Step Together Pilot

Implementation and process evaluation

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Ipsos

YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

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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 from 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 that 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.

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About the evaluator

Ipsos UK's Policy and Evaluation Unit was commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund to undertake an implementation and process evaluation of the Step Together pilot project.

The Ipsos Policy and Evaluation Unit is a multi-disciplinary team of over 50 evaluation specialists and economists who offer considerable expertise in the evaluation of public policies and programmes. This includes experience across all major areas of public policy and the completion of over 500 evaluations for UK central government departments, DGs of the European Commission and international agencies.

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Executive summary

The project

The Step Together project aims to reduce crime and violence by placing trained adult 'chaperones' on routes used by children walking to and from school in areas identified as having a heightened risk of violence or anti-social behaviour. Inspired by the Safe Passage programme from Chicago, in Step Together, the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (WMVRP) commissioned 10 local youth-focused voluntary and community sector organisations to provide staff members as chaperones and identified 20 routes across Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Solihull, Sandwell, and Dudley. The WMVRP also liaised with schools to secure their buy-in, conducted walkthroughs of routes to identify areas of potential risk and devised a training programme for chaperones. Chaperones were then present on selected routes at the start and end of each school day, with routes being chaperoned for between 20 and 43 weeks during the 2021/2022 school year (some routes began before others). In addition to being present on the routes, chaperones also interacted with pupils (generally 11–18 years old) and community members, such as business owners and local shop staff, introducing themselves, enquiring about local issues and asking young people how they were. There were c.18,000 pupils in the schools involved who were directly or indirectly exposed to the project.

YEF and the Home Office funded the delivery of Step Together from 2021-22, while YEF also funded an implementation and process evaluation (alongside a pilot study published separately). The implementation and process evaluation reviewed the adaptation of the US-delivered Safe Passage programme to a UK context, assessed whether Step Together was delivered as intended, explored the facilitators and barriers to effective implementation, and aimed to inform any future pilots or roll-out of the programme. To achieve these aims, the evaluation included interviews and focus groups with the WMVRP project team, provider organisations, chaperones, school leaders, pupils, and local business and police stakeholders. It also included a survey of chaperones, a review of project documentation and observations of provider learning events. The evaluation, which ran from August 2021 to September 2022, had limitations. Data were self-reported, sample sizes were relatively small and limitations to recruitment may have meant that those involved in the evaluation were not representative of all young people involved.

Key conclusions
Step Together retained the core objectives and features of the US model (delivered in Chicago's Safe Passage programme). However, adaptations were made. Step Together employed chaperones from commissioned community organisations rather than the neighbourhood residents used by Safe Passage. Step Together chaperones were also given more flexibility to move around routes and played a more active role in de-escalating incidents.
Step Together was largely delivered as intended, and the project delivered the target number of routes (19). There was some variation in delivery across providers and chaperones, and chaperones also came from varied organisations (including sports and mentoring-focused organisations). Chaperones were mostly consistent in how they responded to incidents; however, definitions of what constituted an incident varied by provider.
The selection and mobilisation of schools, routes and providers were more complex and time-consuming than anticipated. Commissioning local organisations who had a good understanding of the context was perceived to facilitate effective delivery. Chaperones reflected that the training and ongoing support they received effectively supported them in fulfilling their roles. Where chaperones occupied the same routes every weekday, this was perceived to build rapport with pupils, schools and the community.
Fifty chaperones out of the 90 involved in the project responded to the survey. Forty-six respondents reported handling incidents, including those involving physical violence (40), anti-social behaviour (37), bullying (35) and knife crime (15). School staff, pupils and community members reflected that chaperones responded appropriately to incidents, supporting pupils and the community. The small number of young people who were interviewed reflected that they felt safer and that the programme supported their education, mental health and well-being.
The lack of a specific manual to adhere to for providers could pose challenges for scaling up Step Together. Developing a suite of materials that can be consistently used across chaperones is key to future roll-out.

Interpretation

Step Together largely retained the core objectives and features of the US model (delivered in Chicago's Safe Passage programme). As in Chicago, it placed adults on school routes to deter crime and violence. However, Step Together was not designed to be a direct replication of Safe Passage, and the WMVRP made a series of adaptations. Step Together employed chaperones from commissioned community organisations, such as youth workers, mentors and sports instructors, all of whom had experience working with children and young people. In contrast, the Chicago model used neighbourhood residents. The additional experience that Step Together chaperones had meant they had more scope to have a more active role in identifying, preventing and de-escalating incidents. Step Together chaperones were also given more flexibility to move around routes. Where possible, chaperones were asked to work on the same routes to build relationships with pupils; however, they were not confined to specific street blocks as in the US model. Other differences included the greater emphasis that Step Together has on signposting to other services and conducting active outreach work.

Step Together was largely delivered as intended. The programme delivered the target number of routes (19), and the initial selection of routes was largely systematic, using available crime data and softer intelligence. However, the final selection relied on school input and identifying appropriate provider organisations, which meant some routes that could have benefitted were not included in this project. The selected routes covered diverse areas, ranging in levels of deprivation and covering both isolated areas (such as alleyways) and areas with crowding due to the location of shops and transport links. Some routes also had specific issues relating to school rivalries or transport issues. All provider organisations had experience working with young people, but they varied in organisational scope and size. The chaperones they employed had common qualities and capabilities (including an ability to interact with young people), but they also came from varied backgrounds (with differing lengths of experience). Descriptions of how chaperones responded to incidents were mostly consistent. They typically assessed the situation and safely intervened to de-escalate. If intervening was not considered appropriate, they instead contacted 999. However, definitions of what constituted an incident varied by providers who had different thresholds for measuring severity.

The selection of schools, routes and providers during set-up was more complex and required more WMVRP management time than anticipated. As a result of time constraints, providers primarily selected chaperones that had existing links with the organisation. However, the tight timeframes limited the amount of early engagement with schools and communities prior to launching. Commissioning local organisations was viewed as an effective approach because providers typically had a good understanding of the issues facing local communities. Chaperones were very positive about their experience overall. They reported that the training they attended and the ongoing supervision were effective. Most chaperones fed back that they felt confident and safe when handling incidents. Where chaperones occupied the same routes every weekday, this was perceived to build rapport with pupils, schools and the community. The small number of young people who were interviewed were very positive about the chaperones describing them as friendly and relatable. Fifty chaperones out of the 90 involved in the project responded to the survey. Forty-six respondents reported handling incidents, including those involving physical violence (40), anti-social behaviour (37), bullying (35) and knife crime (15). Interviewees reflected that chaperones responded appropriately to incidents, supporting pupils and the community. The small number of young people interviewed reflected that they felt safer and that the programme supported their education, mental health and well-being.

The lack of a specific manual for providers could pose challenges for scaling up Step Together. Developing a suite of materials that can be consistently used across chaperones is key to future roll-out. These should specify roles and responsibilities, required training, a shared definition and response for handling incidents, and defined expectations. This implementation and process evaluation indicates that Step Together is feasible to implement and shows promising qualitative evidence. YEF will wait to consider the findings of the concurrent Step Together pilot evaluation before deciding on the next steps.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Context

The UK Government's commitments to decrease serious violence are set out in its Serious Violence Strategy, published in April 2018. It recognised that while overall crime was declining, homicide, knife crime, gun crime and robbery were all increasing. The evidence also showed a shift towards younger victims and perpetrators, and consequently the strategy included a focus on supporting children and young people to lead productive lives away from violence (Home Office, 2018).

In March 2019, the £100-million Serious Violence Fund was launched to help tackle serious violence, which included investing in Violence Reductions Units (VRUs) in 18 police force areas with high levels of serious violence. VRUs provide leadership and strategic coordination to develop and deliver a multi-agency response to tackle serious violence in their area, bringing together police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and other key partners.[1] Alongside the VRUs core function, each area is required to fund specific interventions working with young people (aged under 25). As of January 2023, the Home Office has invested £170 million into the development of VRUs, expanding the list of funded areas to the 20 worst affected by serious violence across England and Wales.

It was from these perspectives that the Home Office approached the West Midlands VRP (WMVRP)[2] to host a pilot of a programme that had been trialled in Chicago, IL, USA under the name Safe Passage. This evolved into the Step Together pilot project, with the aim being to decrease violent crime among secondary school pupils.

It is also important to recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown requirements led to decreases in the incidence of almost all types of crime (ONS, 2020). This was also reflected in youth justice statistics, with all-time lows recorded (Youth Justice Board, 2022). However, as restrictions were lifted, levels of crime started returning to or exceeding pre-pandemic levels (ONS, 2021), which coincided with the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

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[1] For more information about WMVRPs, see: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/violence-reduction-unit

[2] For more information about the WMVRP, see: https://westmidlands-vrp.org/.

The US Safe Passage programme

The Safe Passage programme is jointly run by the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) district and Chicago Police Department. The programme works with community organisations as vendors who hire, train and place neighbourhood residents along specified routes to and from schools at the beginning and end of the school day. The aim is to decrease crime by means of deterrence and reporting by community monitors.

Safe Passage workers include parents and grandparents of children who attend the schools or community members with an understanding of their local areas, subject to a background check. According to the CPS website, successful candidates typically possess the following qualifications, although additional qualifications may be required by the specific vendor organisation they apply to:

- Very knowledgeable (or preferably a member) of the community they wish to serve

- Able to demonstrate a commitment to serving the students

- Able to demonstrate an ability to build relationships with students and de-escalate conflicts

- Consistent track record for being reliable and on time

- Able to physically stand for long periods of time and tolerate all weather conditions

- Able to read and write incident reports

- Must be able to pass CPS Background Check

Safe Passage workers receive training on relationship-building skills, de-escalation strategies and safety protocols, in addition to ongoing support. Once they start, they are expected to work five hours per day, five days a week, as a split shift in line with the start and end times of the relevant school. They wear hi-vis Safe Passage vests for easy identification. Information on the programme's set-up and activities is publicly available online and in academic articles, but neither a formal, detailed description of the model (i.e. manual) nor a Theory of Change are available.

The programme is offered to selected schools, primarily in high-crime, low-income neighbourhoods, to support pupils' safety along routes with high footfall. The preliminary routes were defined collaboratively with parents, school personnel and the local community before being supervised. Besides assisting pupils along the routes, they also monitor designated hot spots with the aim of making the neighbourhood safer.

Safe Passage originally started in 2007 as a grassroots initiative led by the Black United Fund of Illinois (BUFI) in Chicago's South Shore neighbourhood before CPS adopted the approach in the 2009/10 school year with 35 routes across Chicago.[3] It has since expanded to over 160 schools and recently started to include summer periods, supporting CPS Summer Programs and Chicago Park District programming.[4] A Safe Passage programme was also launched in Washington, D.C. in 2017, with further investment in 2021.[5]

Existing evidence

Several studies have examined the impact of Safe Passage in Chicago since it launched. The nature of how the programme was rolled out means that it was not feasible to conduct randomised controlled trials (RCTs), so most of the studies have employed quasi-experimental designs (QEDs) using retrospective, longitudinal data. Sanfelice (2018) looked at the initial 35 schools, which were mainly high schools, and Curran (2018) examined the 2013/14 expansion of the programme, which included primary schools. Both found that the programme was associated with reductions in crime along the routes. Using data spanning the 2009/10 to 2015/16 school years, McMillen et al. (2019) found that Safe Passage resulted in lower levels of crime, with violent crime declining by 14% on average compared to neighbouring areas. By looking at data over multiple years, the study found that the effect was stronger where the programme had been running for more than two school years (early adopters), and the effects on lowering crimes were persistent over time. Gonzalez and Komisarow's (2020) longitudinal study also found that total crime decreased by 17% relative to comparison areas.

Most of the evidence suggests some geographic spillovers, whereby the nearest neighbouring streets and blocks also experienced drops in crime, while streets farther away experienced slight increases in certain types of crime (Sanfelice, 2018; Curran, 2018; Gonzalez & Komisarow, 2020). Gonzalez and Komisarow (2020) also found evidence of cross-crime (i.e. shifts in types of crime) and temporal spillovers (i.e. shifts in times of crime). For example, motor vehicle thefts increased during nights and weekends.

Finally, there is some evidence to suggest the Safe Passage programme reduced the rate of absenteeism by 2.5% in participating schools compared to other schools (McMillen et al.,

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[3] For more information about the Safe Passage programme in Chicago, see: https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/pupil-safety-and-security/safe-passage-program/ and https://data.cityofchicago.org/Education/Chicago-Public-Schools-Safe-Passage-Routes-SY2122/mnq7-pv6v

[4] See: https://www.cps.edu/press-releases/chicago-public-schools-shares-comprehensive-school-safety-plan-and-resources-for-staff-and-families/

[5] For more information about the Safe Passage programme in D.C., see: https://safepassage.dc.gov/ and https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-invests-43-million-expand-safe-passage-program-keep-kids-safe-they-travel-and

2019). Overall, the findings across studies generally support the programme as an efficient and cost-effective approach with positive effects on crime and pupil outcomes.

Rationale for this project

Like the US, analysis of crime data in the UK shows that the hours after school are peak times for crime.[6] In recent years, multiple serious and fatal incidents involving children and young people have occurred during these hours in the West Midlands. Pupils' experiences walking to and from school can affect their feelings of safety, which can potentially be a barrier to attendance and engagement, in turn influencing educational attainment. The Home Office and WMVRP reviewed the Safe Passage model, and it was agreed to pilot an adapted version of the intervention under the name Step Together during the 2021/22 school year. The pilot was funded by the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF).

The pilot was the first time the intervention was implemented in the UK. To assess the delivery of the intervention, YEF commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct an implementation and process evaluation (IPE). YEF separately commissioned a pilot study to examine the potential impact of Step Together on crime and pupil safety, which is being conducted by the London School of Economics Centre for Economic Performance (LSE CEP) and will be separately reported.

1.2. Intervention

Like the original Safe Passage model, the UK-adapted model, Step Together, is a universal school- and community-based intervention, covering specified routes to and from schools and the pupils and community members who use them. The core feature of the model retained in Step Together involves recruiting qualified adults – called 'chaperones' (described more below) – and placing them on high-footfall routes used by pupils walking to and from school. The key intended purpose of chaperones being present on routes is to reduce crime or violence.

Although Step Together is based on Safe Passage, it was agreed by the Home Office, YEF and WMVRP that several key adaptations were required before delivery started, which are detailed throughout this report. As such, to inform the evaluation during the set-up phase, Ipsos, in collaboration with the Home Office, YEF and WMVRP, developed an initial Theory of Change and logic model to set out how Step Together was anticipated to work and achieve its intended outcomes. This is described below and shown in Figure 1.

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[6] See, for example, slide 17 from GLA Strategic Crime Analysis Team.

Inputs

The key inputs for the intervention include (1) funding to cover the costs of delivery; (2) staff and governance arrangements to oversee and manage delivery; (3) staff to deliver the intervention; and (4) existing knowledge and expertise across all delivery partners. The specific inputs for this pilot study are detailed below.
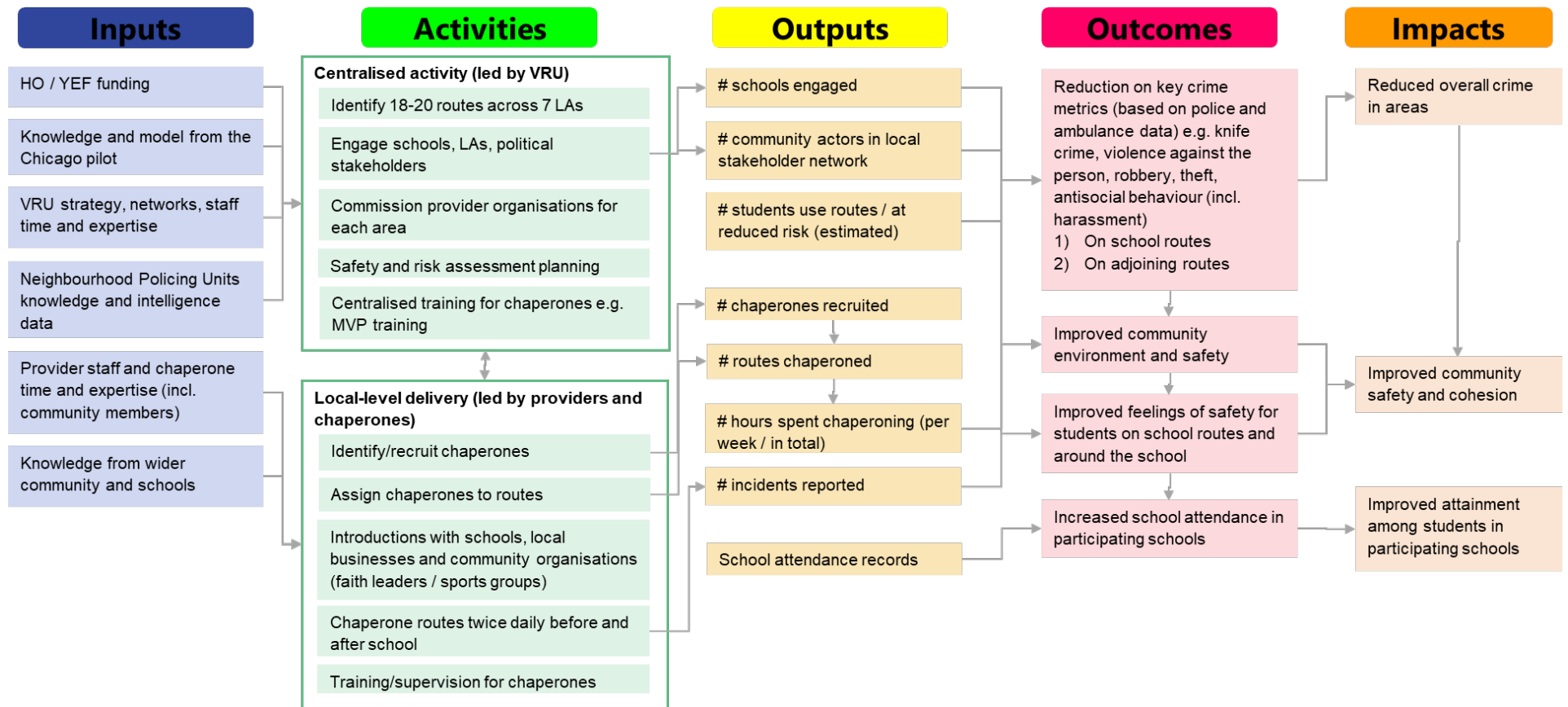
The Home Office funding for the pilot was awarded in 2021, covering delivery from September 2021 to March 2022. Separate arrangements were put in place for the YEF to fund the project from April 2022 until the close of the academic year, which was secured at the end of September 2021. The overall financial investment totalled £1,167,313 (£747,313 from the Home Office and £420,000 from YEF).

The WMVRP was responsible for setting up the project and making arrangements to implement the intervention. The WMVRP team had knowledge of the diversity of the region and could employ existing systems and networks to work with stakeholders. This included relationships with schools and youth provision across both statutory and non-statutory partners. For example, the WMVRP is recognised as providing nationally leading training in Mentors in Violence Prevention[7] (MVP) and integrating this into school curriculums in the region. In addition, the WMVRP brought data analysis capability and links with neighbourhood policing teams generating softer intelligence about potential routes. The WMVRP project delivery team took direction from the project steering group, which included funders, partners and evaluators.

The WMVRP identified and commissioned local youth-focused voluntary and community sector organisations (see Table 6) as 'providers' of the staff members who would be present on the routes, called chaperones (described further under 'Activities'). Provider organisations and the selected schools contributed resources, knowledge and expertise, for example about the communities and/or working with children and young people.

