



Department
for Education



Serious violence foundational system mapping

Research report

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Contents

Glossary	4
Executive summary	6
Introduction	6
Background	6
Methodology	7
What does the system look like?	8
The system map	8
What does this mean for support?	10
Access	10
Engagement & Navigation	11
What potential improvements can be made to the system?	12
1. Introduction	14
1.1. Background	14
1.2. Research objectives	14
1.3. Methodology	15
Sampling	15
Fieldwork	18
Analysis	19
Uncertainty and assumptions	21
2. What does the system of support look like?	22
2.1. The system map	22
Most support is locally determined	24
National government	24
Regional decision maker individuals/organisations	28
Main entry points into the system	32
LAs	36
Health	37
What national and regional funders and practitioners <i>think</i> the system looks like from CYP perspective	38
2.2. Children and young people map	39
CYP case study 1 –support system can lack a sense of ‘journey’ and connections	44

3. What does this mean for support experienced by at risk children, young people and their families?	45
3.1. Access	45
Identification – perceived different priorities and inconsistent funding seen to lead to a reactive system with a lack of preventative support for CYP	45
Entry points and referrals – while there are multiple entry points, support for CYP at risk of SV is perceived as inconsistent across cases	48
CYP case study 2 – lack of effective support following arrest	51
Eligibility criteria and ‘gatekeepers’ – entry criteria to statutory services are perceived to be too limiting	53
3.2. Engagement & navigation	54
Building trusted relationships is key to supporting CYP, and ensuring that CYP feel able to disclose issues	54
Once issues are identified, participants said it can be too slow and difficult to refer CYP on to further help	55
However, participants reported that once a situation escalates, there can be an over-saturation of services for the CYP and family	57
4. Potential improvements to effectiveness of the system	59
Enhanced communication and data sharing within the system	59
Creating effective leadership within a complex system	60
Integrating health services in the discussion of serious violence provision	62
CYP case study 3 –health services not being part of a holistic support system	63
The role of schools in identifying and supporting children at risk of violence	63
5. Key themes	65
Appendix A: Topic Guides	67
National / regional funder/policymaker:	67
Professionals/Practitioners	76
CYP and families	86

Glossary

This report uses the following terms which in this context has been taken to mean the following:

Alternative provision (AP): education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

At risk: someone at risk is someone that has been identified as being exposed to the possibility of danger or harm (in this context, usually involvement in serious violence).

Commissioning: the process of planning, agreeing and monitoring services.

Multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH): the aim of MASH is to bring together all the agencies involved in safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children. The intention is that agencies can become aware of incidents as quickly as possible and use all powers and options available to all of them, so that they can put the best possible solutions in place. They are normally formed of various public and VCS organisations, including (but not limited to): the police, social services, local authorities, probation service, and charities.

Preventative support: support provided to a CYP before they have been involved in an incident of serious violence.

Serious violence (SV): For the purposes of this research serious violence was defined using the definition outlined in the 2018 Serious Violence Strategy: “specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes emerging crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon”.

Statutory: something that is legally required, permitted or enacted by the government.

System mapping: a graphical representation of a system that shows the underlying interrelationships and structure of a system.

System of support: how different services work individually and together to support children at risk of involvement in violence. Examples include education, health, children’s social care, and the criminal justice system.

Trusted adult relationship: an adult who is not a family member or friend, but is someone that has the knowledge, skills and capabilities to build trusted relationships and

deliver specific approaches that support positive outcomes for a CYP. Clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries are established between a trusted adult and a CYP.

Voluntary and community sector (VCS): while there is no single formal definition of the sector, in this research the term primarily refers to charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations.

Executive summary

Introduction

Background

The involvement of children and young people (CYP), those aged 0 to 25 years old, in serious violence (SV),¹ as victim or perpetrator, has serious consequences for the CYP involved, their peers and families, and has huge costs for society.² In this context, the Serious Violence Research and Analysis team within the Department for Education (DfE) with the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)³ commissioned this research to begin exploring how the systems of support around SV⁴ shape the experiences of CYP and their families; and why some CYP still go on to become involved in SV. As a 'foundational' project, the primary aim was to help the DfE-YEF research team to develop hypotheses about the quality of CYP's experiences. As such, this project was not intended to provide a complete picture of CYP's journeys or experiences within these systems of support but will provide us with an indication of how the system is working from the perspective of various stakeholders. This will act as a steppingstone for further research.

The research aimed to create a system map: a visual representation that shows the structure and relationships within the system of support for CYP around SV. This included both preventative support, i.e., support delivered before a CYP becomes involved in SV, and support delivered after a CYP has been involved in SV. The map was then accompanied by commentary on how the different organisations and individuals in the system were perceived to interact, where the system is perceived to work well and less well, and what this is perceived to mean for CYP and their families.