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[7] See: https://westmidlands-vrp.org/education/mentors-in-violence-prevention

Figure 1: Step Together pilot logic model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Inputs

- HO / YEF funding
- Knowledge and model from the Chicago pilot
- VRU strategy, networks, staff time and expertise
- Neighbourhood Policing Units knowledge and intelligence data
- Provider staff and chaperone time and expertise (incl. community members)
- Knowledge from wider community and schools

Activities

Centralised activity (led by VRU)
- Identify 18-20 routes across 7 LAs
- Engage schools, LAs, political stakeholders
- Commission provider organisations for each area
- Safety and risk assessment planning
- Centralised training for chaperones e.g. MVP training

Local-level delivery (led by providers and chaperones)
- Identify/recruit chaperones
- Assign chaperones to routes
- Introductions with schools, local businesses and community organisations (faith leaders / sports groups)
- Chaperone routes twice daily before and after school
- Training/supervision for chaperones

Outputs

- # schools engaged
- # community actors in local stakeholder network
- # students use routes / at reduced risk (estimated)
- # chaperones recruited
- # routes chaperoned
- # hours spent chaperoning (per week / in total)
- # incidents reported
- School attendance records

Outcomes

- Reduction on key crime metrics (based on police and ambulance data) e.g. knife crime, violence against the person, robbery, theft, antisocial behaviour (incl. harassment)
  1) On school routes
  2) On adjoining routes
- Improved community environment and safety
- Improved feelings of safety for students on school routes and around the school
- Increased school attendance in participating schools

Impacts

- Reduced overall crime in areas
- Improved community safety and cohesion
- Improved attainment among students in participating schools

Context: The ST project sits within the VRU which has 14/15 live workstreams, including an Education workstream where ST will be housed. The **VRU commissions a large number of interventions** meaning there are many activities taking place, which may also influence some of the anticipated outcomes – this is important to understand other influencing factors. The **DfE-funded AP Specialist Taskforces** will also involve Birmingham and Sandwell which may have a bearing on this project. **COVID 19** has limited the VRU's levels of community engagement so ST provides an opportunity to re-engage especially as it is expected to have several **spillovers**.

The key assumptions that underpin the above logic model are outlined below:

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Key assumptions underpinning the logic model:

1. The inputs provide sufficient resources to deliver the activities as planned.

2. The selected providers and chaperones have the appropriate skills and expertise to deliver the activities effectively.

3. Chaperones become trusted adults for pupils and build the necessary networks with schools and community stakeholders to identify and respond to incidents efficiently and effectively.

4. Schools and communities support the project and role of chaperones.

5. There is a positive relationship between improvements in pupils' feelings of safety and school attendance and attainment.

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Activities

Step Together involves delivering activities at two levels: (1) centralised activities led by the WMVRP and (2) local delivery led by provider organisations and chaperones (*see Assumption 1*).

The main WMVRP-led activities include:

- **Identifying and selecting routes:** The project aimed to pilot Step Together on 18–20 routes. It was originally expected that this would include four each in Birmingham and Coventry and two each in Walsall, Wolverhampton, Solihull, Sandwell, and Dudley. To identify potential routes, the WMVRP used crime and violence data from the 2019/20 school year[8] combined with local knowledge and intelligence from across the WMVRP teams, neighbourhood policing teams and local schools. Decisions were also informed by the WMVRP Strategic Needs Assessment (West Midlands VRU, 2021).

- **Engaging and liaising with schools and wider stakeholders:** The WMVRP was responsible for contacting schools on the identified routes and securing their buy-in to take part in the pilot. It was expected that each school would be associated with one route, but each route could include more than one school, typically one

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[8] Data from 2019/20 was used due to limitations in the data during the COVID-19 pandemic.

or two. The pilot targeted secondary schools, but the WMVRP also liaised with primary schools and colleges in the areas to raise awareness. Beyond schools, the WMVRP managed local communications with wider stakeholders, including local authorities and community representatives.

- **Specifying the UK delivery model and commissioning providers:** As mentioned above, it was agreed by the Home Office, YEF and WMVRP that several key adaptations were required before delivery started. As such, the WMVRP was responsible for specifying the UK delivery model, in collaboration with the funders. A key adaptation (described further under 'Findings') was a significant focus on detached youth work principles – meeting children and young people in their spaces, for example streets, parks and other shared public spaces. This informed the service specification for commissioning local organisations that would provide and manage the chaperone teams on each route.[9] Providers were expected to have the following:

  o Experience of effectively working in local networks and partnerships and a willingness to work with other providers and be an active part of relevant regional networks/partnerships

  o An ability to be mobile and access physical spaces in local areas (such as shops and parks)

  o Experience of directly working with vulnerable young people and communities with lower levels of trust and confidence in authorities

  o Experience of partnership working with schools

  Providers were selected through a tendering process with a panel of WMVRP partners in each geography (including education representatives) that reviewed the readiness of applicants to deliver the project safely and in a geographically and culturally competent way (*see Assumption 2*).

- **Safety and risk assessment planning:** The WMVRP team conducted walkthroughs of each route with providers and chaperones to identify areas of potential risk (e.g. where pupils congregate) and points of safety (e.g. where other capable adults such as security staff are present). These observations sometimes led to changes to the length and precise geography of the routes initially identified. They also shared knowledge about the local area and existing services to develop links where

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[9] For example, see: https://westmidlands-vrp.org/app/uploads/2021/08/Step-Together-Specification-Coventry-1.pdf

possible, including building relationships between providers and policing teams to support significant incidents.

- **Coordinating a training programme for chaperones:** Like the US model, chaperones received training; however, the specific types of training were not pre-specified as part of the Safe Passage programme. The WMVRP, therefore, specified the types of training to offer chaperones, including training in Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), Trauma Informed Practice, local safeguarding processes, and exploitation. Support also included offering chaperones access to monthly clinical supervision. Attendance at training was recorded in monthly update meetings and/or reports.

The core provider and chaperone-led activities include:

- **Forming teams of chaperones**: Provider organisations were responsible for identifying existing employees or recruiting new staff members to become chaperones for the project (*see Assumption 2*). This included requesting DBS checks, identifying a lead chaperone per team who would coordinate other chaperones and be the main point of contact between provider organisations and schools, and providing additional internal training and supervision for chaperones.

- **Being present on routes twice a day**: In line with the Safe Passage model, chaperones needed to be present at the start and end of the school day, typically 8:00–10:00am and 2:30–4:30pm. This typically involved working as a team of four to six chaperones to walk along the route, often staying in pairs for their safety and to provide safeguarding assurances to pupils, though this was not specified in the model.

The following activities for Step Together diverged from the Safe Passage model (described further under 'Findings'):

- **Diffuse and de-escalate incidents**: The Safe Passage model generally relies on deterrence as a means to reduce crime and violence. The Step Together model takes this a step further, given its use of detached youth work. Where incidents occurred or chaperones were informed about potential incidents, chaperones were expected to assess the situation and either safely intervene to de-escalate it or seek further support, namely by contacting policing teams. Chaperones were not intended to play an enforcement role.

- **Building relationships with pupils**: Rather than simply being present, chaperones were expected to actively interact with pupils. Interaction between chaperones and pupils could include talking about their day, interests and hobbies; asking questions; getting to know one another; and seeking or offering advice. This was

intended to establish a positive, trusted adult presence for pupils as they travel to and from school (*see Assumption 3*). Where appropriate, chaperones could also signpost pupils to other services or support. However, it is important to note that while all pupils using the routes are exposed to the intervention in theory, children and young people can choose whether to interact directly with chaperones and how much.

- **Building relationships with school and community stakeholders**: Chaperones were also expected to meet with school leaders and community members (such as local business owners) to identify any issues (such as potential incidents or bubbling tensions between pupils) and opportunities to help address them. For example, chaperones could support local food shops that often become very busy after school, often involving anti-social behaviour affecting the community. While the community members do not have an active role in delivering the intervention, interacting with community members was anticipated to be an important element because they share information about local issues that chaperones can then consider and respond to (*see Assumption 3 and Assumption 4*).

Outputs

The key outputs of the activities described above include the number and/or types of:

- Step Together routes launched (target: 18–20);

- provider organisations commissioned;

- chaperones recruited and hours spent on the routes;

- schools involved and estimated number of pupils using the routes;

- community actors/organisations engaged; and

- incidents reported.

Outcomes and longer-term impacts

Based on the evidence from the Safe Passage programme in Chicago, the primary outcome intended for the pilot is reduced crime on Step Together routes relative to comparator areas. In other words, it was expected that Step Together would reduce crime by recruiting, training and placing youth workers on routes identified as having a heightened risk of violence and crime to deter, prevent and de-escalate incidents, including violence, crime and anti-social behaviour. The pilot impact study, led by LSE, is investigating potential effects on crime using West Midlands crime data. This includes looking at levels of anti-social behaviour, violent crime (violence against the person) and property crime/theft.

However, it is also worth bearing in mind several factors that could influence detecting an impact on crime outcomes:

- It is possible that the increased presence of chaperones in the area may reduce the under-reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour. This may lead to an increase in some types of reported crime.

- The WMVRP commissions a wide range of interventions, some of which could reach the same schools and communities and therefore contribute to reducing crime. It may be that a combination of interventions collectively results in the observed outcomes.

- Despite the findings on Safe Passage in the US, the evidence base for detached and outreach youth work in the UK, including its impact on reducing crime, is limited to a relatively small number of qualitative evaluations.[10] As such, the assumed causal pathway – i.e. that placing chaperones along school routes to deter, prevent and de-escalate incidents involving children and young people will lead to reduced crime – relies heavily on the US evidence on Safe Passage.

In line with findings from McMillen et al. (2019), Step Together was also expected to improve school attendance. As set out in the logic model, it was hypothesised that several outcomes were precursors to this, including improvements to the community environment and safety, which in turn would improve pupils' feelings of safety.

Numerous studies have identified relationships between pupils' feelings of safety, attendance and attainment (s*ee Assumption 5*). Sense of safety can impact educational engagement and success (Côté-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016), and it is well evidenced that school attendance is a predictor of school attainment. Multiple studies have also found a negative relationship between community violence and academic achievement[11] (e.g. O'Brien et al., 2021). As such, improved educational attainment is hypothesised to be a longer-term impact of Step Together. The LSE pilot study intends to investigate the effects on both pupil attendance and attainment.

1.3. Research questions

The IPE aimed to examine how Step Together was adapted from Safe Passage and put into practice, what factors affected its delivery and any preliminary qualitative evidence that the

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[10] https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/grants/detached-and-outreach-youth-work/

[11] Several studies have found that this relationship is mediated by effects on behaviour and symptoms of depression/anxiety.

intervention led to its intended outcomes. It also aimed to understand what lessons can be learnt to inform future delivery, scale-up and evaluation.

Table 1 specifies the four overarching evaluation objectives along with a selection of detailed research questions from the IPE evaluation framework (see Table 4).

Table 1: Research aims and questions

Research aims	Selected research questions
Review the adaptation of the US model (Safe Passage) required for the UK context and population and whether further adaptation is required.	• In what ways was the model adapted to make the project more acceptable/appropriate in the UK and specifically the West Midlands context? • What are the key considerations for rolling Step Together out in other contexts?
Assess fidelity to the UK intervention model (Step Together).	• To what extent has the project been delivered with fidelity to the UK model? What adaptations were needed on the ground, if any? For example, what flexibility did chaperones have to meet the local needs? • How were routes/schools/providers/chaperones selected? Were the criteria appropriate and followed consistently?
Explore dimensions and factors affecting implementation, including facilitators and barriers.	• What were the key facilitators supporting the project design and set-up period (i.e. up until the routes launched)? What were the key challenges/barriers? • Were there any challenges/barriers in terms of the recruitment and retention of chaperones? If so, how were these overcome? • What are the relationships between chaperones and pupils, community members and the school like? What have been key facilitators and barriers for good relationships? • How acceptable/attractive is the Step Together project to schools/pupils/communities?
Understand what lessons can be learnt from this pilot to inform any future pilots or the roll-out of Step Together.	Evidence of promise: • What are the perceived changes in outcomes? • Have there been any unintended consequences, and if so, what are these? Scalability/readiness for trial: • What would be an appropriate scope and design for future impact evaluation, e.g. RCT vs QED and sample size requirements? • In what ways, if any, should monitoring be adapted for future roll-out? • What should be considered when using administrative data sources in terms of access and quality? What should be considered when conducting primary data collection, e.g. in schools?

1.4. Success criteria and targets

To demonstrate its feasibility and scalability, Step Together needed evidence to show that the pilot had successfully:

- launched the target number of 18–20 routes;

- commissioned providers and chaperones with the appropriate resources and right skills to fulfil their roles;

- delivered activities in line with the logic model, consistently across routes/schools;

- engaged pupils and communities who perceived Step Together positively; and

- resulted in early evidence of its intended outcomes.[12]

The IPE also provided an opportunity to assess the practicalities around engaging relevant stakeholders in data collection activities, including:

- participation in interviews or focus groups among HO/YEF stakeholders, WMVRP and provider staff, and chaperones;

- survey responses from >50% of chaperones; and

- four case studies covering four schools/routes across different geographical areas that gather evidence from varied audiences, including school staff, community leaders/members, chaperones and pupils.

1.5. Ethical review

Ensuring ethical research practice is a key priority at Ipsos UK and core to our professional practice. Ipsos follows and complies with the GSR ethical principles and other ethical codes, such as the SRA ethical guidelines, the ESRC Research Ethics Framework and the MRS code of conduct. As standard with all Ipsos projects, the evaluation team completed an internal Ethics Review Checklist for the evaluation. Ethics forms are reviewed by the in-house Ethics Group, which comprises researchers experienced in working with vulnerable audiences and on sensitive subject matter and are independent of the evaluation team.

Researchers sought informed consent from all participants prior to data collection, emphasising the voluntary nature of their participation. This involved providing information about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research and what their participation would entail (e.g. question topics and interview length). It was made clear the evaluation was being conducted independently of the funders and delivery partners to assure participants of their confidentiality and anonymity.

There were three approaches to collecting consent. First, verbal consent was collected ahead of interviews or focus groups with WMVRP and provider staff members, chaperones, school leaders and community stakeholders/members. A privacy notice was also provided to research participants before interviews and focus groups. Second, a two-stage consent process was used for focus groups with pupils, which involved written parental/guardian

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[12] The IPE collected perception-based evidence on outcomes while the pilot impact study is using crime and education datasets to assess outcomes.

consent in advance of the case study visits and written consent from pupils just prior to focus groups. Third, chaperones invited to take part in the online survey were provided information about the study, including a privacy notice, and their consent was provided when they chose to complete the survey.

The Appendix includes the information sheets, privacy notices and consent forms used.

1.6. Data protection

Ipsos has a dedicated Business Excellence and Compliance team to ensure all research meets GDPR and UK DPA requirements. We work to the highest standards in the market research industry and have the appropriate data security and confidentiality systems in place to minimise any risk. Ipsos abides by the MRS Code of Conduct and adheres to ISO 20252 (international market research specific standard), ISO 9001 (international general company standard) and ISO 27001 (international standard for information security).

For this evaluation, Ipsos was the data controller and processor. Personal data were collected under the legal basis of informed consent. Participants were provided with privacy notices and information leaflets that detailed the purpose of the research, how their data would be used and what to do if they changed their mind. This included separate privacy notices for quantitative and qualitative data collection activities and tailored leaflets for school leaders, community members, pupils and their parents/guardians (available in the Appendix).

All personal data are held securely on Ipsos servers and treated as strictly confidential, accessible only for the evaluation team and the approved transcription supplier. Personal data will be securely deleted using digital shredding software six months after project completion. The findings are reported at an aggregate level, ensuring participants are not identifiable.

1.7. Project team and stakeholders

Funders

The Home Office and YEF co-funded the WMVRP to deliver the project, and representatives from both attended project steering groups and other meetings. YEF funded the evaluation and commissioned Ipsos UK and LSE to deliver the IPE and pilot impact study, respectively. YEF monitored the delivery of the evaluation and reviewed the study plan and research tools.

Delivery team

The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for delivering the project was Clare Gollop, the WMVRP Director. The WMVRP project team was managed by Hayley Walton (Project Manager) and Lea-Ann Bentley (Associate Project Manager). Other key staff included:

- Nikki Penniston, Localities Manager
- Amy Carter, Education Intervention Adviser
- Marinda Boyal, Data Performance Analyst
- Sara Roach, WMVRP Strategic Advisor

The WMVRP team consulted with the CPS Security lead who developed the Safe Passage programme in Chicago to better understand the model and exchange practice ideas. This included an online meeting with the WMVRP Director, Project Manager, and Programme Lead in Chicago to discuss implementation. This highlighted key differences in the models, which flagged a risk around sustainability, given that Step Together relies on experienced youth workers for chaperones. The intervention developer was not involved in the delivery or evaluation of Step Together.

Evaluation team

The IPE was undertaken by Ipsos UK's Policy and Evaluation Unit, led by Meera Craston, Director and Joint Head of Evaluation (Project Director), and Raynette Bierman, Associate Director (Project Manager). In July 2022, near the end of the evaluation, Jessica Ozan, Head of Education, Children and Families, took over as Project Director. Catherine Fenton (Senior Consultant) and Irene Soriano Redondo (Consultant) contributed to the data collection, analysis and reporting, and Karl Ashworth (Head of Data Analytics) and Stella Capuano (Senior Consultant) advised on the feasibility of future impact evaluation options.

There are no known conflicts of interest.

2. Methods

2.1. Theory of Change/logic model development

The diagrammatic logic model (Figure 1) and narrative Theory of Change were developed by the Ipsos IPE team in August and September 2021 as part of YEF's co-design stage.[13] This was done in three steps.

- First, the IPE team developed a high-level logic model based on initial documentation and early discussions about Step Together. It specified the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes but did not include any linkages between the components.

- Second, three members of the IPE team led a Theory of Change workshop and presented the initial logic model. Attendees included two representatives each from YEF and the Home Office, five from the WMVRP and one from the LSE evaluation team. The workshop involved three exercises, which are outlined in Table 2.

- Third, the IPE team updated the logic model to reflect feedback provided in the workshop. The logic model and narrative Theory of Change were documented in the study plan.

The logic model was subsequently reviewed as part of the IPE, which is detailed in the Findings section.

Table 2: Theory of Change workshop approach

Session	Focus/questions for discussion
Overview of Theory of Change	• Explain the purpose and benefits of developing a Theory of Change/logic model • Set out characteristics of a 'good' Theory of Change
Exercise 1 – The big picture: context and success	• What does success for Step Together look like? • What are the key characteristics of the context that could influence the success of the project? • Who are the most important stakeholders needed to make it successful?

Exercise 2 – Building a logic model for Step Together	• Looking at the initial logic model:
	    ○ What do you agree with and why?
	    ○ What don't you agree with and why?
	    ○ What do you think needs to be added/changed?
	    ○ What assumptions underpin how X leads to Y?
	    ○ Are there any unintended consequences that you think may occur?

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[13] For more on YEF's commissioning approach, see: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/17.-YEF-evaluation-guidance-March-2022.pdf

Session	Focus/questions for discussion
Exercise 3 – Risks	• What are the internal risks related to delivery processes? • What are the external risks to outcomes being realised?

2.2. Participant selection

The IPE was designed to gather evidence from a range of participants, as outlined below. Changes to the original plans for data collection are detailed in the Data Collection section.

WMVRP project team and other stakeholders

The IPE team invited all staff members involved in the design, development and/or oversight of Step Together to take part in two 90-minute virtual focus groups, one in February 2022 and another in August 2022. Where appropriate, they also offered one-to-one interviews.

Providers and chaperones

Representatives from all provider organisations were invited to take part in a 60-minute virtual interview between January and March 2022 to capture details about their organisation and their views on the project set-up and delivery. They were also asked to identify one to two chaperones employed by their specific organisation for us to invite to take part in short 30-minute virtual interviews in February and March 2022 to gather their views on the project, role and anticipated outcomes. Contact details were obtained through providers, who informed chaperones about the research and obtained their consent to be contacted by the evaluation team.

In June 2022, the IPE team invited chaperones to complete a short 10-minute online survey. Where contact details for chaperones were available (shared by providers with consent), the evaluation team contacted them directly with unique survey links. Following challenges in obtaining contact details, the evaluation team also shared a universal survey link with providers and asked them to pass this on to chaperones. Estimates provided by the WMVRP suggest that there were approximately 90 chaperones in total, yet the total number of chaperones who received the survey was unknown. A total of 50 chaperones completed the survey.

Finally, as part of the four face-to-face case study visits in June and July 2022, the IPE team invited the chaperone teams for the relevant routes to take part in a focus group for each case study.

School leaders and pupils

The WMVRP team introduced the IPE team to senior leaders (e.g. Vice Principal, Assistant Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher) in schools selected for case studies. All senior leaders had a focus on behaviour and safeguarding, so Step Together fell under their remit.

The evaluation team then worked with school leaders to arrange a 60-minute one-to-one interview with them (virtual or face-to-face) and a face-to-face focus group with pupils (typically up to 60 minutes). The evaluation requested school leaders to identify four to six pupils who use the Step Together route and ideally varied in characteristics (e.g. year group and gender). However, the evaluation ultimately relied on school leaders to identify pupils and be gatekeepers for liaising with parents/guardians to gather their written consent on behalf of the research team. Interviews and focus groups explored teachers' and pupils' experiences with the project and asked about their views on the role of chaperones and their impacts. Data collection took place near the end of the school year in June and July 2022.