This research examined how the system is perceived to shape the experiences of CYP and their families, through three lenses:

¹ For the purposes of this research serious violence was defined using the definition outlined in the 2018 Serious Violence Strategy: "specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes emerging crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon" ([Serious Violence Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682222/Serious_Violence_Strategy_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)).

² Involvement in crime ultimately has a huge cost on society - between 2008 and 2019, the costs of serious youth violence were estimated to be between £6-11 billion, Youth Violence Commission, 2020. [YVC-Final-Report-July-2020.pdf](#)

³ The YEF is the Home Office-funded What Works Centre for serious youth violence.

⁴ For the purpose of this research, a 'system of support' is how different services work individually and together to support children at risk of involvement in violence. Examples include education, health, children's social care, and the criminal justice system.

- **Access:** The user journey up to the point of accessing a service, including identification and referral, thresholds and ‘gatekeepers’⁵;
- **Engagement:** The user experience of a specific service. What engagement between CYP and their families, and the professionals / practitioners who work within these systems looks like, and how it is maintained; and
- **Navigation:** The user journey within, between and out of services; including signposting and onward referrals.

DfE and YEF commissioned IFF Research and Dr Charlotte Coleman, Sheffield Hallam University, to conduct this research.

The project was part of the wider Serious Violence Research Programme which aims to establish what evidence-based actions the government and others could take to reduce the number of young people involved in serious violence. As well as the System Mapping, the programme includes an Evidence and Gap Map⁶ (EGM) of current literature on how systems of support interact with young people and their families and reviews of literature within the EGM. The findings from these projects will inform further research over the next 12-18 months.

Methodology

The research took a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with a range of participants:

- national funders and policy makers (such as officials from national government departments);
- regional funders, policy makers and commissioners (such as Local Safeguarding Boards and Violence Reduction Units (VRUs);
- professionals and practitioners working directly with CYP (such as teachers and social workers);
- and with CYP themselves, who had been suggested to us by professionals and practitioners.

DfE, YEF and IFF agreed four regions that the research would cover. We selected three of the regions (Birmingham, Leeds and Haringey) because DfE had previously identified them as hotspots of serious youth violence. We added the final region (Northumberland) to better understand the system in more rural settings.

⁵ 'Thresholds' means the criteria a CYP needs to meet to access a service, and 'gatekeepers' means individuals or organisations that control access to a service.

⁶ [Systems Evidence and Gap Map - Youth Endowment Fund](#)

IFF completed 41 qualitative interviews by telephone, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and face-to-face. Each interview lasted around 90 minutes⁷ and used a topic guide developed by IFF Research with input from DfE and YEF.

In the interviews, participants often worked with researchers to sketch out their thoughts on what the system looks like, as a rough system map. These individual rough sketches of the system, alongside the interview content, were combined into an overall map of the system. This overall map of the system evolved gradually as further discussions were completed. In the CYP interviews, rather than reviewing the whole system map researchers worked with CYP to sketch out the personal 'journey' of support they had received.

Uncertainty and assumptions

The research findings are based on a small, qualitative sample and represent the views of participants. Participants included national funders and policymakers; regional funders, policymakers and commissioners; professionals and practitioners working with CYP; and CYP themselves. The findings are based on the views of these participants and do not represent the official government position nor the position of their department or organisation (unless explicitly stated). Further, as this is qualitative research, the purpose is to provide an in-depth understanding and reflection of the variety of experiences of participants. It is not intended to be statistically representative. The report therefore provides an indication of how the system may be working, rather than a complete picture.

Further, as this report is based on participant views, there may be occasions when further clarity is required. On these occasions we have added footnotes to explain in more detail.

What does the system look like?

The system map

- **The system of support is very complex.**
 - There are a large number of organisations and individuals in the system, involving a large number of relationships.
 - Additionally, these relationships are often complex in themselves.
- **Although there is a very clear national government presence, participants identified most provision is locally determined.**

⁷ We allowed 90 minutes for interviews with CYP to allow them to take their time, although in practice they usually only required 30-60 minutes

- Even though a lot of funding ultimately comes from national government, the commissioning of services is mostly done by statutory services that only cover their own region.
- This local commissioning means that support is varied across the UK, with different leadership styles and funding arrangements, leading to different support in each area.
- **Participants identified schools and police as the most common system ‘entry points’ (i.e., where CYP are identified as being at risk and potentially referred to support services).**
 - Schools are a frequent entry point because they have consistent contact with CYP and have a lot of connections to organisations that can provide support.
 - The police come into contact with CYP frequently, but are less likely to be involved before a crime has been committed meaning generally they only have contact once a CYP has already been involved in SV as perpetrator, victim or witness.
 - The voluntary and community sector (VCS)⁸ is also an entry point, but this is less frequent.
- **Participants commented that health services are often missing from the conversation around SV risk.**
 - Several participants described health services as taking a medicalised approach, and only recently (in the past five years) starting to consider youth SV as part of their work.
- **CYP⁹ perceived the system as being more sparse, with fewer connections and interactions between those in the system.**
 - Often support came from one source for a period of time, and then that support ended (and often ended not when the CYP was ‘ready’ for it to end, but due to other reasons).