The pilot impact study led by LSE originally included a survey with pupils to measure feelings of safety. The survey also included a small number of questions to inform the IPE. However, the survey was discontinued due to a low response rate.

Local business and police stakeholders

Given the nature of Step Together as an intervention that works within and is visible to the local community, it was important to seek community members' views about the project, especially those who have met with chaperones and were more likely to be affected by the intervention. The evaluation team identified community stakeholders for case studies by asking chaperones, school staff and pupils about local shops or businesses that were along the routes and most likely to have been affected by Step Together, e.g. had experienced issues with anti-social behaviour among pupils or crime in the past. During case study visits, researchers visited these local businesses and invited community members to take part in short 30-minute interviews to gather their views on the project and anticipated outcomes. Schools and providers also sometimes identified other stakeholders, such as police links or community centre staff. These interviews took place both face-to-face and virtually.

2.3. Data collection

Table 3 summarises the IPE data collection methods and evidence sources. Several methods were adapted from those originally set out in the study plan, which are also outlined and explained in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of data collection methods

Data collection methods	Data collection planned	Data collection undertaken	Reasons for adaptation of data collection undertaken
Interviews with the WMVRP delivery team, providers and wider stakeholders	2 focus groups with the WMVRP delivery team 3 interviews with Home Office stakeholders	2 focus groups and 1 interview with the WMVRP delivery team 10 interviews with providers	An additional one-to-one interview was undertaken to capture a range of perspectives from the WMVRP. All 10 providers were interviewed to capture all routes and local authorities.

Data collection methods	Data collection planned	Data collection undertaken	Reasons for adaptation of data collection undertaken
	• 7 interviews with providers (one per local authority)		The views of the Home Office were captured during the co-design stage and regular Steering Group meetings.
Interviews with chaperones	• 15–20 interviews with chaperones	• 9 interviews with chaperones	There were challenges/delays in receiving chaperone contact details, which limited the sample.
Surveys with chaperones	• Short online survey at 2 time points, open for 4 weeks	• Short online survey at 1 time point, open for 6.5 weeks	The challenges/delays in receiving chaperone contact details shortened the intended time between surveys, which limited the scope for change/progress. Moving to a single survey minimised the burden on chaperones, and lengthening the timeframe enabled targeted reminders and more flexibility for chaperones.
Surveys with pupils	• Short online survey at 2 timepoints, led by LSE	• Survey discontinued	The survey was discontinued after the first wave due to low response rates. This limited the views of pupils to the case studies.
Case studies	• 4–6 case studies covering 4 local authorities • Each including 1 focus group with chaperones, 1 focus group with pupils, 1 interview with a school leader, and 2 interviews with community members	• 4 case studies covering 2 local authorities • 3 focus groups with chaperones • 4 focus groups with pupils • 3 interviews with school leaders • 4 interviews with community stakeholders	Several schools identified in the initial sample were unresponsive and/or unable to take part, resulting in 3 case studies in Birmingham and 2 case studies with the same provider (hence 3 instead of 4 chaperone focus groups). There were multiple challenges in recruiting and engaging community stakeholders.
Documentation and monitoring information	• Review of project documentation • Analysis of monitoring information, e.g. chaperone hours; recorded incidents	• Review of project documentation, e.g. Steering Group Highlight Reports	Incident data were not shared with the evaluation team as this often included personal information and sensitive content.
Observations of provider learning events	• Not originally planned	• 2 observations of Community of Learning events	The IPE team asked to observe these events as an additional data collection opportunity.

Along with the study plan, the IPE team developed an evaluation framework (see Table 4), which set out a detailed list of potential questions mapped to the planned data collection methods. It was informed by:

- the requirements set out in the initial specification for the evaluation;

- a desk-based review of a small set of documents (e.g. delivery plans and monitoring reports) provided by the WMVRP;

- two co-design workshops, including the Theory of Change workshop; and

- regular discussions with the WMVRP.

The evaluation framework informed the development of a suite of research tools, including the chaperone survey and discussion guides for the qualitative research.

Table 4: IPE framework

Process area	Example data collection questions *Adapted for survey and/or qualitative approaches.*	Data collection methods – *triangulated in analysis where appropriate*						
		Monitoring information	WMVRP focus groups	Provider interviews	Chaperone interviews	Chaperone survey	Case studies	*Pupil survey (LSE-led)*
Design and model	What were the key facilitators supporting the project design and set-up period (i.e. up until the routes launched)? What were the key challenges/barriers? Did the model/design put in place reflect the original intervention model (as set out in the ToC)?	Route launch dates						
Multi-agency working	Who are the key agency stakeholders within and outside the WMVRP contributing to the project? In what ways have they been involved (including resource implications), and has this been appropriate, sufficient and proportionate? What value does this bring?							
Governance structure	What governance arrangements are in place for overseeing the delivery of Step Together?							
Route and school selection	How were routes and schools identified? Were the criteria appropriate and followed consistently? What are the characteristics of routes and schools, and does this reflect the aims of the project? What is the project reach, i.e. how many routes and schools are included, and what is the estimated number of pupils affected?	Number of routes Number of schools Number of pupils (total and estimated using routes)						
Provider commissioning	What were the criteria for selecting providers, and were they effective in identifying suitable providers? What are the characteristics of provider organisations, including their skills, assets and knowledge of the local area? What challenges/barriers were encountered when seeking provider organisations, if any? How were these overcome?	Number of providers commissioned						

Process area	Example data collection questions *Adapted for survey and/or qualitative approaches.*	Data collection methods – *triangulated in analysis where appropriate*						
		Monitoring information	WMVRP focus groups	Provider interviews	Chaperone interviews	Chaperone survey	Case studies	*Pupil survey (LSE-led)*
Chaperone recruitment and training	What were the criteria for recruiting chaperones? What implementation strategies were used to recruit chaperones, establish the project within provider organisations and train/support chaperones? How did this differ by provider? Were there any challenges/barriers in terms of the recruitment and retention of chaperones? If so, how were these overcome?	Number of chaperones recruited Hours of training offered to chaperones, if any, and their attendance						
School and pupil engagement	What approaches were used to get buy-in and support from the schools? What worked well/less well? How acceptable/attractive is the Step Together project to schools and pupils? Is Step Together seen as a good fit given the needs of schools and pupils?							
Community engagement	What approaches were used to get buy-in and support from the local community and families? What worked well/less well? How acceptable/attractive is the Step Together project to families and community members? Is Step Together seen as a good fit given the needs of the communities?	Number of community organisations in the stakeholder network						
Active time on routes	Was chaperone attendance monitored, and if so, was this in line with expectations? To what extent has the project been delivered with fidelity to the model? What adaptations were needed on the ground, if any? For example, what flexibility did chaperones have to meet the needs of their local needs? What are the relationships between chaperones and pupils, community members and the school like? What have been key facilitators and barriers for good relationships?	Chaperone work attendance Time chaperones spend with pupils, parents and teachers						

Process area	Example data collection questions *Adapted for survey and/or qualitative approaches.*	Data collection methods – *triangulated in analysis where appropriate*						
		Monitoring information	WMVRP focus groups	Provider interviews	Chaperone interviews	Chaperone survey	Case studies	*Pupil survey (LSE-led)*
Mechanisms of change	What support and/or supervision is in place for chaperones? Is this sufficient?	▰			▰	▰	▰	▰
	What are the perceived changes in outcomes? What are the perceived mechanisms of change for Step Together to intended outcomes for pupils and communities? What are the reasons behind 'what works'?	School attendance records Incidents reported				▰	▰	▰
Monitoring arrangements	What data are collected and monitored as part of the project and by whom? Are the data used effectively? In what ways, if any, should monitoring be adapted for future roll-out?	Review of available information/data	▰	▰				
Contextual factors	In what ways was the model adapted to make the project more acceptable/appropriate in the UK and specifically the West Midlands context? How did delivery vary by local authority? Have any contextual factors influenced delivery? What implications did this have, if any? What are the key considerations for rolling Step Together out in other contexts?		▰	▰			▰	
Unexpected consequences	Have there been any unintended consequences, and if so, what are they? If negative, what are the implications of this? If positive, what additional benefit does this offer?					▰	▰	
QED feasibility assessment	What would be an appropriate scope and design for future impact evaluation, e.g. RCT vs QED and sample size requirements? Is there a feasible way to identify the group of pupils using the routes rather than all pupils?		▰	▰				

Process area	Example data collection questions *Adapted for survey and/or qualitative approaches.*	Data collection methods – *triangulated in analysis where appropriate*						
		Monitoring information	**WMVRP focus groups**	**Provider interviews**	**Chaperone interviews**	**Chaperone survey**	**Case studies**	*Pupil survey (LSE-led)*
	What should be considered when using administrative data sources in terms of access and quality? What should be considered when conducting primary data collection, e.g. in schools? What contextual considerations must be considered for future evaluation?							

Qualitative data collection

The IPE predominantly relied on a set of complementary qualitative research activities, which added both depth and breadth to the evaluation. As detailed above, these included:

- Two virtual focus groups and one interview with five members of the WMVRP delivery team responsible for overseeing delivery.

- Ten virtual interviews with provider organisations responsible for managing chaperone teams.

- Nine virtual interviews with chaperones from seven providers.

- Four face-to-face case study visits covering four schools/routes, three providers, and two local authorities (Birmingham and Sandwell), including:

  - Three focus groups with chaperones (n=16);

  - Three interviews with school leaders (n=3);

  - Four focus groups with pupils (n=17); and

  - Four interviews with community members (n=4).

- Two observations of Community of Learning events attended by providers and chaperones.

The IPE team developed all research tools and materials, including discussion guides, information leaflets and consent forms, and conducted all data collection. It is important to note that data were self-reported and sample sizes were small, meaning findings on perceived impact should be considered with caution. Furthermore, several limitations to recruitment may have introduced selection bias: (1) providers nominated chaperones for initial interviews; (2) the WMVRP team helped with the selection of case study locations, which were ultimately Birmingham-centric due to challenges recruiting schools in other local authorities; and (3) school leaders selected pupils to take part in the focus groups. Some interviewees may have also viewed the security of their role as linked to the success of the pilot, resulting in a positive bias.

Quantitative data collection

The IPE team developed the bespoke chaperone survey and distributed it in two ways:

- **Using unique survey links**: Where contact details were available, the evaluation team directly invited chaperones using a unique survey link that allowed chaperones to start and stop the survey as needed. Contact details were available

for 57 chaperones out of approximately 90 chaperones. The IPE team also monitored completion and sent targeted reminders.

- **Using an open link**: It was not possible to receive contact details for all chaperones because some did not have professional email addresses with the provider. As such, providers were asked to circulate an open link that any chaperone could click on to access the survey. The IPE team followed up with providers to update them with the number of responses from within their organisation and request that they send reminders on the team's behalf.
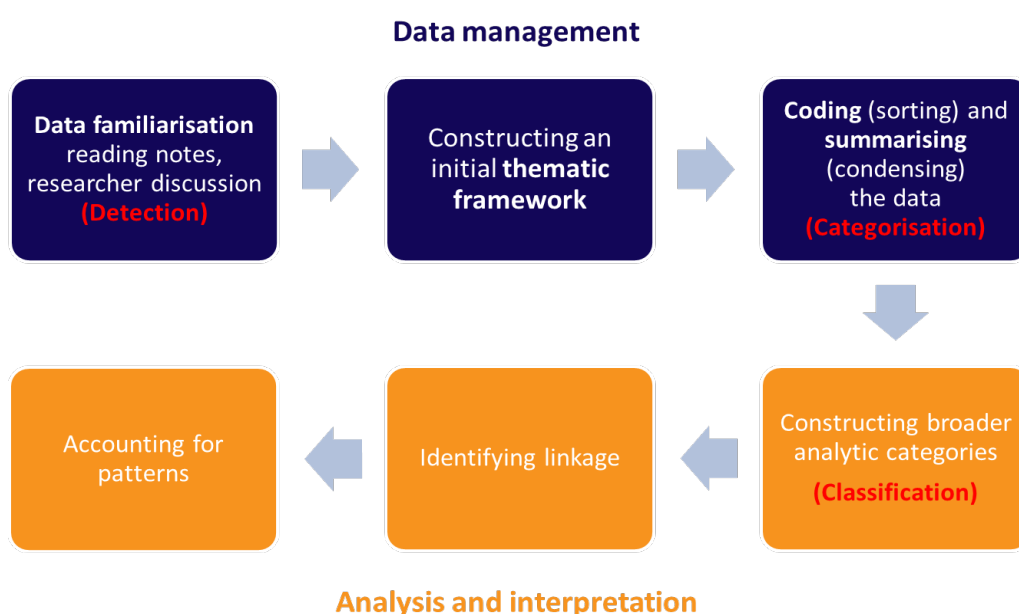
The survey was live for six and a half weeks, from 17 June until the 3 August 2022. A total of 50 chaperones completed the survey, from nine out of ten providers.

2.4. Analysis

Qualitative analysis

Most interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed, with the exception of two interviews with community members where notes were used due to the interview environment (e.g. in shops). Researchers also took notes during case study visits and observations to inform the interpretation and analysis stages. The IPE team conducted two analysis sessions with researchers to identify emerging themes. The raw data were then coded in line with the research aims, Theory of Change and evaluation framework, as well as any emerging topics identified during analysis sessions. The approach, therefore, involved both deductive content analysis guided by the evaluation frameworks and inductive content analysis guided by themes arising in the raw data.

Figure 2: Approach to qualitative data management and analysis

Data management

| Data familiarisation
reading notes,
researcher discussion
(Detection) | → | Constructing an
initial **thematic
framework** | → | **Coding** (sorting) and
summarising
(condensing)
the data
(Categorisation) |

| Accounting for
patterns | ← | Identifying linkage | ← | Constructing broader
analytic categories
(Classification) |

Analysis and interpretation

This analysis process supported the development of descriptive accounts of experiences within each stakeholder group as well as themes that were common across multiple stakeholder groups. This assisted in developing more explanatory accounts of what worked well or less well, under what circumstances and why. Figure 2 summarises the approach.

Quantitative analysis

The survey data were analysed to look at overall trends and examine any differences using cross-tabulation that broke down the data by key characteristics, for example by provider or local authority. However, sub-groups often had small sample sizes, which created challenges for comparisons. As such, survey findings are presented for all surveyed chaperones.

Data synthesis and triangulation

The evaluation framework formed the basis for data synthesis and triangulation as it had pre-specified where multiple evidence sources were intended to answer the same questions. Findings from different strands of the qualitative data collection were brought together as part of the coding framework and analysis sessions, while quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated using analysis notes and sessions.

2.5. Timeline

Table 5 provides a high-level timeline of the evaluation activities.

Table 5: Evaluation timeline

Date	Delivery activity	Evaluation activity
August–December 2021	- WMVRP specified model and selected routes, schools and providers - Providers recruited and mobilised chaperone teams - Most routes launched, including soft launches	Set-up: - Co-design workshops - Desk-based review/familiarisation - Theory of Change/logic model development - Ethics review - Study plan and evaluation framework development
January–March 2022	- Remaining routes launched; one route terminated - Chaperones started building relationships with schools, pupils and communities - WMVRP, providers and schools worked together to improve delivery/resolve issues - Chaperone training	Wave 1 data collection: - Research material development 1 - WMVRP focus group 1 - Provider interviews - Chaperone interviews
May–July 2022	Nineteen routes operational, and chaperones continued building relationships with pupils, schools and communities	Wave 2 data collection: - Research material development 2 - Chaperone survey

Date	Delivery activity	Evaluation activity
	• Future planning	• Case study visits, including interview/focus groups with chaperones, school leaders, pupils and community stakeholders • WMVRP focus group 2 and interview • Observations of two Community of Learning events
August–September 2022	Pilot delivery completed at the end of July 2022.	Analysis and reporting: • Survey data analysis: topline, cross tabs and charting • Qualitative data analysis: analysis sessions and coding • Findings presentation to YEF, Home Office and WMVRP representatives • Final IPE report
Throughout	• Steering Group meetings • Reviewing Highlight Reports • Regular check-ins with WMVRP and YEF	

3. Findings

3.1. Participants

In total, the WMVRP commissioned 10 provider organisations, each of which managed a team of chaperones. The number of chaperones varied across organisations, ranging from five to 15, usually around nine. Table 6 provides a summary of the provider organisations, and Table 7 summarises the provider and chaperone participants involved in the evaluation activities.

Table 6: Provider overview

Provider name	Description
Sport Birmingham	Sport Birmingham is part of a national network of 42 County Sports Partnerships that receive core funding from Sport England. Its vision is for all young people in Birmingham to experience outstanding Physical Education, school sports and physical activity that will lead to active and healthy lifestyles through life-long participation.
Sport 4 Life	Sport 4 Life UK is the leading sport for employment charity in the West Midlands. They provide opportunities for young people (aged 11–29) to prepare for and move into sustained education, employment or training by improving their employability and key life skills through sports-themed personal development service, including mentoring and guidance.
First Class Foundation	First Class Foundation is a charity that supports young people (aged 13–25) from Birmingham and the West Midlands by tackling youth violence, building mental health resilience and connecting them to their purpose by exposing them to new opportunities. They provide programmes and services to schools, youth clubs and religious groups.
Inpower	Inpower Academy's overall mission is to connect with young people and provide them with important life skills such as determination, resilience and self-belief to facilitate their own personal empowerment journey. They use mixed martial arts as a primary engagement vehicle.
Fitcap and Vision4All	Fitcap is a non-profit with a mission to provide children and adults with opportunities to learn, play and succeed within their communities. They run weekly and holiday sports and physical activity sessions.
Wolves Foundation	Wolves Foundation is the official charity of the Wolves football club. They deliver outreach projects with a variety of partners in Wolverhampton to motivate, educate and encourage children, young people and adults to unite with like-minded people in an inclusive environment and to change their lives for the better.
Birmingham City Football Club (BCFC)	BCFC is a registered charity that uses the power of sports and the brand of BCFC to deliver diverse and accessible programmes and activities to care for, inspire, educate and make a difference to their local people.
BURN	BURN specialises in delivering music workshops to help young artists develop their skills in music production and songwriting. They partner with other service providers in the community to improve the well-being and future prospects of young people, including community-based projects, career development initiatives, educational workshops and mentoring.
EYES	EYES is a grassroots charity organisation that engages young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. It supports young people at risk of losing their quality of life or potentially their lives from the negative gang culture and its influences.
Moat House Consortium	Moat House Consortium is a consortium formed to deliver the project consisting of three providers: Sky Blues, Empowr-U and GYM. Sky Blues in the Community is the official charity arm of Coventry City Football Club. Empowr-U is a not-for-profit organisation empowering local communities to provide better opportunities for

Provider name	Description
	children and young people. Guiding Young Minds (GYM) is a confidential service providing attitude and behaviour management for vulnerable children and young people.

Table 7: Provider and chaperone participant breakdown

Provider name	Number of routes	Location of routes	Provider interviews	Chaperone interviews	Chaperone survey	Case study focus group
Sport Birmingham	3	Birmingham	1	1	10	1
First Class Foundation	3	Birmingham	1	1	9	1*
BURN	2	Birmingham	1	1	5	-
Birmingham City Football Club	2	Walsall	1	1	4	-
Sport4Life	2	Sandwell	1	2	4	1
Inpower	2	Dudley	1	-	-	-
Fitcap and Vision4All	1 (1 terminated)	Solihull	1	1	5	-
Wolves Foundation	2	Wolverhampton	1	-	4	-
EYES	1	Wolverhampton	1	2	7	-
Moat House Consortium	1	Coventry	1	-	2	-
TOTAL	19	-	10	9	50	3

Focus group covered two case study routes/schools.

Chaperones interacted with school staff, pupils (generally aged 11–18 years old) and community members, such as business owners and staff in local shops. Due to the nature of the project, levels of interaction varied both across pupils and day-to-day. This causes significant challenges in estimating the number of people affected by the Step Together pilot. The WMVRP team roughly estimated that up to 18,000 pupils might have been exposed to Step Together (directly or indirectly) based on aggregating the number of pupils in schools along the routes. A significantly smaller number of pupils actively interacted with chaperones.

Routes were generally associated with one or two schools. This included 20 priority schools that fell directly on the route; for example, the route started outside the school gates. There were also at least eight periphery schools where at least some pupils were likely exposed to Step Together, but they were not actively part of the project. Table 8 summarises the characteristics of the schools that participated in the case studies, which included four focus groups with 17 pupils and three interviews with four school leaders. While Birmingham was clearly over-represented, the schools varied in terms of types, size and latest Ofsted ratings.