⁸ For example, charities and community youth/sports clubs.

⁹ We were only able to speak to a small number of CYP (n=5), so these findings should be treated with caution.

What does this mean for support?

Access

- **Participants believed that differing priorities between national organisations and inconsistent funding has led to a reactive system with a lack of preventative support for CYP.**
 - Participants described a system where, even at national policy level, different organisations had different priorities. Participants perceived this to have unintentionally created a system where:
 - Funding increases and decreases over time, with a lack of long-term funding for initiatives;
 - Funding is often allocated to new initiatives, rather than existing provision;
 - Funding is tied to particular outcomes or performance indicators, which makes it difficult to use funds for preventative work (which is harder and takes longer for evidence of effectiveness to emerge).
- **Participants described inconsistency in entry points and services offered to CYP identified as at risk. Participants described a system where:**
 - The multiple entry points into the system mean that CYP have access to different types of support depending on who first identified and referred them.
 - For example, participants reported that CYP who entered the system via the police can have what they saw as a ‘criminalised¹⁰’ experience, rather than being directed to other support options.
 - Some participants identified Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) as being an important entry point for CYP who are at risk of being abused or are experiencing abuse. However, participants reported that MASH does not exist in every borough and practitioners who engage directly with CYP at risk of SV did not report much awareness of MASH.
- **Additionally, participants believed that some entry points to the system are used less frequently than they have the potential to be. Participants described a system where:**

¹⁰ Participants described a criminalised experience as one where they feel that police are focussed on identifying criminal offences for which they can arrest, charge or issue other punitive actions to the CYP for (i.e. treating them as purely a ‘criminal’ as opposed to someone that is vulnerable and could benefit from support).

- Police and schools were both seen to be over-stretched in their roles, which participants perceived firstly limits their ability to spot warning signs of CYP at risk and secondly even, when CYP are identified, limited resources mean they are not always referred to the support they need.
- VCS organisations are one of the only entry points to which CYP can self-refer, providing a unique opportunity for CYP to access support and empowering them to make their own choice. However, professionals within VCS organisations reported feeling under-valued and overlooked by statutory services, describing a system where referrals are not as frequent or proactive as they could be.
- Participants reported that statutory services (particularly LA social care services and CAMHS¹¹) often can't meet the demand for support, leading to strict eligibility criteria and long waiting lists. As a result of this limited capacity, they said statutory services have become less used as an entry point for CYP and their families.

Engagement & Navigation

- **Trusted relationships are key, but are not always consistently present.**
 - CYP and their families often reported mistrust of statutory services to practitioners, with a perception that such services are not there to support them and do not listen to them.
 - Participants, including CYP, emphasised the importance of CYP relationships with a 'trusted adult'¹². In the context of a trusted relationship, CYP are much more likely to disclose issues and are more likely to be receptive to support that they are being offered.
 - Even where trusted relationships are built, however, they can be undermined by other factors that prevent them from being consistent. For example, in schools a CYP can build a relationship with a member of staff only for the member of staff to change at the beginning of the new school year.
- **Once issues are identified, participants reported that it can be slow and difficult to refer CYP on to further help.**

¹¹ CAMHS is children and adolescent mental health services; the name for the NHS services that assess and treat young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

¹² YEF define a trusted adult relationship as "an adult who is not a family member or friend, but is someone that has the knowledge, skills and capabilities to build trusted relationships and deliver specific approaches that support positive outcomes for a child or young person. Clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries are established between a trusted adult and a child and young person".

- Participants noted in particular, referring to statutory social services in the transition between Children’s Services and adults’ services (age 17-18) is incredibly difficult. This is because once CYP are over 18, many services are either different for adults or simply do not exist.
- Participants felt that, across the system, communication between statutory services and VCS organisations is lacking, with some statutory services having disengaged due to capacity issues. VCS organisations can thus feel isolated and disconnected from the rest of the system and may be struggling to refer CYP to other organisations for preventative work, until the situation escalates.
- Participants also felt that certain parts of the system, in particular the police and to an even greater extent mental health services, are over-stretched and underfunded. For mental health, this means that capacity is limited so entry criteria are increasing.
- **However, participants perceived that once a situation escalates there can be an over-saturation of services.**
 - Whilst participants felt that referrals are difficult and criteria for statutory services are strict, once the CYP meets these, there can suddenly be an influx of multiple services without sufficient communication between them. This can result in what is seen as duplication of work and CYP having contact with multiple organisations without clarity of what each one is responsible for.
 - Practitioners that work directly with CYP reported that this over-saturation can cause CYP and families to become frustrated with the lack of joined up working, and feel like their voice is ignored.

What potential improvements can be made to the system?

Participants identified a number of areas where they considered the system could be improved:

- **Communication and data sharing:** There are many instances during the CYP’s journey where the opportunity for data sharing exists but does not occur. Better structures could encourage those holding relevant information about the CYP to share it with others who could provide the CYP with further support. Further, improved communication directly with the CYP and their families would ensure that they are receiving provision which is working well for them, which could be done through a trusted relationship (although there would challenges associated with this).

- **Leadership within a complex system:** There are multiple regional strategic bodies which have relatively equal status, which sometimes makes it unclear who should be taking charge in the hierarchy of decision making. Regional leadership can also make the system work more favourably and effectively for CYP and their families by inspiring a region-specific CYP-focused culture.
- **Integration of health services:** Some participants felt that health services are the 'missing link' in attempting to join up the system of SV provision. At present, they are seen to be taking a more individual approach, looking after each patient without engaging with the wider picture. A more integrated, whole system approach could be taken by health services to ensure collaborative working that puts the CYP at the centre of the system.
- **The role of schools:** Schools already play a highly important role in the identification of CYP at risk of SV. However, participants felt that schools are likely under resourced and over stretched, and therefore find it difficult to support at risk children. Teacher education (for example, around signs of SV risk) and stronger relationships with other individuals/organisations in the system could help support schools in further improving their effectiveness.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Foundational System Mapping project is part of the Serious Violence Research Programme, a multi-year programme of research which is being co-delivered by the Department for Education (DfE)¹³ and Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)¹⁴. Alongside other Programme research including an Evidence and Gaps Map (EGM)¹⁵ and descriptive statistics,¹⁶ this project will contribute towards the Programme's overall aim of establishing what evidence-based actions the Government can take to reduce the number of children and young people (CYP) involved in serious violence (SV). The involvement of CYP in SV, as victim or perpetrator, has serious consequences for the CYP and their families and peers, and huge costs for society. As outlined in numerous Serious Case Reviews¹⁷, there is significant interaction between systems of support¹⁸ (such as education, health, children's social care and voluntary and community organisations) and CYP at risk of or involved in SV. However, knowledge of how these systems interact to support CYP, and why some CYP who access support from these systems still become involved in SV, is limited.

It is in this context that the Foundational System Mapping project was developed. DfE and YEF commissioned IFF Research, an independent research agency, and Dr Charlotte Coleman, Deputy Head of Psychology, Sociology and Politics at Sheffield Hallam University, to deliver the project.

1.2. Research objectives

The Foundational System Mapping project aims to map the systems of support around CYP who may be at risk of involvement in SV. It examines how the system shapes the experiences of CYP and their families, through three lenses:

¹³ [Department for Education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

¹⁴ [Homepage - Youth Endowment Fund](#)

¹⁵ [Systems Evidence and Gap Map - Youth Endowment Fund](#)

¹⁶ [Education, children's social care and offending - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ When a child dies, or is seriously harmed, due to abuse or neglect, a case review is conducted to identify how local professionals and organisations can improve the way they work together to safeguard children.

¹⁸ For the purpose of this research, a 'system of support' is how different services work individually and together to support children at risk of involvement in violence. Examples include education, health, children's social care, and the criminal justice system.

- **Access:** The journey of CYP and their families up to the point of accessing a service, including identification and referral, thresholds and 'gatekeepers'¹⁹;
- **Engagement:** The experience CYP and their families have of a specific service. What engagement between CYP and their families, and the professionals / practitioners who work within these systems looks like, and how it is maintained; and
- **Navigation:** The journey of CYP and their families within, between and out of services; including signposting and onward referrals.

As a 'foundational' project, the primary aim was to help the DfE-YEF research team to develop hypotheses about the quality of CYP's experiences. These hypotheses would then be used to inform future primary research as part of the Serious Violence Research Programme. As such, this project was not intended to provide a complete picture of CYP's journeys or experiences within these systems of support.

The project was also intended to build DfE and YEF's understanding of how the systems of support function, including their inherent complexity.

1.3. Methodology

The research took a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with four groups of participants:

- national funders and policy makers (such as officials from national government departments);
- regional funders, policy makers and commissioners (such as Local Safeguarding Boards and Violence Reduction Units (VRUs));
- professionals and practitioners working directly with CYP (such as teachers and social workers);
- CYP themselves.

Interviews were conducted in a group setting, with multiple individuals from the same organisation. Groups ranged from between two and five people. In total, 157 participants took part across 41 interviews.