Table 8: School case studies breakdown

School ID	Local authority	School type	Age range	Gender	Ofsted rating	Size
School A	Birmingham	Academy	11–16	Mixed	Requires Improvement	985
School B	Birmingham	Academy	11–16	Mixed	Good	602
School C	Birmingham	Secondary	11–18	Mixed	Requires Improvement	1,190
School D	Sandwell	Academy Converter	11–18	Mixed	Good	1,017

Interviews with community stakeholders included one shopkeeper, two restaurant owners and one school police link – all associated with Birmingham routes.

3.2. Intervention feasibility

Adaptation to the UK context

Overall, Step Together retained the core objectives of the Chicago-based Safe Passage programme – specifically to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour along routes to and from schools, increase feelings of safety and improve school attendance. The general management structure was also largely replicated, including an organisation with a central oversight function that commissioned local community organisations to recruit, train and manage chaperones. In both, chaperones were not intended to have an enforcement role but instead to safely deter crime.

However, Step Together was not intended to be a direct replication of Safe Passage due to differences in the structures and resources in the UK, and specifically the West Midlands, relative to the US.

"It became very clear that where the Home Office was talking about replicating it in the West Mids, that that was not going to become possible. So, we started to think about actually, if we were funded to do this, how would we do it? When it became clear that we were not going to mobilise an army of volunteers, we started looking at the different options that we had […] We identified that models of chaperones that were also equipped to be youth workers – not necessarily formally recognised and trained as youth workers or working in institutions as youth workers – but people who were connected to community interest companies and very local youth activity was going to give us the best connection to the community. So, that was the model that was selected." – WMVRP delivery staff

This influenced decisions on which providers to commission and requirements for recruiting chaperones. In Chicago, chaperones included family members and local community members, whereas Step Together chaperones had to have work experience involving children

and young people, such as youth workers (including those with a focus on outreach and detached youth work), mentors, sports instructors, former social workers and school/college staff. Furthermore, it was considered key that providers and chaperones were based in the community and had local knowledge.

"We wanted to be a little bit more engaged with the kids that were experiencing problems and challenges, and we also didn't have that [city] block system [...] What that gave us was this strong ambition that we wanted the community to be a part of this if we could [...] But one of the big challenges that we have in the Midlands is the very many different communities that we have [as well as the] postcode gang situation and the high prevalence of youth violence that is semi-organised by others, that wasn't quite the same as what they were trying to protect the kids from in Chicago. So, we really needed the youth workers to know the kids and notice if something was different." – WMVRP delivery staff

Ultimately, this allowed Step Together to employ features of detached youth work, which involved: 1) more interaction with children and young people, such as signposting and outreach work, and 2) identification and de-escalation of incidents in a more active way, compared to the US Safe Passage model. The latter was a key divergence from Safe Passage, which is largely based on deterring crime rather than actively preventing or de-escalating it.

Several other adaptations were made to ensure the project was culturally appropriate. These included:

- Following consultation with the WMVRP, the name was changed to Step Together to minimise confusion with other initiatives and organisations in the UK under the name Safe Passage.

- Given key differences in city/town layouts, chaperones were given more flexibility to walk around their specific route compared to the Safe Passage model, where they tend to be stationed on specific street blocks.

"One thing that became very clear in those conversations was the predictability of the geographic layout in Chicago, the block system, for example." – WMVRP delivery staff

- There was also more flexibility in the resourcing model for Step Together, e.g. chaperones were not required to work every shift or every day, and they could also work on more than one route (if the provider was responsible for more than one route).

- There were some differences in the types of (potential) incidents the Step Together chaperones were trained and prepared to respond to, given differences between the US and UK, e.g. levels of gun vs knife crime.

As this was the first time the intervention was piloted in the UK, the delivery of Step Together also allowed for some flexibility and small adaptations and evolved over time. For example, some providers avoided the term 'chaperone'. Alternatives such as Youth Engagement Officer and Community Outreach Officer were preferred by providers and chaperones, and pupils tended to refer to chaperones using the provider's name (e.g. the MAD team) or based on their 'uniform' (e.g. the people in purple or orange tops/jackets).

Based on interviews with WMVRP staff, providers and chaperones and the fact that the pilot met its target of launching 18–20 routes, the evidence supports the feasibility of implementing Step Together.

Fidelity to the UK model Step Together

The following section examines the extent to which the project was delivered with fidelity to the UK model (as set out under 'Intervention').

Selection of routes and schools

A total of 20 routes were identified and launched. One route was terminated due to a breakdown in the relationship between the school and the provider, with the school no longer wishing to be involved in the pilot project. This was due to concerns about a chaperone messaging a young person without parental consent. Although the messages were in relation to supporting the young person, the incident raised an important lesson regarding the remit of chaperones and setting boundaries. In response, the provider received additional safeguarding training. Despite this, the pilot met its target of 18–20 routes, with 19 operational routes across all seven local authorities.

The selection of routes was largely systematic. This first involved using available crime data for the after-school period to indicate route locations. Then, to ensure routes were hyper-local, softer intelligence was sought from Neighbourhood Policing Units to identify key areas on the route that would be pertinent to include. The WMVRP presented these routes to schools. The final selection of routes often relied on school buy-in and identifying appropriate provider organisations. This made the process more complex and time-consuming than originally expected and partially contributed to the following:

- Changes to the number of routes expected for each local authority, with a larger number of routes in Birmingham and Wolverhampton and fewer in Coventry.

- More staggered launch timeframes than originally planned (from 6 October 2021 to 14 March 2022) though the WMVRP and providers interviewed generally saw this as beneficial because it provided early insights about delivery that could be integrated into later routes. Table 9 details the launch dates for each route.

The WMVRP, provider and chaperone participants saw value in the iterative and responsive approach to the selection of routes and schools and viewed the process as effective overall. They, as well as school and community participants, thought that the routes selected were appropriate, and they understood the rationale behind the selection. However, a small number of chaperones and pupils reflected that other areas would also benefit from Step Together, and possibly more in some cases where they perceived there to be higher levels of violence or anti-social behaviour. For example, pupils from one case study described how their community was mostly safe (before Step Together was delivered), while pupils from another case study identified other areas that they were surprised did not have Step Together, too.

As expected, the selected routes varied in terms of their length (ranging from 0.4km to 7.1km, with most between 1km and 3km – see Table 9) and surroundings. Most included hotspot areas where pupils congregate, for example on high streets, by bus stops or in local parks. When asked about the routes, interviewees across participant types reported that there were different challenges depending on the local context, including entrenched gang culture in the area, poorly lit streets, low deprivation, heavy traffic areas, busy high streets and rival schools in close proximity.

The map below (Figure 3) was developed by the WMVRP using data from three years (September 2019–July 2022) of police-recorded violence with injury, robbery and homicide offences (excluding domestic offences) that occurred after school (3–6pm) and involved victims aged 7–13 years old. The darker red one-kilometre squares indicate higher volumes of crime. The selected Step Together routes are in blue. Routes were selected based on available data and engagement from schools – which likely explains why routes may not align with areas with higher levels of crime.

Figure 3: Map of Step Together routes
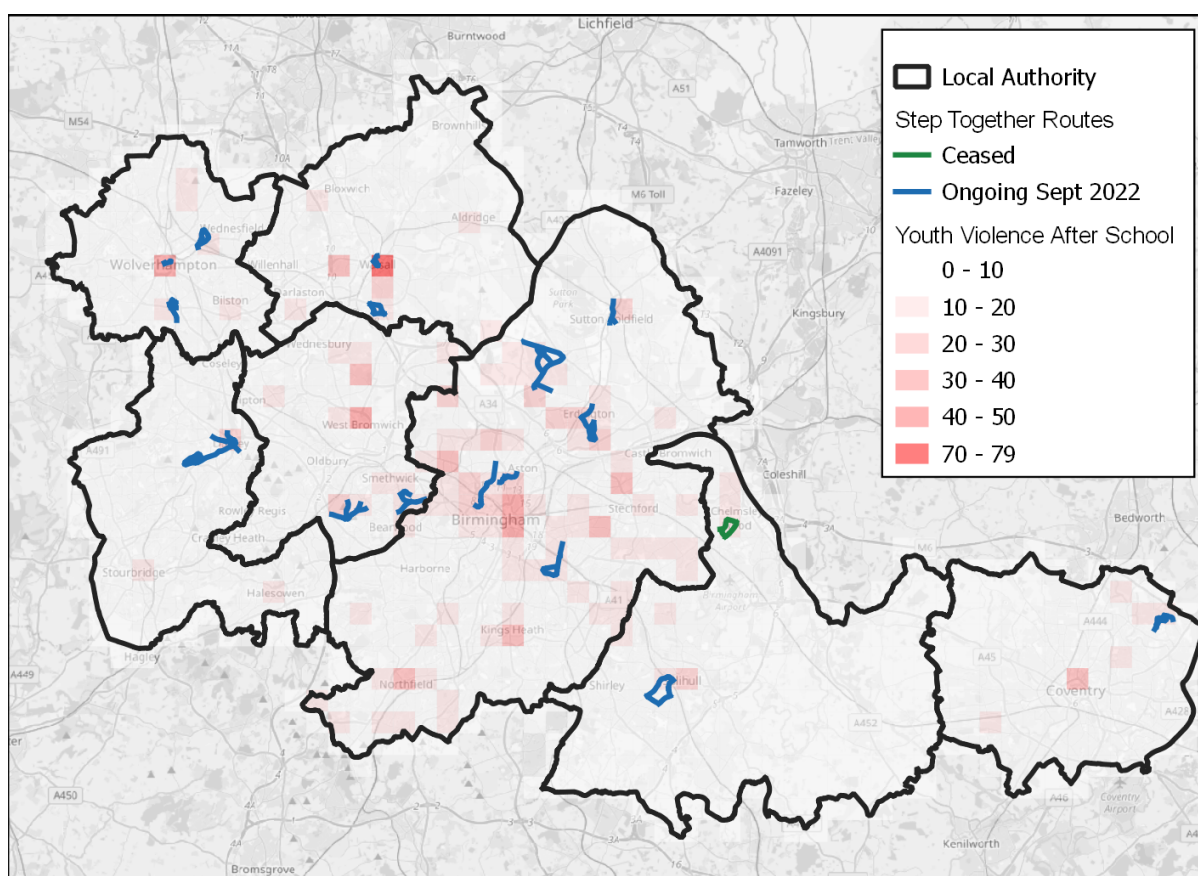
Source: Step Together Steering Group Update (August 2022)

Selection of providers

As planned, the WMVRP commissioned local community organisations with local knowledge and experience working with children and young people. Overall, WMVRP participants were positive about the selection of providers and that the tendering process yielded 10 appropriate organisations with the required skills and experience. Working with organisations with knowledge of their local area facilitated making small amendments to routes during the first couple of weeks when chaperones were on the routes (referred to as soft launches), e.g. to encompass previously unknown gathering spaces for young people.

*"So, the WMVRP [...] took on board what I said and let me amend the route due to [us] having that further knowledge." – **Provider organisation***

As detailed in Table 6, the scope of providers' wider work varied but shared a number of characteristics, such as experience using sports and physical activity to engage children and young people.

Table 9: Route launch dates

Local authority	Route name	Length	Provider	Launch Date
Birmingham	Lozells	1.14km	First Class Foundation	01/11/2021
	Jewellery Quarter	1.41km	First Class Foundation	26/11/2021
	Newtown	1.27km	First Class Foundation	13/12/2021
	Sparkbrook	3.07km	Sport Birmingham	22/11/2021
	Erdington High Street	0.75km	Sport Birmingham	13/12/2021
	Erdington	2.61km	Sport Birmingham	06/10/2021
	Sutton	1.29km	BURN	13/12/2021
	Kingstanding	7.14km	BURN	14/03/2022
Solihull	~~Chelmsley Wood (terminated)~~	~~2.41km~~	~~Fitcap and Vision4All~~	~~26/11/2021~~
	Tudor Grange	3.80km	Fitcap and Vision4All	13/12/2021
Dudley	St James	2.77km	Inpower	26/11/2021
	Kates Hill	4.00km	Inpower	13/12/2021
Wolverhampton	Blakenhall	1.90km	EYES	13/12/2021
	Town Centre	0.40km	Wolves Foundation	26/11/2021
	Heath Town	2.23km	Wolves Foundation	13/12/2021
Sandwell	Cape Hill	2.60km	Sport4Life	26/11/2021
	Oldbury	2.91km	Sport4Life	13/12/2021
Walsall	Palfrey	1.96km	Birmingham City Football Club	13/12/2021
	Walsall Town Centre	1.01km	Birmingham City Football Club	26/11/2021
Coventry	Wood End	2.48km	Moat House Consortium	28/02/2022

Recruitment and training of chaperones

Although there were extensive discussions between the WMVRP and providers to support project set-up, the process for recruiting chaperones was not formally specified by the WMVRP – for example, providers could develop their own criteria and job specifications. Despite this, recruitment appeared largely consistent across providers. Most providers adopted a mixed approach to identifying chaperones from within the organisation and supplementing this with external recruitment. The external recruitment process generally involved an application form, a formal interview and requirement checks, such as gaining DBS approval. The views of chaperones were also fairly consistent, with most chaperone survey respondents reporting that the application process had been very or fairly easy (75%, n=36) or neither easy nor difficult (22%, n=11). This may have been because nearly three in four were currently working with (62%, n=31) or had previously worked with (10%, n=5) the provider. Most chaperones found out about the role directly through the provider (84%, n=42). Using existing staff was seen to support a smoother transition into the role and the ability to mobilise more quickly – indeed, all survey respondents reported that the responsibilities were very or fairly clear.

Overall, interviewees agreed that chaperones had relevant skills and experience. Many chaperones shared qualities and capabilities (e.g. engaging with children and young people) but also came from varied backgrounds (e.g. length of their relevant experience and previous employment). For example, chaperones had previous roles as youth workers, mentors, sports instructors, social workers and school staff. Some had extensive training experience and qualifications, while others, especially those new to the provider, had less. Most chaperone

survey respondents (86%, n=43) reported that they attended training to prepare for the role, and almost all viewed the training as fairly (44%, n=22) or very (53%, n=27) effective in supporting them to fulfil their role as a chaperone. This included centralised training sessions facilitated by the WMVRP, such as training in MVP, ACES, trauma-informed practice and exploitation. However, these mostly took place after routes launched, and not all chaperones attended due to other work commitments during the day. Those unable to attend could book sessions via the WMVRP regional training menu.

This was linked to challenges raised by providers about the limited lead-in time for mobilising chaperone teams, which seemed to increase the risk of inconsistencies in some cases.

*"If we had more time, we could've recruited a little bit better, vetted a little bit better, trained everyone up to speed before starting the route." – **Provider organisation***

Similarly, some providers and chaperones noted that more lead-in time would have enabled earlier relationship-building with schools and communities.

Delivery, dosage and reach

Across participant groups, there was evidence from interviews, focus groups and survey responses that the pilot had been delivered largely as planned, such that the following critical ingredients were generally consistent:

- Chaperones were present on the specified routes Monday to Friday before and after school hours (typically 8–10am and 2:30–4:30pm). Most chaperones worked every day, which provided consistency for schools, pupils and communities.

- There were typically four to six chaperones working on each route per shift.

- Chaperones engaged pupils (generally aged 11–18 years old), school staff and community members on a regular basis.

- Chaperones made informed decisions on whether to safely prevent or de-escalate a (potential) incident or seek further support, e.g. from policing units.

Given the range of local authorities, routes, schools, providers and chaperones, some variation was unsurprising. For example, the staggered launch dates meant routes were operational for between 20 and 43 weeks. Therefore, schools, pupils and communities of routes that launched later had around half the overall intervention dosage compared to earlier routes, where dosage refers to the total number of hours chaperones are on the routes.

The intervention's reach also significantly varied, with some pupils engaged to a greater extent than other pupils, which also varied from day to day due to the nature of the intervention. This became further complicated when providers started delivering activities in

schools beyond the scope of Step Together or promoting their other programmes through outreach. For example, one provider, First Class Foundation, delivered additional mentoring in one of the schools and promoted its 'First Class Fridays', a weekly session for young people to take part in positive activities such as dance, media projects and games. These additional activities were separate from the core intervention specified for Step Together, but for pupils who participated in these additional activities, it was challenging for them to unpick where Step Together started and ended. While it was anticipated that Step Together would signpost and generate links with other local provisions, the blurring of what constituted Step Together versus other activities among pupils was unexpected. This adds a layer of complexity for evaluating the project as these additional activities could be contributing to the same outcomes of interest – unpicking this further was outside the scope of the IPE but would need to be considered in future research.

Chaperones tended to adhere to the specified routes in line with the model, but most survey respondents (78%, n=39) also reported going off the routes on some occasions. This was usually in response to observing pupils diverting to other routes to avoid the presence of chaperones or becoming aware of (potential) incidents taking place nearby. On a very small number of occasions, chaperones have walked or travelled by bus with pupils closer to their homes and off the route to ensure they got home safely.

Incidents

Most chaperone survey respondents (92%, n=46) reported handling at least one incident. Chaperones described incidents that varied in terms of severity, with the majority handling less severe incidents, such as pupils vaping or cases of bullying, to less frequent but more severe incidents, such as pupils involved in violence. One in three survey respondents reported incidents involving a knife crime, such as carrying a concealed knife or sharp instrument – highlighting the severity of some of the incidents taking place.

According to monitoring information provided by the WMVRP, providers reported three Level 1 incidents, three Level 2 incidents, and no Level 3 or 4 incidents. Examples for each incident level are detailed below:

- Level 1: fatality, abduction, allegation of physical assault, allegation of sexual assault, use of weapon or acid to cause harm, or supplying large quantities of drugs.
- Level 2: safeguarding allegation against staff member/volunteer, immediate risk of radicalisation or gang involvement (e.g. county lines) or self-harm requiring hospitalisation, possession of an offensive weapon, or possession of drugs with intent to supply.
- Level 3: staff sharing personal contact details with children, disclosure of harm about the risk of harm occurring outside of the project, or failure to carry out a DBS check.
- Level 4: risk of homelessness, risk of eating disorder, risk of self-harm, or mental health concerns (e.g. anxiety, depression).

All survey respondents reported that they felt fairly (52%, n=26) or very confident (48%, n=24) handling an incident on the route. Most also reported feeling safe when handling incidents, although some (15%, n=7) did not. Based on interviews, this was largely dependent on the types of incidents rather than insufficient training and preparation. Chaperones valued working in pairs for safety, which was a requirement in some providers but not specified in the Step Together model. Providers and chaperones were generally clear on the guidelines that the chaperones were there to de-escalate conflict and manage safeguarding concerns rather than enforcement.

*"They've [the WMVRP] made it very clear… the safeguarding protocols. We don't need to jump in the middle of a fight and break it up. We're not here to risk our lives. We are here to engage and observe […] they did plan a lot of time around sitting down with [providers and chaperones], having those one-to-one conversations and making the objectives [relating to incidents and safeguarding] quite clear." – **Chaperone***

Descriptions of how chaperones handled incidents were mostly consistent across providers. They typically assessed the situation and either safely intervened to de-escalate the issue (e.g. by trying to separate confronting individuals or speaking to pupils) or contacted 999 for more serious incidents, such as if there was an immediate threat to someone's life. Other processes included logging the case into an incident report; notifying the safeguarding lead within the provider organisation, the safeguarding lead within the school and the WMVRP; and holding internal debriefing sessions to assess the overall risk. These processes could then trigger any follow-up response required.

One potential issue flagged was that different providers and chaperones had slightly different definitions of what constituted an incident and whether to intervene, i.e. lower/higher thresholds of severity. The extent to which chaperones intervened in incidents varied depending on the context and sometimes the personality of the chaperone. For example, in one incident that involved a fight between pupils, a school leader thought that the chaperones had collectively handled it effectively but worried that one of the chaperones had potentially become more involved than necessary by physically trying to separate those involved.

*"Yes, certainly, in both instances, that was managed appropriately. The fight that happened, one of the Youth Workers probably intervened more than we really wanted him to, but that was his call. He did physically try to get in between the pupils, but yes, it was managed well and minimised as much as possible." – **School lead***

Overall, interviewees agreed that chaperones handled incidents appropriately and efficiently, and there was no evidence to suggest that chaperones missed high-risk incidents. The WMVRP were in close contact with the providers to discuss roles and responsibilities throughout the pilot. However, there was limited formal training before delivery started due to the timeframes for launching. Looking ahead, additional communications from the WMVRP

to providers and chaperones about the remit of chaperones could be made clearer, including set definitions for different types of incidents. For example, the WMVRP should consider incorporating additional written guidance and training ahead of delivery, such as clear descriptions of the chaperone role and responsibilities, types of incidents within and outside the scope of their role and recommended actions to take, and guidance on logging incidents consistently.

Responsiveness and quality

All interviewees agreed that there was a clear rationale for Step Together and viewed the intervention as an acceptable approach to improve the safety of pupils.

Relationships between chaperones and schools

The following approaches were taken to engage schools during set-up and delivery:

- The WMVRP set up MS Teams calls with schools to discuss the project.

- The WMVRP sent letters outlining the project to schools.

- Providers discussed the project with headteachers and senior leadership staff.

- Providers attended school assemblies.

- Chaperones met school staff informally at the school gates.

In most cases, these activities were positively received and reciprocated.[14] Some of the provider organisations already had established relationships with the schools due to working with them on other projects prior to Step Together. This was perceived as beneficial because it helped to mobilise Step Together more quickly and built on existing trust between providers and schools. Most chaperones and providers described how their relationships with schools developed over time as the project became more embedded and school staff experienced how the chaperones supported the school in terms of general pupil behaviour and reporting incidents.

*"I suppose my first visual experience was after school one day seeing them outside, but it was easy to realise quickly that they were experts with building relationships with people. I don't know if it's because they can relate to them, they're authentic, but pupils were keen to engage with them." – **School lead***

Chaperones typically had a direct contact within the school if they needed to report an incident and found this an effective point of contact to share intelligence about pupils and

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[14] There were some instances where schools opted out of the pilot.

potential challenges. Additionally, some of the providers developed more extensive partnerships with schools as a result of the additional activities they delivered within the school, such as mentoring sessions or sporting events, which sat outside the scope of the core Step Together model. These additional activities gave chaperones the opportunity to engage with pupils in a school setting and build stronger relationships.

*"The school relationship is absolutely amazing with most of the schools. We work in partnership with them, and we do it on a relationship basis where they will tell us certain things that happen in the area; if we know anything happens in the area… if we potentially feel like there's some risk, we will contact the school before anything happens so they can basically do what they need to do on their side." – **Chaperone***

*"Having communication with the school, knowing what issues and scenarios are arising in school. So therefore, when we turn up for the walk after school, we'll know if any issues are going to occur." – **Chaperone***

In a small number of cases, a key barrier was insufficient buy-in from the school's senior leadership team or key safeguarding leads within the school. Where this occurred, it impacted the relationships between the chaperones and school staff and had a negative effect on the project. For example, one provider organisation described the variation between schools along one of the routes, where most schools were very supportive and engaged in the project, compared to one school where the headteacher was not supportive of the project and seemed to perceive the chaperones as being an extension of the police. In this case, the lack of communication between the school and the chaperones meant that the school was not fully aware of the chaperones' role and information-sharing processes were not established. On the other hand, one school leader was disappointed by the drop off in communication from chaperones following the set-up period. Making regular communications between the WMVRP and provider organisations a consistent part of the core intervention to discuss progress or flag issues was considered key to maximising the impact of Step Together. Other key barriers to effective engagement between schools and chaperones were time constraints and stretched resources; for example, some school leads were unable to attend meetings with chaperones due to conflicting school commitments.

Relationships between chaperones and pupils

School leads and chaperones reported that it took some time to develop connections and trust with pupils as they initially questioned the chaperones' role and why they were there watching them. Pupils were less wary and started engaging more once chaperones introduced themselves and explained their role and as chaperones became a consistent feature for pupils' everyday experiences.

*"I honestly didn't think it changed a single thing [at first]. I thought it was kind of pointless, but I can see now, it has made a massive impact, and it has helped everyone a lot." – **Pupil***

Pupils described chaperones as being approachable, relatable and friendly, which supported relationship development. Pupils said they felt comfortable speaking to the chaperones, including about potential challenges on the routes.

*"They're really relatable. They're not that long away from experiencing it, so they're not much older than us, so they had the same path as we did." – **Pupil***

*"Say if you had a bad day, they're kind of there just to cheer you up. I see them as a positive icon for the community." – **Pupil***

*"A lot of high fives, talking to the pupils as they come out of school, building up positive relationships with conversation, asking how they are, if they've had a good day, that kind of friendly relationship which our pupils lap up." – **School lead***

Chaperones and pupils noted that these relationships strengthened over time, and school staff also perceived this to be the case. This resulted in some pupils confiding in chaperones, e.g. telling chaperones about potential incidents such as plans for a fight between young people but also disclosing information about their home life that could raise safeguarding concerns. Developing these relationships should be seen as a key mechanism for the intervention because it often meant that chaperones could actively work to prevent or mitigate potential incidents and work with school staff, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to support pupils when concerns were raised.

As noted above, some providers started working with schools to deliver mentoring or other support beyond Step Together, or they signposted pupils to their other services, such as sports activities. Some of the pupils interviewed also took part in these additional activities, which appeared to strengthen relationships further and have additional benefits (discussed further under unintended consequences).

*"I feel like I can talk to him about most stuff that's going on in school, outside of school, and he doesn't tell the teachers. He gives me the right kind of advice that I need. He helped me with my behaviour a lot. My behaviour calmed down a bit, and I get less detentions." – **Pupil***

Relationships between chaperones and communities

The degree to which the chaperones had built relationships within the community varied across routes. Where they were more established, chaperones had introduced themselves to community stakeholders and explained Step Together and the chaperone role. This included local businesses and staff, members of the public and other local services along the route, such as bus station staff, colleges, religious centres and the local police. This was primarily done while chaperones were on shifts, though some of the local providers developed some relationships as part of their other work, e.g. with a local community centre that the provider uses as a venue for their other activities. This was typically well-received, especially among business owners and shopkeepers who experienced extremely busy and sometimes

disruptive periods after school. For example, chaperones offered to help monitor pupils in the shops to ensure no issues occurred, including shoplifting and/or anti-social behaviour. Some chaperones used food outlets like chicken shops to engage pupils by buying them food and sitting down to learn about them.

*"The shops, they all know us now, we go in there every day, they've said how everything since we've been around, there's been less anti-social behaviour. Some of them have asked for our on-call number and stuff." – **Chaperone***

*"We just go and support them to make sure that young people are not stealing from the shops or anything like that, and just in general, not being a nuisance to businesses. So, for example, on the Friday when the fight was going to happen, it was going to happen outside the shop, and the shop was looking out the window worried about their business, but we ended up moving the situation away and handling it while it was away from the shop." – **Chaperone***

*"[The chaperones are] friendly, very friendly, approachable and caring." – **Community member – business owner***

There was also evidence that suggested missed opportunities to develop relationships in the communities, especially due to the speed at which routes were launched, and limited community engagement during the set-up stage. For example, some community members had only recently learnt about Step Together at the time of the case studies near the end of the school year.

The interview with a school police link also uncovered the benefits of having a rapport with chaperones. For example, the police representative reported that chaperones had informed them about key incidents where police presence is needed, which was perceived to enhance the police's ability to respond.

*"We've had calls after school from Step Together workers, saying, 'We're in the park, there are groups coming together, there's some disorder.' So, actually, that comes in, we can get there considerably quicker than otherwise. Not only that, but we've got reliable witnesses who are able to identify who was involved and support the school staff with that as well." – **Community member – police representative***

Additional facilitators and barriers to delivery

Facilitators

Interviews with providers, chaperones and school staff identified the following enabling factors:

- Providers were clear on the aims and objectives of the Step Together pilot project.

- Providers' knowledge of the local context was perceived to be a key enabler in mobilising the project quickly and effectively, e.g. having an understanding of where the 'hotspot' areas were on the routes.

- The consistency of having the same chaperones on the routes was perceived very positively by interviewees because it allowed chaperones to build rapport with pupils, school staff and community members.

- Most chaperones (82% or n=41) received ongoing support or supervision to help them in their role.

- The WMVRP established the Step Together Steering Group in early 2022 once all routes were operational, which met monthly and engaged a wider network of partner agencies, including Community Safety Managers from local councils. This group provided a sounding board when challenges arose and were forward-looking to inform decisions about the future delivery of Step Together.

- The WMVRP facilitated three Community of Learning events for providers and chaperones to share learning, which generated discussions about how to improve engagement with schools, pupils and communities. In interviews, chaperones and providers highlighted that these types of activities would be valuable to continue and expand to capture learning more systematically.

"[I would like to] better communicate with different providers of Step Together to highlight trends and safeguard better." – Chaperone

Barriers

The following barriers to delivery were identified by providers, chaperones and school staff:

- Many providers highlighted the timelines as particularly challenging, with tight turnaround times between the notification of the award and the set-up of the route. Providers described how routes had to be set up in a matter of weeks, which required rapid mobilisation to start the delivery. Interviewees noted that an ideal timeframe for set-up would have been a full half-term working with schools and providers.

- Providers and chaperones who were not local to the routes required additional time to develop local knowledge and build local networks.

- Some of the provider organisations who did not have existing relationships with schools in the area found it challenging to develop these relationships within the set-up phase and would have preferred more lead-in time to establish strong connections with the schools (and communities) prior to delivery on the routes.

- The split shift (i.e. working mornings and afternoons only) made the recruitment and retention of chaperones challenging. Some chaperones found this to work well and fit in between their other work commitments, such as running daytime sports activities, whereas other chaperones found the scheduling difficult to align with other work.

*"Because of the time of the day we have to chaperone and not enough hours, it makes it difficult for retention. We have to find other jobs to make up hours, which proves difficult at times. It would be great if this could be reviewed where there are more hours." – **Chaperone***

*"I suppose the challenge that we have is the split in shifts…the difficulty has been that you have maybe a 7:15 start in the morning because one of the schools starts at 7:40…So, we do a two-hour in the morning, so somebody can do 10 hours. But then, from 9:15, they might have to go home, they might travel some distance away, and they might have children. So, then the people that do the morning tend not to do the afternoon as well." – **Provider organisation***

3.3. Evidence of promise

As highlighted in the logic model, the Step Together project was developed based on a series of hypotheses whereby project activities are expected to lead to a series of outcomes and longer-term impacts, including:

- **Reduced crime** (knife crime, violence, robbery and theft) and **anti-social behaviour** (including harassment) on the identified routes and potentially adjoining routes/areas, leading to a long-term overall crime reduction in areas.
- **Increased feelings of safety** for pupils who use the routes to/from school and **improved local community environment and safety**, leading to improved community safety and cohesion in the long term.
- **Increased school attendance** in the participating school, leading to improved attainment among pupils in participating schools in the long term.

The pilot impact study led by LSE will investigate these outcomes using crime and education datasets where possible. The below section investigates the extent to which there is initial qualitative evidence that Step Together contributed to these outcomes. Given the scope of the evaluation and methods used, findings focus specifically on short- and medium-term outcomes and should be treated with caution, given the evidence was self-reported and lacks a counterfactual. The findings are based on survey responses and interviews with small samples, meaning the views and experiences may not be representative of other routes.

Perceived impact on crime and anti-social behaviour

As discussed above, Step Together covered routes in areas with different characteristics across the West Midlands, including both more affluent and deprived areas. Interviewees

from all participant groups emphasised that anti-social behaviour was common in the school and/or along the selected routes before Step Together, especially in busy areas such as town centres and around shops after school and into the evening. Some areas have also been affected by gang activity, county lines and other serious organised crime.

Interviewees from across all participant groups provided positive perception-based evidence that Step Together led to reduced incidents in areas where chaperones were present. Pupils perceived that there were fewer fights between pupils during the intervention period because chaperones were visible and could intervene. Pupils explained how chaperones calmed down situations that could lead to incidents, which included children and young people and adults.

"Because if anything happens, say if there was even a little discussion and everyone was circling around it, the [chaperones] would be there and watching over it, and they would be stopping it. They wouldn't just stand there and watch it like some other teachers do. They'd immediately break it up and speak to the person individually." **– Pupil**

According to the survey, 84% (n=42) of chaperones surveyed thought Step Together led to a reduction in youth-related violent crime rates in the area, and 72% (n=36) thought it led to a reduction in non-violent crime rates. Teachers interviewed also agreed that Step Together had a positive effect on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. For example, one teacher mentioned a decrease in the number of pupils being involved in criminal activity based on the police reports sent to the school.

"We'd expect 10 to a dozen [incidents] in a normal year (…). We'll often hear about it through members of the public ringing in, but we've had two incidents this year where we've been called out of school, so that is definitely reduced." **– School leader**

Community members interviewed as part of the case studies also perceived a decrease in incidents and problematic behaviour in and/or around their business. This included anti-social behaviour that had historically been disruptive for staff and other customers and issues around stealing. One business owner described how they had previously tried to limit pupils coming into their shop due to problematic behaviour, whereas they now have a positive relationship and pupils bring positive business.

"Over the years, we've seen a lot; [for example], some girls have to keep themselves in the toilet to not get into a fight and stuff. We've stopped with [allowing] the kids because it was too much for us as well and behaviour and stuff. But it's stopped. I said to [the chaperone], 'You're doing a great job because the kids are much, much well-behaved.' You can have them in. You can tell. Sometimes, it's just that listening and that friendship and even bringing the kids. It stops them from stealing as well […] I would say that [without Step Together] there probably would be more fights, and we probably would not want to interact with them." **– Community member – business owner**

Some of the pupils interviewed also described changes in their personal behaviour, particularly those who had developed stronger relationships with a chaperone(s). For example, chaperones often made an effort to speak personally with children and young people who were involved in (potential) incidents to listen to them, understand their side of the story and provide advice. Young people said they noticed differences in how they regulated their emotions and thought twice before responding with fighting or violence. They described chaperones as role models for how to handle situations they found difficult.

*"Before the chaperones came, I kind of used to have anger issues. Then, when talking to them and having them understand – like before going to violence – just talking it through and just understanding it all first, they've helped me with that." – **Pupil***

*"[Without chaperones], I'd have probably got kicked out by now because if they weren't here, I used to get into fights often, but then when they came, I kind of stopped it a little bit. I can't explain why, but it's not as bad as it used to be." – **Pupil***

*"I feel like I've gone less rude now. I know how to say things without actually saying it the way I want to say it, but how the teachers will actually listen to what I'm trying to say." – **Pupil***

These findings provided key insights on the mechanisms of change for Step Together – that is, how the activities led to the outcomes (as perceived by interviewees). To summarise, these include:

- Chaperones building relationships with children and young people such that they viewed chaperones as trusted adults with whom they could, or indeed should, share information about potential incidents.

- Equally, the strength of relationships between chaperones and school staff or community members strongly influences whether they share information about local issues or bubbling tensions, which could alert chaperones to potential incidents.

- Chaperones also actively worked with children and young people who were more likely to be involved in incidents to understand their circumstances, engage them in positive activities and offer advice. This appeared to rely on young people relating to chaperones and respecting them.

Perceived impact on feelings of safety

When asked how they felt when walking to and from school before Step Together, pupils from most case study areas described how they were often actively aware of their surroundings and avoided particular areas that made them uneasy or uncomfortable before Step Together.

*"The High Street is a little bit of a crazy place, I can't lie. It's not really too safe, especially if you are by yourself… It does make me like just keeping my head down, just making sure nobody sees me and just carry on walking." - **Pupil***

However, in one case study area, pupils said their community was generally a safe place most of the time, and more of the issues were in or around the school.

*"I'd say it's quite a friendly neighbourhood... There are not that many alleyways. It's just one straight direction to school, so yes, I think it's alright… There's nothing much going on, so I feel safe to walk to school." - **Pupil***

When asked about what it was like having the chaperones around, pupils reported feeling safer and more confident walking in the area. This appeared to be for several reasons. First, as described above, interviewees perceived that chaperones had prevented or stopped fights and improved behaviour among pupils, especially in crowded places.

Second, pupils explained how chaperones positioned themselves in places where pupils might otherwise hesitate to go because they can be hotspots for crime and other issues. Similarly, they perceived the presence of chaperones as deterring people who were potentially there to intimidate or negatively influence pupils. School leaders noted that this sometimes included slightly older young people who were involved in gang activity.

*"Before [Step Together], you just don't know who's going to come around the corner. You don't know who's going to be there, or you just pray that the bus comes. Nowadays, you're just like, 'Okay, [the chaperones] are here. We're safe. We're all good.'" – **Pupil***

*"Without chaperones, I feel like the route… it would be more cautious. You can't really just be looking down all of the time. You have to look up." – **Pupil***

Third, both pupils and school leaders noted that chaperones helped improve safety relating to road traffic around the school and along the route and with transport home. These issues were not initially identified during the project design and are an example of how there was flexibility in the model to adapt and flex the focus while retaining the core objective of keeping pupils safe. In one case study area, there was a particular issue with cars driving quickly near the school, so chaperones helped pupils safely cross the street. Chaperones also helped flag buses down due to issues with buses not stopping, often due to previous issues with problematic behaviour of pupils. They also helped pupils when they lost their bus passes to ensure they got home safely.

Chaperones surveyed and interviewed perceived these changes in feelings of safety among pupils as well. A total of 90% (n=45) of chaperones surveyed thought the project improved feelings of safety for pupils on school routes and around schools. In terms of community safety, more generally, 88% (n=44) of chaperones thought Step Together improved the community environment and safety, and 82% (n=41) believed that wider community

members felt safer. During one of the Community of Learning events observed, providers and chaperones discussed the relationships they developed with community members and the feedback they received, suggesting that they felt safer in their presence. They perceived this to be particularly impactful for elderly members of the community.

Several community members interviewed agreed that Step Together would increase safety for young people and the community and have a positive impact on the area. One pupil noted that the chaperones encouraged them not to litter and thought the local environment was better as a result. This is linked to the expectation that Step Together could have wider benefits for the community to make it feel like a safer place to be.

Perceived impact on school attendance

Interview findings indicated that the project has positively impacted pupils' school experiences. Some pupils reported enjoying school more since chaperones started being present in their area.

"I feel like [the chaperones] have really changed my opinion on this school. Before, I didn't like coming here, but since [the chaperones] have come, I have started to enjoy school more." – **Pupil**

"I think having the [chaperones] has really changed our school as a whole… since they've come, school is slowly starting to become more an educational place, where I feel like I'm learning a lot more. My head isn't elsewhere." - **Pupil**

Chaperones were less confident about the impact of the project on school attendance, with only 34% of them reporting it led to increased attendance. Furthermore, school leaders interviewed were sceptical about whether Step Together had improved attendance because their attendance rates were already fairly high.

Unintended consequences

There was early qualitative evidence of two potential outcomes not captured in the original logic model. This included perceptions among interviewees that Step Together:

- **Improved well-being among pupils**: Multiple pupils interviewed described how the chaperones had positively affected their well-being. These comments were unprompted though unsurprising, given links to feelings of safety. However, pupils often linked these changes to the fact that chaperones consistently checked in with them rather than as a result of feeling safer. Improvements in well-being were noted by those who engaged with chaperones on a regular basis and were strongest for those who were also involved in the additional activities delivered by providers, such as mentoring or sports activities.

"We talk about school, what we learnt, generally, 'How are you?' Like, that little question could mean so much to someone, especially if they had something going on at home or school. It kind of takes your mind off things." – Pupil

"I think they've made a difference to some people's mental health. Sometimes, you come out of school, you've had a bad day, or you're just tired that day, and sometimes just having a one-to-one conversation with them can just uplift your day." – Pupil

- **Improved multi-agency responses to youth crime and violence**: The original logic model referenced the network of partners working together to support Step Together but did not specify an outcome resulting from this activity. It was clear from interviews with the WMVRP, providers, chaperones and school leaders that Step Together had generated and strengthened links between community organisations (i.e. the providers), schools, police and other local services engaged. Coming together to deliver and oversee Step Together appeared to benefit the strategic planning and decision making around responding to youth crime and violence and keeping children and young people safe in the West Midlands. This is closely linked to findings relating to a wider interest in Step Together and plans for future delivery, as discussed below.

Evidence of demand and plans for future delivery

Throughout the pilot, the WMVRP was contacted by other schools in the West Midlands, expressing an interest in the Step Together programme for their local area. The WMVRP recorded this interest as evidence of demand and intended to review these schools against other evidence of need based on crime data.

Near the end of the school year, the WMVRP also began discussions with Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), West Midlands Police and providers to extend and separately fund a version of Step Together (Step Together Commonwealth Games) outside of the academic year for the Commonwealth Games that took place in Birmingham between 28 July and 4 August 2022. The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership secured funding to cover Birmingham, while the WMVRP budget covered areas outside of Birmingham.