Sampling

IFF Research generated the sample frame through an iterative sampling approach where early discussions with national and regional funders and policy makers and the first

¹⁹ 'Thresholds' means the criteria a CYP needs to meet to access a service, and 'gatekeepers' means individuals or organisations that control access to a service.

practitioners / professionals interviewed gave direction and focus to further sample building, with participants recommending further individuals and organisations for potential inclusion in the research. IFF asked professionals and practitioners if they could approach CYP they worked with to participate. IFF provided CYP with information outlining the project aims and informed them prior to participation that they did not need to share any details of their involvement with SV. IFF also informed CYP that they could refuse to take part at any time (even after the interview) and that it would not affect the support they were receiving.

In order to avoid the subject matter being too distressing the research only sought to conduct interviews with CYP where a reasonable delay had passed between any involvement in severe violence and participation in the research. A delay of 12 months was suggested, sufficient to allow the sensitivity of the subject matter to recede slightly, while memories of using the services/interacting with practitioners/professionals should still be fresh. However, practitioners/professionals ultimately made the decisions on the types of CYP who they felt it would be reasonable to include.

Whilst conducting fieldwork, CYP were required to read and sign a consent form in order to participate, which informed the CYP on the purpose of the research, what was required for the CYP to take part and what would be done with the information they gave us. If the CYP was under 16, the consent of a 'responsible adult' was required in order for them to take part in the research. In those cases both the CYP and the 'responsible adult' were required to read and sign the consent form. Interviewers were required to read and sign the briefing note on handling disclosures of potential risk to individuals participating in the research, providing guidance on what might constitute risk of harm and who to inform if they suspected there may be a risk of harm.

DfE, YEF and IFF agreed four regions that the research would cover. The regions included in the research were selected as they had been identified as hotspots of serious youth violence (Birmingham, Leeds and Haringey) and SAFE (Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed) and Alternative Provision (AP) Special Taskforce locations. Regions were also selected to include both more urban and more rural locations as well as to ensure coverage of different parts of the country. The regions selected were:

- Birmingham, as the West Midlands has one of the highest hospital admission rates for knife crime among under 25s (averaging 159 p.a. from 2012-2021²⁰) and is predominantly urban (only 0.1% rural²¹);

²⁰ NHS Digital. Hospital Admitted Patient Care Activity, 2012-2021

²¹ Office for National Statistics. 2011 Local Authority Rural Urban Classification

- Leeds, as West Yorkshire has hospital admission rates for knife crime among under 25s averaging 82 p.a. from 2012-2021 and a relatively high rural population for a city (7.5%);
- Haringey, as London has the single highest hospital admission rates for knife crime among under 25s, averaging 543 p.a. from 2012-2012 and is urban (0% rural); and
- Northumberland, whilst not identified as a hotspot has a relatively high hospital admission rate for knife crime among under 25s (33 p.a. from 2012-2012 across Northumbria) but was predominately included in order to comment on provision across urban and rural settings, as it is very rural (70.8%).

National funders/policymakers were interviewed to provide the ‘big picture’ view of the system. Those participants included professionals working in DfE, YEF, the Home Office (HO), the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Regional funders/policymakers/commissioners were included to explore the different ‘shape’ of the system between geographic areas. These are the roles ‘in the middle’ between national policy makers (above); and practitioners/professionals on the ground who work directly with children and young people. They included professionals working in organisations providing or commissioning one or more of the following types of support:

- primary support, working with children and young people in general, not just those ‘at risk’;
- secondary support, working with children and young people felt to be ‘at risk’ in some way;
- tertiary support, working with children and young people involved in serious violence as a victim or perpetrator.

Examples include Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Community Foundations, Local Authorities, and Violence Reduction Units (VRUs). At this level, the system varies from one region to another and therefore structuring this part of our sample by region enabled the exploration of several variants.

Practitioners/professionals who work within the systems were included because of their ‘on the ground’ knowledge of how the systems function and their direct contact with CYP. These included voluntary and community sector (VCS) workers, teachers, police officers, health workers, social workers, Youth Offending Teams and children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) workers.

CYP with lived experience / at risk of serious violence were included to provide the unique perspective of those at the receiving end of the system and to ensure that the

'voice' of the CYP was not lost. The CYP that were interviewed ranged from 14 to 21 years old.

Fieldwork

IFF Research carried out fieldwork between 24th June and 28th November 2022. In total, we contacted 157 participants and completed 41 qualitative interviews via telephone, Microsoft Teams or Zoom, as shown in Table 1. Interviews lasted around 90 minutes using a topic guide developed by IFF Research with input from DfE and YEF.

All three topic guides included a section on plotting the individuals and organisations involved in the system of support and explored relationships between those included on the map. They also reflected on how the way the system is structured affects how CYP access and navigate it. National and regional funders/policymakers were asked to comment on how organisations shape policy and funded organisations, whilst professionals and practitioners described their own role in providing direct support to CYP. The full topic guides can be seen in Appendix A: Topic Guides

Table 1: Achieved quotas overview

Participant category	Contacted	Completed
National funders	8	8
Regional policy maker	29	9
Professionals / practitioners	105	19
CYP	6	5

At the regional level these discussions break down as follows.

Table 2: Achieved quotas breakdown

Region	Contacted	Completed
Birmingham	Regional policymakers	2
Birmingham	Professionals/practitioners	5
Birmingham	CYP	0
Haringey	Regional policymakers	2
Haringey	Professionals/practitioners	4
Haringey	CYP	2
Leeds	Regional policymakers	2
Leeds	Professionals/practitioners	5
Leeds	CYP	0
Northumberland	Regional policymakers	3
Northumberland	Professionals/practitioners	5
Northumberland	CYP	3

We were hoping to speak with more CYP. However, there were significant challenges in identifying and gaining access to relevant CYP, in part due to the vulnerable nature of this audience. Recruiters often found it difficult to achieve direct contact with the individual who knew the CYP at the organisation. Recruiters were often passed around multiple departments or individuals, who had limited capacity to help recruitment of relevant CYP. In response to this, additional discussions were conducted with national funders, regional policy makers and professionals/practitioners.

Going forwards, DfE and YEF will take the challenges of recruiting CYP as a key learning point to encourage the inclusion of the CYP voice in future research.

Analysis

IFF Research undertook analysis using a framework analysis approach. The approach consisted of the following stages:

- Developing a thematic framework to analyse the data;
- Developing the system map; and
- Interpreting the data.

Developing a thematic framework to analyse the data

IFF used initial interviews to identify emerging themes as well as individuals/organisations in the system and the relationships between these. This informed the development of a thematic framework, structured around the identified individuals/organisations, and the objectives of the research.

Researchers used notes from the interviews and the recordings to populate the analysis framework, so that each row contained a detailed summary of an individual interview, structured around the consistent column headings. This allowed them to make comparisons across different groups of participants.

Developing the system map

The project aimed to create a visual system map accompanied by commentary on how the different individuals/organisations within the system interact, and what this means for CYP/their families. Often the individual participants had, working with the researchers, sketched out their thoughts on what the system looks like as a rough system map, as part of the interview. These individual rough sketches of the system, and the interview content (as summarised in the thematic framework) were brought together into an overall composite map of the system. This overall map of the system evolved as further discussions were completed. Early versions of the composite map were shown to participants in later discussions so that they could critique and help to further refine this.

This system map visually plotted the individuals/organisations within the system and represented the relationships, referral paths or data sharing between them. It further described the role of each individual/organisation, how they interact around serious youth violence, and how they are funded. Within the individual interviews, the mapping exercise was used as the starting point for a discussion about the likely consequences of this system, for the experiences of CYP and their families.

Interpreting the data

Multiple analysis sessions were conducted throughout fieldwork to discuss both the findings emerging from the interviews and the evolving composite system map. These sessions provided a forum for the individual researchers to challenge each other's interpretation of the data and to pose further questions to explore via further analysis and within the remaining interviews. The emerging themes were written up and shared with DfE and YEF iteratively, to allow further discussion and refinement of the analysis.

Uncertainty and assumptions

As this is qualitative research, the purpose is to provide an in-depth understanding and reflection of the variety of experiences of participants. It is not intended to be statistically representative.

Additionally, due to the significant variation across local systems, the composite map may not document or explain everything in the system. The map represents the views of the range of participants interviewed, therefore some individuals/organisations who play a role in the system may have been missed.

In drawing together the findings of multiple interviews, there is a focus on recurring themes; some of the nuance of feedback from individual research participants may be lost. This should be considered when interpreting the findings.