Looking further ahead, the SAFE Taskforce agreed to fund all eight routes within Birmingham during the 2022/23 academic year, and the Steering Group supported a proposal for the WMVRP Core Grant to fund the remaining eleven routes up until the end of March 2023. The WMVRP sought additional funding from the Home Office to ensure continuation of delivery until the end of the school year, i.e. April to July 2023.

The WMVRP also proposed modifying the delivery model for 2022/23 so that routes are only chaperoned during the after-school period rather than both before and after school. This was proposed based on discussions between the WMVRP and providers that indicated that most incidents took place after school. It would also allow longer shifts during lighter summer

nights when more people stayed out and help mitigate issues with split shifts for chaperones. The Steering Group agreed to this change, and while this decision was not informed by the evaluation findings, which were not yet available, the evaluation team provided early qualitative evidence that supported the change, given pupils were less likely to travel straight home after school and tended to visit shops or parks. However, given that this represents a change to the model, future evaluation should examine its appropriateness and whether it has any implications on the intended outcomes.

3.4. Logic model development

Delivery on the ground largely reflected the logic model and Theory of Change developed for the pilot. However, in line with the findings above, the following changes would better reflect the delivery of Step Together on the ground:

- Greater emphasis on multi-agency working and strengthened relationships between schools, community organisations, police and other statutory services.

- Better recognition that some routes are associated with transport hubs/links rather than specifically with schools.

- Inclusion of improved well-being and mental health among pupils as an outcome, recognising that a key mechanism of change is the trusted relationship developed between pupil and chaperone.

Furthermore, while the IPE provided some early evidence of promise against the outcomes, future impact evaluations should seek to gather more robust evidence of the causal pathways and outcomes. At present, the qualitative evidence on perceived outcomes cannot sufficiently claim causal links between the Step Together activities and outcomes observed due to the lack of a counterfactual assessing what would have happened in its absence. In addition, there were multiple methodological limitations, meaning that the findings may not be representative across all routes.

4. Evaluation of feasibility and readiness for trial

In line with research objective 4, the IPE included a feasibility assessment for a future impact evaluation, particularly options for a randomised controlled trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental design (QED). This assessment should be considered alongside the findings from the pilot study delivered by LSE, which will provide further insights into the feasibility of a future impact evaluation.

This section includes overviews of:

- key outcomes of interest and data collection options, including anticipated challenges that need to be overcome;

- participant selection, given that exposure to the intervention varies across pupils in a school;

- potential impact evaluation designs (RCT and QED);

- contamination risks;

- route eligibility and selection;

- sample size estimates;

- process evaluation questions to sit alongside an impact evaluation; and

- study protocol development.

4.1. Outcomes for measurement

The primary outcome for Step Together is **reduced crime** along routes, which must be measured at an *area level*. Crime outcomes can be measured through existing secondary datasets (e.g. Police National Computer data, Police Recorded Crime data).

There are several secondary outcomes, all of which would most likely be measured at an *individual level*. This includes:

- **Improved feelings of safety among pupils**: This could be measured through surveys administered to pupils in intervention and comparison schools.

- **Improved mental health and well-being among pupils**: This could be measured using a standardised well-being scale administered to pupils in intervention and comparison schools (built into the survey above).

- **Improved school attendance**: This could be measured based on the number of absences during the intervention period, available from schools or the DfE with appropriate Data Sharing Agreements in place.

Outcome data would ideally be collected both before and after the intervention is delivered to enhance analyses, including a basic descriptive analysis of change over time (pre/post designs). This has implications for the timing of baseline and post-intervention surveys, which are discussed further below.

Primary data collection

The secondary outcomes of interest on feelings of safety and mental health among pupils are not available through existing datasets, meaning primary data collection will be required to measure these outcomes (regardless of whether the impact evaluation design is an RCT or QED). Surveys of pupils administered within schools would overcome the logistical challenges of collecting data along routes, for example around obtaining parental consent.

1. **Maximising response rates**: Where surveys are used as a source of data, the successful assessment of the outcome will depend on maximising response rates. As such, primary data collection must be scoped and planned carefully, incorporating learning from the pilot study. Although the pilot study included an online survey for pupils in intervention schools, this was removed from the design due to low response rates. Looking ahead, greater investment in primary data collection, both in terms of resourcing and budget, will be necessary to overcome such challenges. This would require working closely with schools to devise strategies to maximise engagement, which will especially be the case for collecting data from comparison schools not receiving the intervention.

   Several recommendations include:

   a. Working with specialist recruiters to recruit schools to take part in the surveys, particularly for comparison schools not receiving the intervention.

   b. Establishing relationships with schools as early as possible, including a designated, named contact from the evaluation team to ensure clarity on the research requirements. This would ideally be 10–12 weeks before delivery begins to ensure sufficient time to sequence activities, such as brokering relationships with schools, explaining the research, gathering parental/guardian consent and administering a baseline survey before the intervention begins.[15] If the start of delivery is intended to coincide with the

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[15] This would also need to account for randomisation if the study was an RCT.

start of the academic year, the evaluation team should aim to start discussions with schools about data collection during the previous summer term. As such, eligible schools and routes would ideally be identified and selected by the end of the previous spring term (e.g. April) to allow planning during the summer term.

c. Using validated scales for robust assessment of outcomes balanced with keeping surveys short and young-person friendly.

d. Visiting schools to administer surveys in order to minimise the burden on school staff and ensure consistency in how and when surveys are administered.

Comparison schools not receiving the intervention during the academic year may require an additional incentive to participate in evaluation and data collection activities. One option is to offer the intervention to them in the future (i.e. waitlist), for example the following academic year. However, this may not be possible within the funding scope and timeframes. Instead, a financial incentive should be considered and discussed with prospective schools linked to eligible routes. A school-level incentive of £100–200 would generally be sufficient, although this should be further scoped during the design stage.

2. **Aligning delivery and evaluation timeframes**: It is critical that baseline data are collected before the intervention begins and that data collection occurs at the same time points for both treatment and comparison groups. This requires early planning to align delivery and evaluation timeframes, e.g. building in time to obtain consent from parents/guardians for pupils to participate in the evaluation. Assuming schools are recruited ahead of the academic year, a minimum of four to six weeks would be necessary at the start of the term before the intervention starts (i.e. before chaperones are placed along the routes) to gain parental/guardian consent and collect baseline measures.[16]

Administrative data

Reduced absenteeism should be measured using individual-level data from the National Pupil Database (Absences dataset), available from the DfE or directly from schools. Future impact evaluations focusing on school-level outcomes should allow sufficient time to request access to the administrative data, which are accessed through the ONS Secure Research

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[16] Ideally, baseline measures would be collected prior to randomisation to minimise bias at this stage of measurement. However, given the time needed to commission providers, train and prepare chaperones, it is likely that baseline data collection will need to occur after randomisation.

Environment. Furthermore, sufficient time should be allowed to negotiate Data Sharing Agreements with schools or local authorities, who should provide Unique Pupil Numbers (UPN) to identify treated pupils (and control pupils if an RCT or matched QED approach is adopted) in the administrative data. The process can often take several months, so evaluators should anticipate approximately at least six months before they can access these data.

Alternatively, absenteeism could be measured at the area level (i.e. comparing absenteeism from schools in treated and untreated areas). This approach would be less precise but could overcome any challenges in accessing individual-level data.

Furthermore, any future impact evaluation will need to overcome, as far as possible, challenges with data quality and levels of granularity available through secondary datasets.

4.2. Participants

Ultimately, the target population includes pupils who use a Step Together route at any point during the intervention period. However, only a proportion of pupils will regularly walk along the selected routes to/from school and therefore have higher exposure to the intervention with more potential for it to generate an impact (if one exists). Other pupils may not use the routes on a regular basis but could be exposed on occasion, for example walking to a friend's house or to a local shop. Information about which pupils walk the routes, how and when is neither readily available nor easily attained – this should be scoped further to provide information about the intensity of exposure to the intervention. One option would be to incorporate questions in the surveys as a proxy measure for levels of exposure and engagement with chaperones.

Furthermore, activities during the pilot have often extended beyond chaperoning the routes and into schools. For example, chaperones have presented at assemblies, provided mentoring, joined lunchtimes and offered after-in-school/out-of-hours activities – though these mostly sit outside the scope of Step Together. As mentioned above, the endline survey could seek to capture pupil involvement in these activities to test whether participation in any additional activities delivered in parallel contributes to the outcomes of interest. Alternatively, evaluators could work with providers and schools to track attendance at other activities, although this could introduce challenges in matching pupils to outcome data.

It is therefore recommended to collect outcome measures from the wider population of pupils in schools. However, it is important to flag that this could potentially dilute the effect if it is not possible to differentiate different levels of exposure and engagement, which could reduce the chances of detecting an effect.

4.3. Potential impact evaluation designs

Randomised controlled trial (RCT)

One of the initial decisions for an RCT should be agreeing on the unit of randomisation. In the case of Step Together, the three options are assessed below:

- **Individual**: As a community-based intervention, Step Together targets areas (defined by the routes selected) and groups of pupils (defined by the schools along those routes). It is area- and school-wide and therefore does not target particular pupils. As such, it is not appropriate to randomise at the individual level like a traditional RCT. Doing so would lead to significant contamination within the study, i.e. pupils randomised to the control group would very likely be exposed to the intervention (e.g. treatment and control pupils from the same school are likely to walk the same routes, or treatment and control pupils who are friends may walk similar routes even if they attend different schools).

    Instead, a cluster RCT can be used to randomise and allocate groups to either treatment or control arms. Two options include clustering based on schools or routes.

- **School**: Schools are an obvious unit for clustering pupils. However, for Step Together, each route can be associated with one or more schools. If randomisation occurs at the school level, it is possible that one school along the route is allocated to the treatment group while the other is allocated to the control group. Given that the control school is also positioned along the route where the intervention occurs, there would be significant contamination as pupils in the control school would walk the same route as pupils in the treatment school and also be exposed to and interact with chaperones.

- **Route**: To account for the above, we recommend randomising routes, i.e. Step Together is delivered along routes randomly allocated to the treatment group but not routes allocated to the control group. Schools associated with the routes would therefore be designated as intervention or control schools. There is still a risk of contamination when randomising at the route level. Some routes may be in neighbouring areas, and therefore pupils in control areas/schools could be exposed to the intervention, or pupils may even go out of their way to use an intervention route if it is nearby and perceived to be safer. For example, some routes in the current pilot were segmented given their length/scale (i.e. in the Lozells area), so this would need to be considered when undertaking randomisation, e.g. by randomising groups of routes that are sufficiently distant from each other.

Quasi-experimental design (QED)

There are multiple potential options for employing a QED, including using Propensity Score Matching, Difference in Difference and Regression Discontinuity Designs. At a minimum, these could be employed, relying specifically on secondary datasets. This would utilise existing datasets to compare outcomes for schools/areas where Step Together is delivered or not. This provides a wide pool of potential comparators that can be matched to develop the most similar comparator group. For example, an RDD could exploit the eligibility criteria to identify schools/routes that also met these or fell just below the required threshold. However, this would significantly limit the outcomes that could be measured in crime and education statistics. As such, the impact evaluation would not be able to assess the impact of Step Together on feelings of safety, well-being or other outcomes.

Using a design that involves primary data collection would enable the measurement of outcomes that are not available in secondary datasets. However, there are challenges in conducting research with control schools, as outlined above, which would need to be considered. One option would be to sample a smaller selection of intervention and comparator schools to conduct primary data collection while employing QED methods with a larger sample available in datasets.

4.4. Avoiding contamination

As referenced above, the strength of trial results will be diminished to the degree that pupils in the control group can access the intervention. The extent to which this can be minimised through the design will need to be explored. However, there may be contamination risks that cannot be controlled within the design of the evaluation, e.g. if pupils in the control group learn about the intervention and that there are safer routes to use and begin using these. While selecting routes that are sufficiently distant from each other might mitigate this, it is also recommended that survey questions are used to determine the extent of contamination.

4.5. Route eligibility and selection

Routes and schools currently involved in the pilot should not be included in any subsequent RCT because they have already received the intervention. The intervention may have already had some impact on pilot areas meaning that baseline and post-intervention outcomes for an RCT could be better than they otherwise would have been, which could reduce the observable effect.

Furthermore, the evidence in this report points to promising evidence to suggest Step Together is having a positive impact. If so, there could be ethical concerns about taking away an intervention that shows benefits for children and young people (i.e. which would happen if they were allocated to the control group).

As such, it would be necessary to identify and select a new set of routes/schools for any future RCT. This presents two key challenges if future impact evaluation takes place in the West Midlands:

- The pilot routes were selected based on being areas with the highest need. This could affect the number of eligible routes for an RCT and potentially be a barrier to meeting the required sample size. In the first instance, the WMVRP should review the process for selecting routes and current crime data to identify the volume of additional eligible routes.

- Currently, there are plans to continue delivering Step Together in the pilot areas, which might warrant including the pilot areas as part of a QED study instead of or in addition to an RCT.

The eligibility criteria for selecting routes must be clearly set out and followed to minimise differences in key observable characteristics, e.g. baseline levels of local crime. If successful, the randomisation process should balance all other observable and unobservable differences between treatment and control routes, which could influence the outcomes of interest (e.g. resident population, resident youth population and number of schools within the routes). Balance tests after randomisation can be conducted to verify that differences in observable characteristics between treatment and control routes are small and/or not statistically significant. This will provide a falsification test for whether unobservable characteristics are also balanced.

On the other hand, existing routes would be eligible if employing a QED.

4.6. Sample size estimate and power calculations

A robust statistical analysis relies on the availability of large enough sample sizes to identify impacts. Small sample sizes decrease the statistical power of the estimates, i.e. where the estimates found may lead to the conclusion that the intervention had no effect, even if there has been. Determining what sample sizes are needed to obtain estimates with sufficient power depends on the magnitude of the effect we aim to detect, the measurement level of the outcome impact variable, Types I and II error rates and the direction of the test, some technical inputs, and the design of the allocation to the trial arm (individual or cluster). In general, larger samples have more potential to detect even small impact effects, other things being equal.

It can be challenging to assign, in advance, an anticipated impact effect size for an outcome to be measured. However, it is this minimum detectable effect (MDE) impact that is used to decide the success of the intervention, and any impact smaller than this is deemed too small to be relevant. In some studies, it is possible to use cost–benefit forecasts to calculate what minimum impact effect size is required to make an intervention cost effective. Consequently,

if the intervention meets, or exceeds, this minimum impact threshold, the intervention is deemed successful. In such cases, the MDE can be set in advance, and the required sample size to detect this effect can then be calculated. Alternatively, it is possible to assess what level of MDE is detectable with a given sample size. If both the sample size and the MDE are unknown, it may be helpful to explore the sensitivity of the design to variations in both these parameters and to conduct desk research of effects found in existing literature.

As a cluster design, it is also necessary to account for similarity among pupils within schools, which often results in a net loss of power and therefore requires larger sample sizes. This is most efficiently done by increasing the number of clusters (i.e. routes/schools) rather than increasing the number of pupils within a cluster. In addition to the cluster size and the number of clusters, this calculation depends on the intracluster correlation (ICC) coefficient, or ρ (rho), which compares the within-group variance with the between-group variance. In other words, it is a measure of how similar people are to each other within a cluster group relative to their similarity to others in general, in terms of being exposed to crime.

Together, this information is used to calculate the effective sample size (ESS) and power in a clustered design.

It is also important to align the statistical power analysis for sample size/MDE calculation with the proposed statistical analysis. For example, continuous scales use standard regression models, proportions use logistic regression models and counts/rates use a Poisson model. Cluster designs may require the multilevel structure to be accounted for in the analysis using a multilevel regression framework.

In the absence of full knowledge of the input parameters, only illustrative sample size requirements can be offered here. It is very important to be aware that these estimated sample sizes are very likely to change as better input information is received. However, using the PowerUp[17] tool for a two-level cluster design with α = 0.05 (Type I error, with 2-tailed test) and β = 0.2 (Type II error) and an assumed ρ = 0.1 (ICC), we have varied the number of schools, the number of pupils in each school and the proportion of schools allocated to the treatment. We have also considered each of the variants with and without a baseline covariate adjustment. The availability of a school-level measure of the outcome prior to the intervention is likely to correlate with the outcome and can act to increase statistical power. Therefore, this measure should be included when it is available.

In the following examples, we have assumed the outcome is either a continuous measure or a proportion, e.g. the proportion of pupils experiencing an incident. With 50 schools available, no baseline covariate adjustment, full response from around 1,000 pupils per secondary

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[17] https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1265&context=gse_pubs

school and a 50:50 allocation to the trial arm, a minimum detectable effect size (MDES) of 0.26 is achieved. Translating the MDES into a more readily interpretable effect requires knowledge of the standard deviation of the outcome. For the purposes of illustration, assuming a baseline proportion of 0.19 incidents, we would need the treatment to reduce the incidents to a proportion of 0.9 or lower to observe an effect. Assuming a 20% response rate of pupils has a negligible effect on the MDES and MDE. If we were to add a baseline covariate accounting for 20% of the outcome variance, the MDES would be reduced to 0.23 and the MDE to 0.9. Increasing the number of schools to 160 would reduce the MDES substantially to around 0.142, with a corresponding MDE of 0.06. Decreasing the allocation from 50:50 to 25:75 treatment to control (i.e. 40 schools in the treatment) would not have a major detrimental effect on the MDES and would translate to an MDE of around 0.6. Adding a baseline covariate could reduce the MDES further, if only by a small amount, even with a 20% response rate.

In summary, assuming a 20% response rate from pupils and the availability of 160 schools, with 40 in the treatment group and a conservative baseline covariate effect, we could achieve an MDES of 0.15, which would require a treatment effect reduction of six percentage points, assuming a 19% control group incident percentage.

The PowerUp tool provides us with an approximation to calculate sample sizes in the absence of full knowledge of the data. However, to do so, we have conceptualised the outcome as a proportion, which ignores the potential for people to record multiple incidents in the observation period of the study. We do not have access to data that show the actual number of events that are experienced. With such data, we would consider a Poisson model and calculate sample size to detect an impact on the rate of incidents. However, we anticipate that PowerUp provides a reasonable first approximation to required sample sizes.

4.7. Process evaluation

In line with best practice, any future impact evaluation should be accompanied by a further process evaluation to provide insights about how and why an intervention worked (or did not work). This is particularly important in the context of potentially considering any future scaling up or roll-out of the programme elsewhere. Key questions that the process evaluation should focus on include:

- To what extent is the intervention delivered as intended?

- To what extent are the key stakeholders engaged in the process, including schools, providers and wider stakeholders?

- Is the intervention reaching the intended population? How does this differ across pupils?

- To what extent do pupils and other community members engage with the intervention?

- How does the intervention vary across routes/schools to accommodate for local context?

- What facilitates implementation? What are the barriers?

- What are the lessons learnt from scaling up the programme that can inform future roll-out?

4.8. Study protocol

A study protocol will need to be developed to set out and monitor each step of any future evaluation, including approaches for recruitment and enrolment, as well as a defined time period for the trial. For a cluster design approach (i.e. routes, as opposed to recruiting individual pupils into the trial), recruitment activity, enrolment into the study and data collection will be multi-levelled. For example, initial recruitment will occur at the school level, but where data are collected directly from pupils, additional layers of recruitment will be necessary, including obtaining both parental and pupil consent.

If an RCT is employed, an appropriate protocol for randomisation and the allocation procedure (i.e. how routes are to be randomly allocated) will also need to be agreed upon. The size of each cluster is an important factor here, as there would need to be some level of control over the balance of numbers in the treatment and control groups. Furthermore, ongoing monitoring of the 'balance' of the treatment and control groups will be needed to provide assurance that the protocol is being implemented effectively.

In addition, the study protocol should consider issues such as:

- **Non-response bias:** Regardless of the effectiveness of the strategies employed to maximise response rates, there will be a risk of differential attrition across the treatment and control groups. This could lead to bias in the estimated impacts if non-response is associated with unobservable characteristics that also influence the outcomes of interest (e.g. if pupils who are less self-confident are also less likely to participate in the trial). Analytical methods, to an extent, can correct for this possibility (e.g. through the application of inverse probability weighting schemes).

- **External validity:** It will also be important to consider the external validity of the results. The participants in the trial may differ in systematic ways from the general population. As a consequence, scaling up the intervention to the wider population may not lead to similar results as the ones observed in the trial. There may be

merit in comparing the characteristics of trial participants to the known characteristics of the population to determine where these differences lie.