2. What does the system of support look like?

2.1. The system map

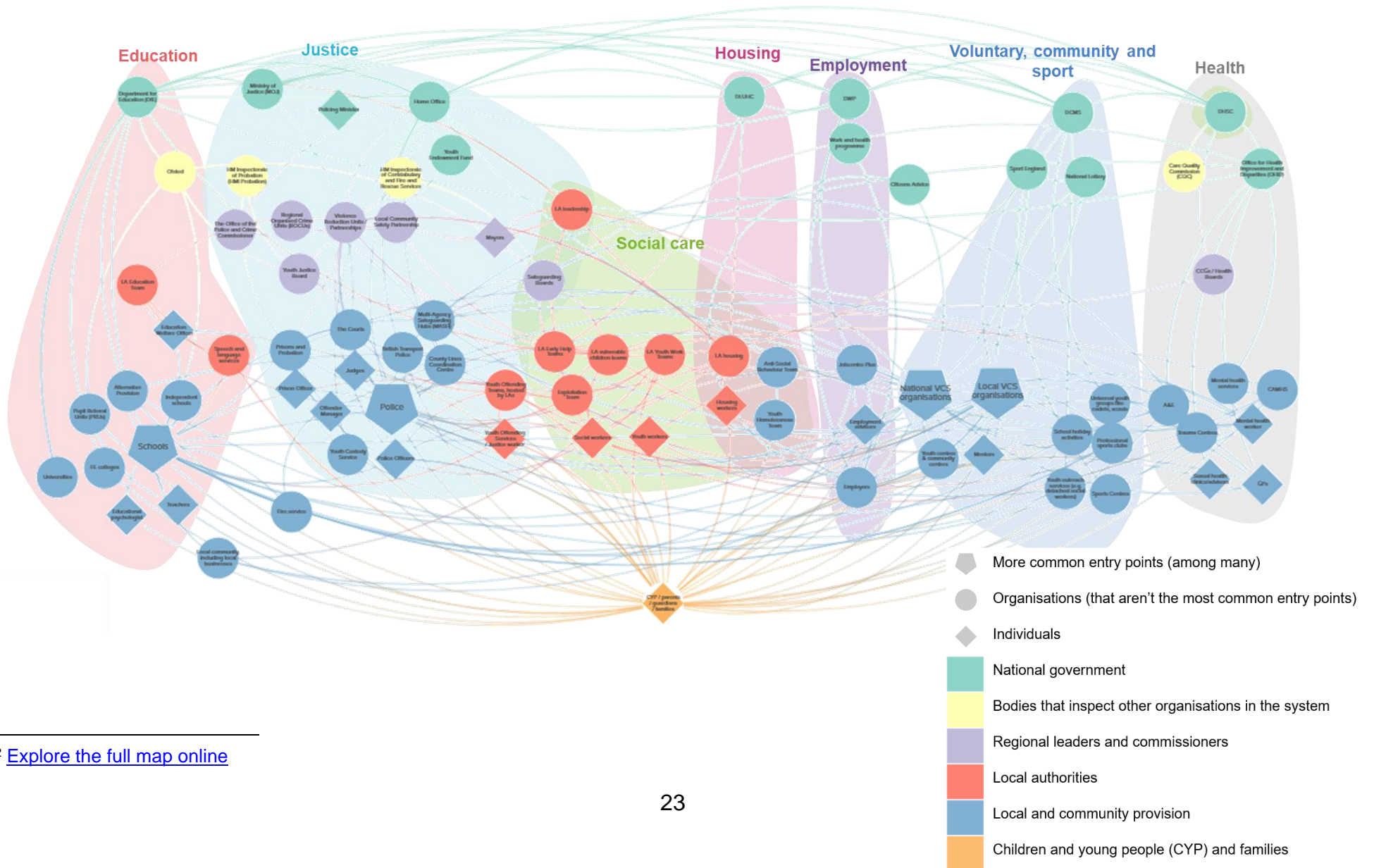
The map in Figure 1 below shows **a complex system, with multiple organisations and individuals, entry points, types of individual/organisation and a variety of relationships between them all.**

The map is laid out into seven vertical sections: Education; Justice; Social Care; Housing; Employment; Voluntary, Community and Sport; and Health. Each of these sections has its own, which encompasses all the individuals/organisations within it. The individuals/organisations (shown as the smaller circles on the map), have colours. The legend shows how these have been categorised.

There are connection lines shown on the map, which can be difficult to follow, due to the complexity of the map, in terms of the number of individuals/organisations involved, and number of connections between them. For this reason, we will be homing in on specific aspects of the map in more detail later in this chapter. This will allow for exploration of how the different parts of the system are currently working, as well as discussion of the characteristics of the system as a whole.

Due to the size of the map, the image below is included to demonstrate the system's complexity, rather than as a source of information. The full map outputs accompany this report.

Figure 1. The system map²²



²² [Explore the full map online](#)

Most support is locally determined

Participants noted that **most support is locally determined**. Very few direct support services at a national level emerged from the interviews. Indeed, most direct support is devolved to the local level. There were some exceptions. For example, the Department for Education (DfE) was described as having a national, strategic stewardship role, whilst also providing some more local support.

To give some examples of locally determined support, Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) are funded nationally from the Home Office (HO) but work locally. Similarly, statutory services typically only cover a specific region, even though national government ultimately fund them. Schools and the police have relationships at the local level, for information sharing and interventions. There were also many examples of local 'grass roots' community groups and Voluntary and Community Services (VCS) organisations, which are typically commissioned by local authorities (LAs).

Some charities have a national presence. However, charities' provision tends to be commissioned locally by LAs and independent funders (such as Community Foundations, private family funds and the National Lottery Community Fund).

Participants believed that this **local commissioning means that support is varied across England**, with different leadership styles and funding arrangements.