- **Displacement effects:** The intervention may have the scope to generate displacement effects, e.g. the presence of chaperones on one route can lead to the displacement of crime onto a nearby untreated route. To account for displacement effects, one should be able to quantify the extent to which they occur, to disentangle how much of the observed reduction of crime (if any) is due to the intervention and how much is compensated by an increase in crime along other routes. While this is challenging, the results of the pilot evaluation could provide an indication of displacement effects in the areas where the intervention has already been running to determine the likelihood of this. The QED study of the Safe Passage programme in Chicago provides an example of how this could form part of the design.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility

Overall, the findings supported the feasibility of implementing Step Together. In line with the success criteria, there was evidence that the project successfully:

- **Launched the target number of 18–20 routes**: A total of 20 routes were launched, but one was terminated partway through delivery. Timeframes for launching routes were more staggered than expected, mostly due to resourcing and capacity challenges.

- **Commissioned providers and chaperones with the appropriate resources and right skills to fulfil their role**: Evidence supported the decision to adapt the US model, commission local organisations as providers and recruit youth workers for chaperones. Providers had a range of relevant policies, training and existing staff to support the delivery of Step Together, in addition to their knowledge of the local areas and communities. Chaperones had relevant previous experience working with children and young people (e.g. youth workers and mentors) and reported being clear and confident in fulfilling their role.

- **Delivered activities in line with the logic model, consistently across routes/schools**: All activities specified in the logic model were delivered. At a high level, activities were consistent across providers, e.g. chaperones were present on routes twice a day. However, the findings unsurprisingly included variation across different providers and chaperones in their exact approaches. For example, communications with schools could have been more consistent, such as monthly face-to-face reflection meetings or weekly check-ins. Also, the delivery of training took place on a more ad hoc basis than originally expected.

- **Engaged pupils and communities who perceived Step Together positively**: There was ample evidence that chaperones interacted with pupils, although it was not possible to estimate the number of students engaged. Pupils shared positive views and experiences regarding Step Together and chaperones. Evidence on community engagement was more mixed. In the first instance, chaperones appeared to focus attention on pupils and schools, so engaging the community was only starting to increase near the end of the pilot period.

- **Resulted in early evidence of its intended outcomes**: Qualitative views about the intended outcomes showed promising evidence that Step Together was having the desired effects. However, the IPE findings on outcomes should be considered with caution, given the limitations of the study. The pilot impact study led by LSE will provide further findings using crime and education datasets to assess outcomes.

The table below provides a summary of findings against the research objectives set out for this study.

Table 10: Summary of IPE findings

Research aims	Finding
Review the adaptation of the US model (Safe Passages) required for the UK context and population and whether further adaptation is required.	• The Safe Passage programme does not have an explicit Theory of Change and has not been formally manualised. However, the UK adaptation, Step Together, retained the core objectives and structures of the US model, i.e. placing adults on school routes to deter crime and violence. • Step Together was not intended to be a direct replication of Safe Passage, as there was consensus among the Home Office, YEF and WMVRP that adaptations were necessary before delivery began. As this was the first time the intervention was piloted in the UK, the delivery of Step Together also allowed for some flexibility and small adaptations and evolved over time. • The name was changed to Step Together to minimise confusion with other initiatives and organisations in the UK under the name Safe Passage. • While the Safe Passage model predominantly worked with neighbourhood residents, including parents and grandparents of pupils or other community members, the Step Together project commissioned youth-focused community organisations that employed chaperones with experience working with children and young people, e.g. youth workers, mentors and sports instructors. This also meant that Step Together involved more interaction with young people and the community and a more active role in identifying, preventing and de-escalating incidents – in addition to being a deterrence. • Given key differences in city/town layouts between the US and the UK, chaperones were given more flexibility to move around the routes compared to the Safe Passage model, where they tend to be stationed on specific street blocks. • There was also more flexibility in the resourcing model for Step Together, e.g. chaperones were not required to work every shift, and they could also work on more than one route. However, there was an expectation that all shifts were covered, and where possible chaperones were expected to work the same route to ensure predictability and facilitate building relationships with pupils. • The Step Together model has a greater emphasis on detached youth work and involves more signposting and outreach work than the Safe Passage model. • There were some differences in the types of (potential) incidents chaperones were prepared to respond to, given differences between the US and the UK, e.g. levels of gun vs knife crime. • These adaptations appeared to be successful. However, the term 'chaperone' was problematic and typically avoided, especially with pupils, and should be reviewed for future delivery. For example,

Research aims	Finding
	pupils preferred to use the provider's name. Furthermore, adaptations relating to how Step Together is intended to link with other community actors and services require further clarity.
Assess fidelity to the UK intervention model (Step Together).	• An initial Theory of Change for Step Together was developed as part of the evaluation set-up process; based on this, the project was largely delivered as planned.
	• It launched the target number of routes and commissioned providers to deliver Step Together across the seven local authorities.
	• The selection of routes was largely systematic, using available crime data and softer intelligence. However, the final selection heavily relied on school buy-in and identifying appropriate provider organisations, which meant some routes that could have benefitted were not included in the pilot. Despite this, Step Together was valued by participants across all routes.
	• Overall, the model was seen as acceptable and appropriate, and its core activities were delivered as intended, i.e. chaperones were present on routes twice a day before and after school.
	• The WMVRP carried out a tendering process to select providers that met certain requirements, but as expected, there was some variation in delivery across providers and chaperones.
	• Provider organisations all had experience working with children and young people but varied in organisational scope and size. For example, some focused on sports-based activities while others provided mentoring.
	• There were common characteristics of chaperones in terms of their qualities and capabilities (e.g. interacting with children and young people), but chaperones came from varied backgrounds (e.g. length of their relevant experience and previous employment).
	• There were typically four to six chaperones working on each route per shift. Most chaperones covered shifts every weekday. Some worked less frequent shifts but usually at least two days per week.
	• Chaperones focused on the specified routes, but most also reported going off the routes on some occasions. This was usually in response to observing pupils diverting to other routes or becoming aware of (potential) incidents taking place nearby.
	• Descriptions of how chaperones responded to incidents were mostly consistent across providers. They typically assessed the situation and either safely intervened to de-escalate the issue or contacted 999 for more serious incidents. However, definitions of what constituted an incident varied by providers, with some requiring lower/higher thresholds of severity. Providers fed back that communications about the remit of chaperones could have been clearer earlier on.
	• Some providers started delivering activities beyond the scope of Step Together, for example working more closely with schools to deliver mentoring to specific pupils during/outside school hours.

Research aims	Finding
	• A key recommendation for future delivery is to more formally manualise the programme to support consistency and fidelity within the Step Together model.
Explore dimensions and factors affecting implementation, including facilitators and barriers.	• The selection of schools, routes and providers and the set-up period were more complex and required more WMVRP management time than originally anticipated. • Linked to the above, the timelines for set-up were challenging as they needed to mobilise rapidly. Providers primarily selected chaperones that already had links with the organisation (e.g. existing staff), which enabled swifter mobilisation of teams because they had existing DBS checks and training. However, the tight timeframes limited the amount of early engagement with schools and communities prior to launching, which some interviewees thought would have enabled stronger relationships between providers and schools. • Commissioning local organisations was viewed as an effective approach because providers typically had a good understanding of the context and issues facing the local communities. • The selected routes covered diverse areas, e.g. ranging in levels of deprivation and covering both isolated areas (e.g. alleyways) and areas with crowding or loitering due to the location of shops and transport links. Some routes also had specific issues relating to school rivalries or transport issues, e.g. buses not stopping for pupils. Chaperones were encouraged to reflect on the routes during the first couple of weeks of delivery (referred to as soft launches) to identify these issues early on and review them with the WMVRP. • Chaperones were very positive about their experience overall. They reported that the training they attended and the ongoing support or supervision they received were effective in helping them to fulfil their role, and chaperones reported that they felt prepared when routes launched. Most chaperones fed back that they felt confident and safe when handling incidents. • Having the same chaperones on routes every weekday helped build rapport with pupils, schools and community members. Young people were very positive about the chaperones and described them as friendly and relatable, bringing positive energy, and easy to talk to. • The limited hours and split shifts across the morning and afternoon were challenging for some chaperones. This caused some issues for recruitment and retention, with some providers trying to offer additional work hours, for example working on other projects. • When asked whether incidents were being displaced elsewhere, chaperones tended to agree that pupils or other residents could try to avoid them by taking other routes. By developing good relationships with pupils and schools, chaperones could sometimes pre-empt or respond to this.

Research aims	Finding
Understand what lessons can be learnt from this pilot to inform any future pilots or the roll-out of Step Together.	**Evidence of promise (based on participants' perceptions):** • Most chaperones reported handling incidents that involved physical violence, anti-social behaviour and bullying. One in three survey respondents also handled incidents involving knife crime. There was a general consensus among interviewees that chaperones responded appropriately to incidents, which supported better outcomes for pupils and the community. • Pupils reported feeling safer with chaperones around, giving examples of where chaperones de-escalated conflicts. • Pupils also described benefits beyond feelings of safety, including improved mental health and well-being, a better educational environment and more opportunities outside of school (as a result of outreach work). • School staff and community stakeholders also described fewer incidents and/or improved ability to respond to incidents. **Scalability/readiness for trial:** • As mentioned above, the project allowed for some flexibility and variation across different providers and chaperones, for example in the way that they worked with schools. However, the lack of a specific manual to adhere to could pose challenges for scaling up the programme and/or larger-scale evaluation. There was extensive dialogue between providers and the WMVRP, but there were minimal materials developed that specified the role and remit of chaperones – likely due to the speed at which the project aimed to mobilise. Developing a suite of materials that can be consistently used across providers and chaperones is key to future roll-out. These should specify roles and responsibilities, required training, a shared definition and response for handling incidents, and monitoring expectations. • Providers and chaperones expressed interest in having more opportunities to share ways of working and best practice across providers. This might also help identify a shared model of working. For example, this could help with aligning how chaperones should engage with schools and community stakeholders, e.g. who should be involved, how frequently, in what capacity etc. • Managing the project requires significant resources, given the number of providers, schools and other partners involved. To scale up the programme, this would need to be carefully considered both in terms of staffing and timeframes, especially during the set-up of new routes. • The evidence to support that Step Together is feasible to implement and shows promising qualitative evidence is encouraging. Depending on the results of the pilot impact study, a follow-up efficacy study is needed to further understand the effects of Step Together. • Future impact evaluation designs will need to overcome, as far as possible, challenges to measuring outcomes using secondary

Research aims	Finding
	datasets (i.e. data quality, levels of granularity and achieving sufficient power) and primary data collection (i.e. achieving sufficient response rates and sample sizes). • Cluster randomisation may be an option by randomising routes that meet specific criteria and stratifying these to ensure sufficient distance and avoid contamination. However, this would require identifying a large number of new routes where Step Together has not been piloted and a longer delivery and evaluation timeframe. As such, a QED would be a more cost-efficient and feasible follow-up. If findings remain positive, a larger-scale RCT should be considered.

5.2. Interpretation

There were several lessons from the IPE that should be considered when planning any future delivery, including scaling up and evaluation. These are summarised below:

- While the project was largely delivered as intended, variation between different providers and chaperones could pose challenges for scaling up the programme and/or for a larger-scale evaluation. There was extensive dialogue between providers and the WMVRP, but there were minimal materials developed that specified the role and remit of chaperones – likely due to the speed at which the project aimed to mobilise. Developing a suite of materials that can be consistently used across providers and chaperones is key to future roll-out. These should specify roles and responsibilities, required training, a shared definition and response for handling incidents, and monitoring expectations.

- Providers and chaperones expressed interest in having more opportunities to share ways of working and best practice across providers. This might also help identify a shared model of working. For example, this could help with specifying how chaperones should engage with schools and community stakeholders, e.g. who should be involved, how frequently, in what capacity etc.

- Linked to the above, it will be important to pre-define any additional activities that may be delivered by providers in parallel to Step Together. For example, this included mentoring in schools and activities with pupils outside of school hours, which were the result of outreach and signposting during Step Together. These activities could also contribute to the outcomes of interest and therefore have implications for future delivery and evaluation.

- Managing the project required significant resources, given the number of providers, schools and other partners involved. To scale up the programme, this would need to be carefully considered both in terms of staffing and timeframes,

especially during the set-up of new routes. Ideally, project set-up would begin at least a full half-term before the intended start of delivery.

- There is an assumption that the types of incidents being prevented or de-escalated would have otherwise been reported as crimes. In reality, many of the incidents described in the IPE were fights between pupils that may not have been formally recorded, and therefore it would be difficult to measure this effect. As such, a consistent approach to monitoring incidents should be developed and employed so that monitoring information can inform the impact evaluation. For example, schools often have monitoring information about incidents involving their pupils, but this is not consistently collected across schools. Future evaluators should scope whether using this monitoring information (with some guidance for consistency) would be feasible for both intervention and comparison schools.

Finally, while the evidence is generally positive, it is important to note again that data were self-reported, sample sizes were relatively small and limitations to recruitment may have introduced selection bias.

5.3. Future research and publications

The pilot impact study, led by LSE, will be published later in 2023.

The key messages for future evaluation are summarised below:

- Any future impact evaluation will need to overcome, as far as possible, challenges to measuring outcomes using secondary datasets (i.e. data quality, levels of granularity and achieving sufficient power) and primary data collection (i.e. achieving sufficient response rates and sample sizes).

- Cluster randomisation may be an option by randomising routes that meet specific criteria and stratifying these to ensure sufficient distance and avoid contamination. However, this would require identifying a large number of new routes where Step Together has not been piloted and a longer delivery and evaluation timeframe.

- As such, a QED would be a more cost-efficient and feasible follow-up, given that the primary outcome relies on administrative data. If this yielded positive findings, a larger-scale RCT, with more primary data collection of secondary outcomes, could then be considered as a next step.

- Timelines for future delivery and evaluation should be considered carefully to ensure they are aligned appropriately.

- The WMVRP commissions a wide range of interventions, some of which could reach the same schools and communities and therefore contribute to reducing crime. It may be that a combination of interventions collectively results in the observed outcomes. Incorporating a theory-based evaluation alongside the impact evaluation could support a better understanding of the system's effects. This could also help explore how additional activities delivered by providers contribute to the outcomes of interest.

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Process Evaluation of Step Together – Privacy Notice

The Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund are funding the Step Together project, which aims to keep young people safe by placing youth workers along key routes to schools. The project is led by the West Midland Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which is working with partner organisations to deliver the project along routes in all seven local authorities in the West Midlands (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton).

The Youth Endowment Fund commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct a process evaluation of the Step Together project. As part of this, the evaluation team plans to interview stakeholders, project delivery staff, providers and chaperones. The evaluation will also include surveys with chaperones and case studies that will involve speaking with school staff, local community members and students, where appropriate.

This Privacy Notice explains who we are, the personal data we collect, how we use it, who we share it with, and what your legal rights are.

Who are Ipsos UK?

Ipsos UK is a specialist research agency. Ipsos UK is part of the Ipsos worldwide group of companies, and a member of the Market Research Society. As such we abide by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and associated regulations and guidelines. You can find further information about Ipsos UK here.

What information will Ipsos UK collect about you?

We will ask questions about your views and experiences of the Step Together project, including your views about what has worked well or less well, and any aspects that have either helped or challenged the project. Providing responses to this evaluation is entirely voluntary and it is entirely up to you if you wish to provide the information asked for. We will seek consent from all participants to audio-record interviews or focus groups.

What is Ipsos UK's legal basis for processing your personal data?

Ipsos UK requires a legal basis to process your personal data. Ipsos UK's legal basis for processing is your consent to take part in this evaluation, for example by participating in a survey or an interview. If you wish to withdraw your consent at any time, please see the section below covering 'Your Rights'.

What personal data has Ipsos UK received about you?

For interviews: The West Midlands VRU shared a limited amount of your personal data, including your name, organisation and contact details (i.e. email address), so that we can invite you to take part in this evaluation.

For case studies: The West Midlands VRU shared a limited amount of personal data about providers, chaperones, and school staff, including your name, organisation and contact details (i.e. email address), so that we can invite you to take part in this

evaluation. We have not received any personal data about students or community members though this may be shared by schools / providers when case studies are set up.

For the survey: The West Midlands VRU either shared a limited amount of your personal data, including your name, organisation and contact details (i.e. email address) or, in cases where this information has not been shared, are supporting the administration of evaluation invites, so that we can invite you to take part in this evaluation.

What personal information will Ipsos UK collect as part of this study?

For the survey: If you agree to take part in the survey and/ or an interview, Ipsos UK will collect additional personal information about you, in the form of your responses to questions. This includes:

- Your experience of the training and recruitment process.

- Your experience chaperoning the routes.

How will Ipsos UK use any data collected?

The information collected through the qualitative research will be used solely for the purposes of the evaluation. Ipsos UK will keep your personal data and responses in strict confidence in accordance with this Privacy Policy.

Ipsos UK will analyse the data and produce reports and presentations for the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund. To do so, your answers will be put together with the answers from other people involved the project which will be presented as anonymous research findings. Nobody will be able to identify you in any results that are published.

Where consent to audio-record interviews was provided, audio files will be securely shared with TakeNote who will transcribe the interview. No personal data will be included as audio files will use unique anonymised IDs. TakeNote is UK-based, ISO and GDPR compliant and data is only visible to individuals working on the project. Should you want to contact Take Note for further information please email: compliance@takenotetyping.com. Take Note's Privacy Policy can be found here.

Taking part in this evaluation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to take part or stop the process at any time. You can withdraw your consent and ask for your personal information to be removed from the study by contacting Ipsos UK here: Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com

How will Ipsos UK ensure your personal information is secure?

The personal data will be stored on secure servers at Ipsos UK. Only a small number of people will have access to this data. Ipsos UK takes its information security responsibilities seriously and applies various precautions to ensure your information is protected from loss, theft or misuse. Security precautions include appropriate physical security of offices and controlled and limited access to computer systems.

Ipsos UK has regular internal and external audits of its information security controls and working practices, and is accredited to the International Standard for Information Security, ISO 27001. All of your personal data used and collected for this study will be stored by Ipsos UK in data centres and servers within the United Kingdom. We will not move or share information about you outside the EU.

How long will Ipsos UK retain your personal data and identifiable responses?

Ipsos UK will only retain your data in a way that can identify you for as long as is necessary to support the evaluation and findings. Any personal details used to invite you to take part is this evaluation will be securely deleted from our systems once the evaluation and any quality control checks are complete; this is usually carried out within three months of the end of the evaluation.

Your data protection rights

The rights you have are set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as it applies in the UK, tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018. These include the right in certain circumstances to:

- be informed if your personal data is being used

- get copies of your data

- get your data corrected

- get your data deleted

- limit how we use your data

- object to the use of your data

For further information about your rights see here: https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/

If there are any problems with our handling of your data, we will notify you and the organisation that is responsible for regulating this (The Information Commissioner's Office) where we are legally required to do so. There are other rights not listed here and exemptions may apply. For more details see here: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-act-2018/ or contact our Data Protection Officer.

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), if you have concerns on how we have processed your personal data. You can find details about how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office at https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/ or by sending an email to: casework@ico.org.uk.

How to contact us

If you have any concerns or questions about the evaluation, please contact:

- **Email**: compliance@ipsos.com and reference "21-082282-01 YEF Step Together Evaluation" in the subject line

- **Post**: 21-082282-01 YEF Step Together Evaluation, Data Protection Officer, Compliance Department, Ipsos UK Limited, 3 Thomas More Square, London E1W 1YW

For more information about the Youth Endowment Fund please see their <u>website</u>.

Appendix 2: Leaflet for providers and chaperones

Evaluation of Step Together

Information Leaflet for Providers and Chaperones

November 2021
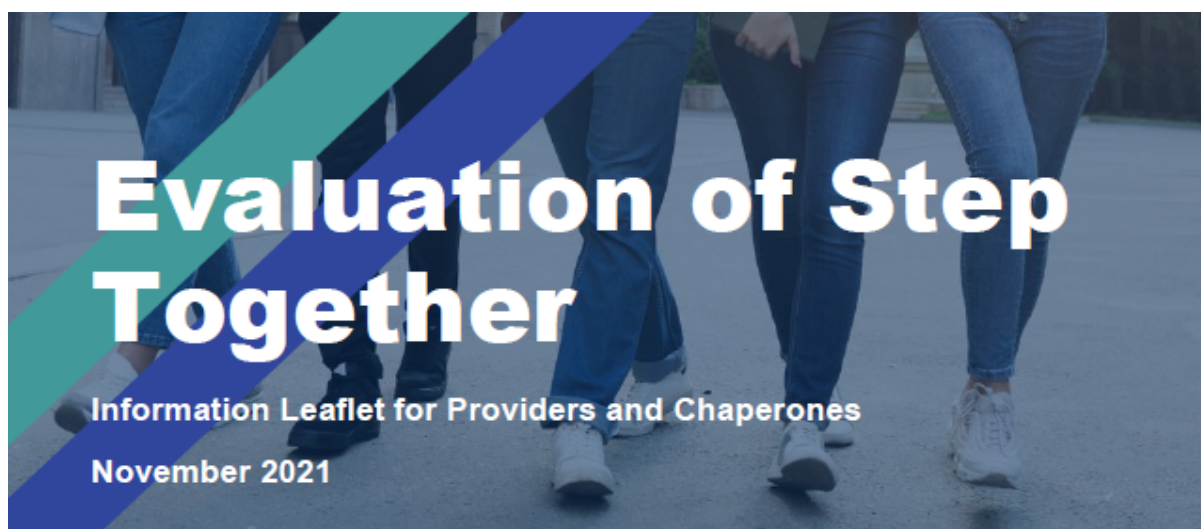
This leaflet is for the providers and chaperones working with the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to deliver the Step Together project. It provides information about the evaluation of the Step Together project and how we need your help to capture lessons learned about what is working well or needs improvement.

Who is conducting the process evaluation?

Ipsos MORI, an independent research organisation, was commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to conduct a **process evaluation of Step Together**. The YEF are funding the evaluation.

What are the aims of the process evaluation?

The process evaluation aims to:

1. Understand **what lessons can be learned** from this pilot, to inform any future pilots or the roll-out of Step Together.

2. Explore factors affecting implementation, including **facilitators and barriers.**

3. Assess whether Step Together was **delivered as intended.**

4. Understand how the project was **adapted for the UK context and population,** and whether further adaptation is required.

What will the process evaluation involve?

The process evaluation will involve **interviews** and **focus groups** with stakeholders, project delivery staff, providers and chaperones. It will also include a **survey with chaperones** and **case studies** that will involve speaking with school staff, local community members and students. Where available, monitoring information about the project delivery will also be shared with Ipsos MORI for analysis.

In addition to the process evaluation, the London School of Economics (LSE), a social science university located in central London, is conducting an **impact evaluation** of the Step Together project. This involves a survey with students and analysis of national datasets to assess whether the project reduces violent crime and antisocial behaviour, and improves student safety across the West Midlands. The **student survey** also includes questions that will be used for the process evaluation.

How can providers/chaperones support the evaluation?

The evaluation will **benefit greatly from your participation and support.** In the first instance, providers and a selection of chaperones will be contacted to take part in an **interview.** This interview will involve discussing your views about the context and need for this project and your expectations for your involvement/role.

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Ipsos MORI will also invite all chaperones to complete a **short survey** in a few months. To do so, your organisation or the West Midlands VRU will share limited personal information with Ipsos MORI, including your **name and contact details**. If you do not want your contact details shared, please inform the lead chaperone.

Finally, we will select a small number of **case studies**, which will involve interviews and focus groups with chaperones, school and community leaders, and students, where possible. We would work closely with the VRU, chaperones and schools to set up case study plans in each area.

Do you need to take part?

No, your participation in the evaluation is **completely voluntary**. We will ask you to provide your consent to participate before any interview or focus group.

No one outside the evaluation team will know whether you took part. However, your input would be extremely valuable.

How will the information be used?

Ipsos MORI will keep your information safe and confidential. It will only be used for the purpose of the evaluation, and it will be stored in secure folders only accessible by the evaluation team. We will not share or publish any information that would enable someone to identify you. We will handle anonymised quotes sensitively to ensure this.

We will combine your responses with the responses of other participants to produce anonymised findings. These findings will be reported back to the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund.

All data will be collected, stored and processed by Ipsos MORI in accordance with Data Regulations. You can read more about how we will use your data and your data protection rights in the Privacy Notice.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the process evaluation, please contact:

- **Project Manager, Raynette Bierman** (Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com) or

- **Project Director, Meera Craston** (Meera.Craston@ipsos.com).

If you have a question relating to the impact evaluation, for example, about the student survey, please contact Julia Friedberg (J.P.Friedberg@lse.ac.uk).

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Appendix 3: Leaflet for schools about overall evaluation

Evaluation of Step Together

Information Leaflet for Schools

November 2021

This leaflet is for the schools partnering with the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) as part of the Step Together project. It provides information about the evaluation of the Step Together project and how we need your help to capture lessons learned about what is working well or needs improvement.

Who is conducting the evaluation?

Ipsos MORI, an independent research company, and the **London School of Economics (LSE)**, a social science university located in central London, were commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to conduct an evaluation of Step Together. Ipsos MORI will lead the **process evaluation** and LSE will be responsible for the **impact evaluation**.

What are the aims of the evaluation?

The impact evaluation aims to assess whether the Step Together project **reduces crime and anti-social behaviour** along the routes selected and **improves feelings of safety** among students using those routes, which in turn could **improve educational attainment**.

The process evaluation aims to:

1. Understand **what lessons can be learned** from this pilot, to inform any future pilots or the roll-out of Step Together.

2. Explore factors affecting implementation, including **facilitators and barriers**.

3. Assess whether Step Together was **delivered as intended**.

4. Understand how the project was **adapted for the UK context and population**, and whether further adaptation is required.

What will the evaluation involve?

The evaluation will involve:

- conducting **surveys with students** attending participating schools at two timepoints.

- analysis of **national datasets** to assess whether the project reduces violent crime and anti-social behaviour.

- **interviews and focus groups** with stakeholders, project delivery staff, providers and chaperones.

- **surveys with chaperones**.

- **case studies** that will involve speaking with school staff, local community members and students.

- analysis of available **monitoring information** about the project delivery.

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How can schools support the evaluation?

The evaluation will **benefit greatly from your participation and support**. School support and involvement is critical for two of the evaluation activities above.

First, we need schools to **distribute the online weblink to students** so that they can complete a short survey. The VRU will provide materials relating to this survey, including information for parents and the weblink itself.

Second, Ipsos MORI will select four areas in different local authorities to conduct **case studies**. This will involve interviews and/or focus groups with chaperones, school staff, community members, and students, where possible. **To set these up**, we hope to work closely with the VRU, chaperones and schools. Additionally, these will involve **inviting a small number of school staff to take part in an interview or focus group**.

Do you or your school need to take part?

Your school's participation is needed to help **distribute the student surveys,** but survey participation is completely voluntary. Parents will have the opportunity to opt their student out of taking the survey, and students will also be asked for consent before taking the survey.

Participation in a case study is completely voluntary. If you, other school staff, or students are invited to take part in an interview or focus group, we will ask for your/their consent to participate beforehand. We will not share with anyone else who chooses to take part or not.

How will the information be used?

Ipsos MORI and LSE will keep information **safe and confidential**. It will only be used for the purpose of the evaluation.

Information provided by students in the survey will help LSE researchers understand whether the programme has impacted feelings of safety. All survey responses will be confidential, so the researchers **will not know the names of**

participants and will only present the findings at an aggregated level.

For information provided in case studies, Ipsos MORI will store information in **secure folders** only accessible by the evaluation team. We will not share or publish any information that would enable someone to identify you or other participants. To do this, we will combine your responses with the responses of other participants to produce **anonymised findings**. We will also handle anonymised quotes sensitively to ensure this.

All data will be collected, stored and processed by Ipsos MORI and LSE in accordance with Data Regulations. Those invited to take part in a case study can read more about their data protection rights in the **Privacy Notice**.

Anonymised findings will be **reported to the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund.**

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the case studies, please contact Raynette Bierman (Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com) or Meera Craston (Meera.Craston@ipsos.com).

If you have a question relating to the student survey, please contact Julia Friedberg (J.P.Friedberg@lse.ac.uk).

Appendix 4: Leaflet for schools selected for case studies

Evaluation of Step Together

Information Leaflet about Case Studies for Schools

May 2022

This leaflet is for schools partnering with the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) as part of the Step Together pilot. It provides information about the evaluation of Step Together.

Your school has been selected as a case study with the support of the West Midlands VRU. This leaflet explains more about how we need your help to capture lessons learned about what is working well or could be better.

Who is conducting the evaluation?

Ipsos, an independent research company, and the **London School of Economics (LSE),** a social science university located in central London, were commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to conduct an evaluation of Step Together. Ipsos is leading the **process evaluation** and LSE is responsible for the **impact evaluation**.

What are the aims of the evaluation?

The impact evaluation aims to assess whether the Step Together project **reduces crime and anti-social behaviour** along the routes selected and **improves feelings of safety** among students using those routes, which in turn could **improve educational attainment**.

The process evaluation aims to:

1. Understand **what lessons can be learned** from this pilot, to inform any future pilots or the roll-out of Step Together.

2. Explore factors affecting its implementation, including **facilitators and barriers**.

3. Assess whether Step Together was **delivered as intended**.

4. Understand how the project was **adapted for the local context and population**, and whether further adaptation is required.

What does taking part in a case study involve for your school?

We would like to visit the school and route in June 2022 to speak with students, school staff, chaperones, and community members.

We suggest arranging a call to talk through the case study plans and how we hope you can help us. For each school, we would like to conduct:

- **1 interview with a member of staff**: This could be with the head teacher, a senior or middle leader, or a staff member in a pastoral position (safeguarding lead). The interview would last up to an hour and can take place in person during the visit or over the telephone.

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- **1 focus group interview with 5-6 students who use the Step Together route:** This will take place in person during the visit. We need your help to:

  - **Identify students** to take part,

  - **Collect parental consent** ahead of our visit; and

  - Provide a **suitable location** for the interview.

What information will be collected?

We will ask staff about their views on the Step Together project and whether they have seen any impact as a result of this.

We will speak with students about their experiences of walking the route and seeing / meeting the Step Together chaperones.

Does your school need to take part?

No, participation in this case study is completely voluntary. Consent to take part will be collected prior to all interviews, in addition to parental consent for students.

How will the information be used?

Ipsos will keep information **safe and confidential**, stored in **secure folders** only accessible by the evaluation team. The information will only be used for the purpose of the evaluation.

Responses from interviews will be combined with the responses of other participants to produce **anonymised findings**. We will not use names or personal information when reporting the findings. We will also handle anonymised quotes sensitively to ensure this.

We will write a report on the findings, which will be submitted to **the Home Office** and the **Youth Endowment Fund**. It will also be published so you can access this.

You can read more about your data protection rights in the **Privacy Notice**.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the case studies, please contact Raynette Bierman (Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com) or Meera Craston (Meera.Craston@ipsos.com).

Appendix 5: Leaflet and consent form for parents

Evaluation of Step Together

Information Leaflet and Consent Form for Parents

May 2022
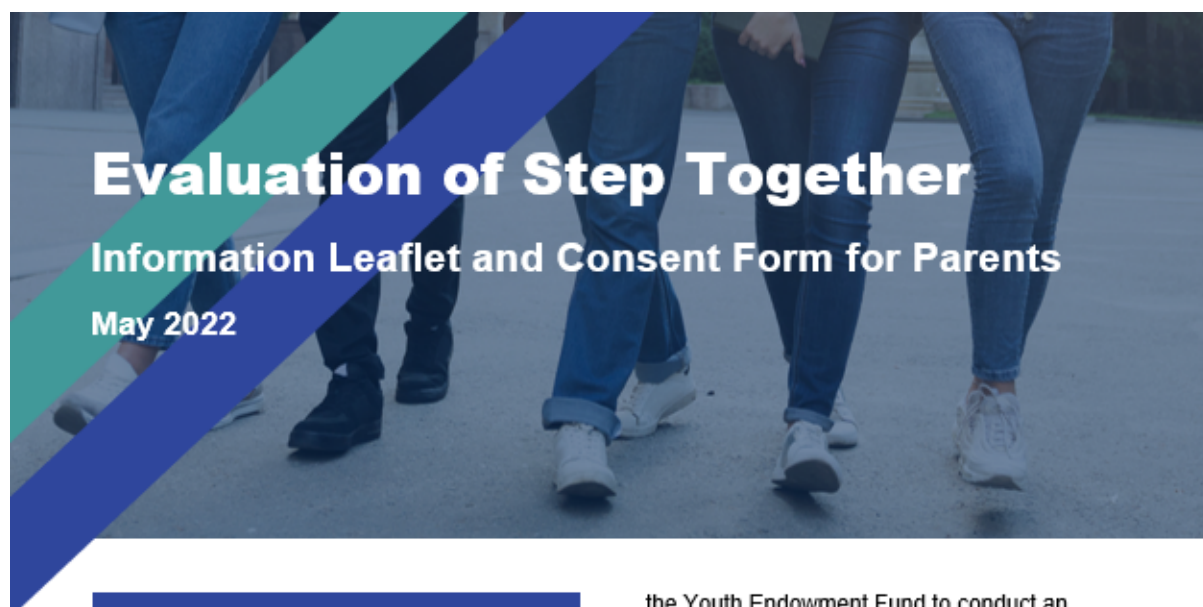
This leaflet is for parents of students attending one of the schools involved in the Step Together project. It provides information about a research and evaluation study that aims to understand how the project is going and whether it is seen to be making a difference.

As part of this study, we would like to invite your child to take part in a group interview with a researcher from Ipsos and 4-5 other students. The interview would take place at the school with staff on hand. To do this, we need your consent to include your child, who will also be given the choice to take part. This leaflet explains more.

What is the evaluation about?

You may know that the school your child attends is currently taking part in a pilot of a programme called **Step Together**. The project involves having youth workers, or 'chaperones', along one or more of the walking routes to the school both before and after school starts and ends. The chaperones are trained to identify potential issues and stop these from happening, to help students and other people in the area feel safer.

Who is conducting the evaluation?

Ipsos, an independent research company, and the **London School of Economics (LSE)**, a social science university, were commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund to conduct an evaluation of Step Together.

What are the aims of the evaluation?

The evaluation aims to understand more about how the project is being delivered, including **what has worked well or what could be improved in the future**. To do this, we are speaking with chaperones, school staff, local community members, and students themselves.

Another aim is to understand the **impact** of the project from the perspective of students. For example, we would like to know whether they have noticed changes on the route or feel safer, and what this means to them.

What does taking part involve for your child?

The school your child attends has been selected as a case study for the evaluation. As part of this, we plan to **interview a group of 5-6 students**. The school helped identify students to interview, which included your child.

The group interview would take place in a **safe location at the school** with a staff member available. It will be led by an experienced Ipsos researcher.

We will ask the group questions about whether they have seen or met the chaperones, and **what they think about them**. We will also ask about their experiences walking to and from

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school and **whether this has changed** at all since the project started.

The conversation would last around 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Does my child have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. We require your permission to interview your child and if you agree, we will also give them the choice to take part or not. They can also choose to not answer any questions or stop taking part at any time for any reason.

It is important for the evaluation to listen to the views and experiences of students. By providing your consent, **your child's experiences will be reflected in the evaluation.**

How will the information be used?

If your child takes part, everything they say will be treated as **anonymous and confidential**. We will combine the findings from across interviews to write a report for the Youth Endowment Fund, which will be published. The **report will not include the names** or any other identifiable information.

We will audio-record (with permission) or take notes to ensure an accurate record of the conversation for our analysis. We will keep this information **safe and secure**. The information will be used for the purpose of the evaluation only. The information will be securely deleted after the evaluation ends.

In exceptional circumstances, we may need to break confidentiality if they tell us something that suggests they or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

You can read more about your data protection rights in the **Privacy Notice**.

What do I do now?

If you are happy for your child to take part, **please complete the consent form provided with this leaflet**. If you do not want your child to

take part in this research, you do not have to take any further action.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the case studies, please contact Raynette Bierman (Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com) or Meera Craston (Meera.Craston@ipsos.com).

Consent form

Evaluation of Step Together

Consent form for parents, carers or guardians of children invited to take part in a case study interview to inform the Step Together Evaluation.

Please complete and return this form to the school as soon as possible.

☐ I consent for my child to take part in **research activities conducted by Ipsos** for the Step Together evaluation. I understand that my child is able to opt out of the evaluation activities at any point if they wish.

Your child's name...

Your child's class..

Your full name...

Your signature...

Date................................

Appendix 6: Leaflet and consent form for students

Evaluation of Step Together

Leaflet and Consent Form for Students

June 2022

This leaflet is for students attending one of the schools involved in the Step Together project. It provides information about a research and evaluation study that aims to understand how the project is going and whether it is making a difference.

As part of this study, we are inviting you to take part in a group interview with a researcher and 4-5 other students. The interview would take place at the school with staff on hand. This leaflet explains more.

What is the evaluation about?

You may know that your school is currently taking part in a pilot of a programme called **Step Together**. The project involves having youth workers, or 'chaperones', along one or more of the walking routes to the school, both before and after school starts and ends.

The evaluation aims to understand more about how the project is being delivered, including **what has worked well or what could be improved in the future**. Another aim is to understand what **impact** the project has had on students at the school. To do this, we are speaking with chaperones, school staff, local community members, and students like you.

What does taking part involve?

Your school has been selected as a case study for the evaluation. As part of this, we plan to **interview a group of 5-6 students**. The school helped identify students to interview, which included you.

The group interview would take place in a **safe location at the school** with a staff member available. It will be led by an experienced Ipsos researcher and take no more than 1 hour.

We will ask questions about whether you have seen or met the chaperones, and **what you think about them**. We will also ask about your experiences walking to and from school and **whether this has changed** at all since the project started.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. It is up to you whether to take part. You can also skip any questions or stop taking part at any time. We will also seek your parent/carer's permission.

Who is doing the research?

We are researchers from **Ipsos**, an independent research company. We have been asked by the Youth Endowment Fund to do this evaluation.

What will you do with what I tell you?

Everything you say will be kept **safe and secure**, and treated as **anonymous and confidential**. We will combine the findings from across interviews to write a report, which will be published. The **report will not include your name**.

In exceptional circumstances, we may need to break confidentiality if you tell us something that suggests you are someone else is at risk of serious harm.

You can read more about your data protection rights in the **Privacy Notice**.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the case studies, please contact Raynette Bierman (Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com) or Meera Craston (Meera.Craston@ipsos.com).

Consent form

Evaluation of Step Together

Consent form for students invited to take part in a case study interview to inform the Step Together Evaluation.

Please return to the researcher when you are done.

☐ I **know why I am taking part in the research.**

☐ I know that **I only need to take part if I want to.**

☐ I know that the **information I give can only be used for the Step Together evaluation** and that **no-one will know what I have said in a way that identifies me.**

☐ I know that **I can take away my consent** at any time until the information has been used (in July 2022).

☐ I **do / do not** [*please select*] **agree for the interview to be recorded.** This will be deleted after at the end of the project.

Name: ....

Sign: ....

Date: .... /........ /.......

Thank you!

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Appendix 7: Leaflet for community

Evaluation of Step Together

Information Leaflet for Community Members

May 2022

This leaflet is for community members who live and/or work in the local area where the Step Together project is being delivered. It provides information about a research and evaluation study that aims to understand how the project is going and whether it is making a difference.

As part of this study, we are inviting you to take part in an interview with a researcher who will visit the area. This leaflet explains more.

What is the evaluation about?

You may know that a pilot of a programme called **Step Together** is currently being trialled in your local area. The project involves having youth workers, or 'chaperones', along one or more of the walking routes to local schools, both before and after school starts and ends.

The evaluation aims to understand more about how the project is being delivered, including **what has worked well or what could be improved in the future**. Another aim is to understand what **impact** the project has had on students and the local community. To do this, we are speaking with chaperones, school staff, students, and local community members like you.

What does taking part involve?

Your local area has been selected as a case study for the evaluation. As part of this, we plan to **interview several community members**, and you were identified as someone we might speak to.

The interview would take place at a **convenient time and location for you**. It will be with an Ipsos researcher and take around **30 minutes**.

We will ask questions about whether you have seen or met the chaperones, and **what you think about them**. We will also ask about your experiences walking to and from school and **whether this has changed** at all since the project started.

With your permission, we would like to **audio record** the conversation to ensure an accurate account of our conversation. If you would prefer not to be recorded, we will take notes instead.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. It is up to you whether to take part. You can also skip any questions or stop taking part at any time.

Who is doing the research?

We are researchers from **Ipsos**, an independent research company. We have been asked by the **Youth Endowment Fund** to do this evaluation.

What will you do with what I tell you?

Everything you say will be kept **safe and secure**, and treated as **anonymous and confidential**. We will combine the findings from across interviews to write a report, which will be published. The **report will not include your name**.

You can read more about your data protection rights in the **Privacy Notice**.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the case studies, please contact Raynette Bierman (Raynette.Bierman@ipsos.com) or Meera Craston (Meera.Craston@ipsos.com).

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