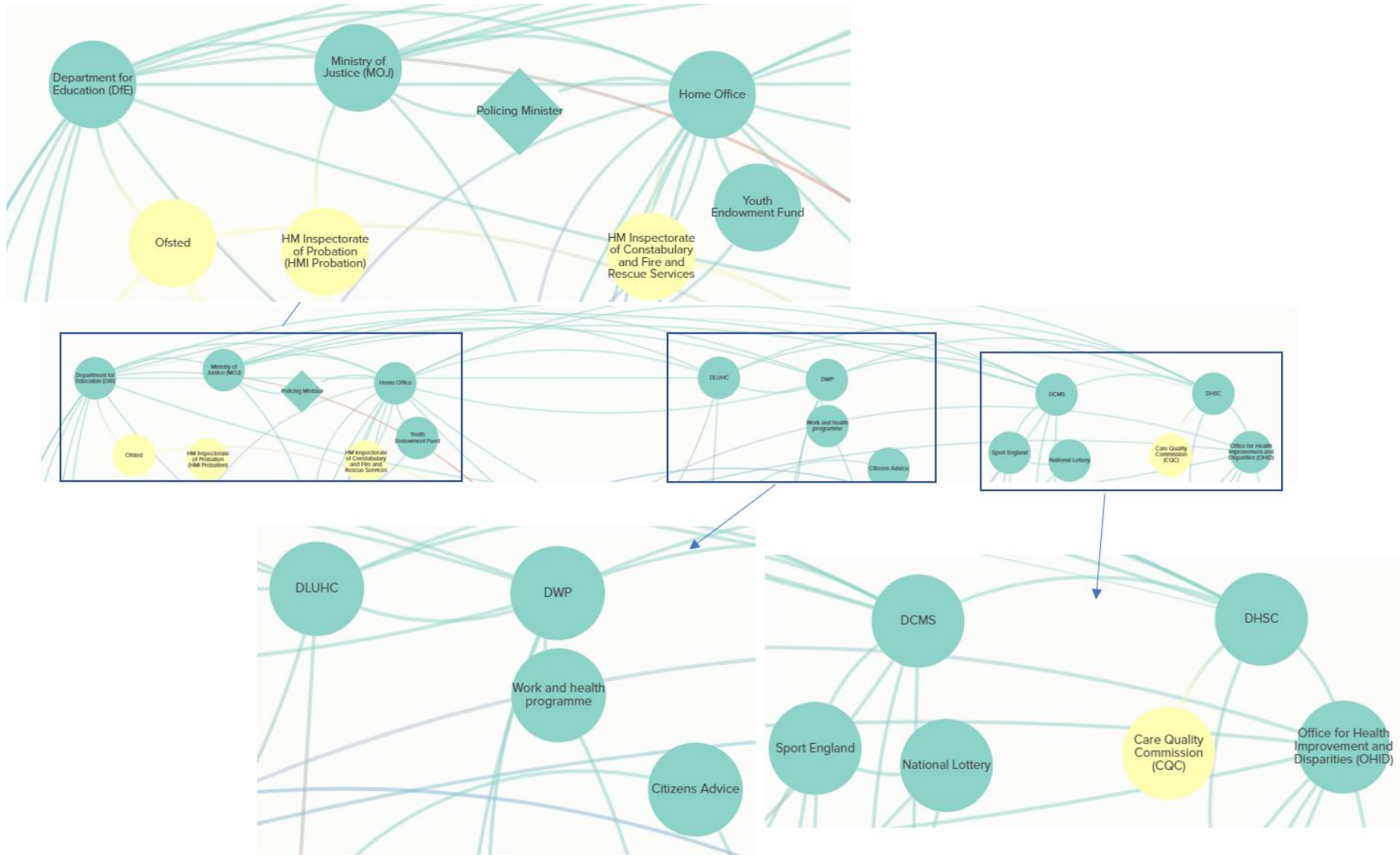
National government

We now move on to discuss some key sections of the map, dealing with clusters of related individuals/organisations. Firstly, national government.

Please note, the following descriptions of how the system of support works, and what each individual/organisation does, are based on what participants said in this research. These descriptions may not marry up with how these individuals/organisations would describe themselves.

As shown in Figure 2, all the government departments are connected. They are also perceived to be aiming for the same broad, ultimate goal – to reduce SV risk for CYP. However, these relationships are not straightforward. Participants reported that policy objectives are not always joined-up, and in fact can be in conflict. For example, the Home Office's focus is to prevent and reduce crime. Some participants felt this led to a more punitive approach by the parts of the system that they fund. Conversely, the DfE, which also encompassed children's social care, was described as aiming for more child-centred support interventions.

Figure 2. National government individuals/organisations²³



Department for Education

Participants described the DfE as providing the national, strategic stewardship for the quality of education in schools. The DfE are also responsible for children's social care, and providing some direct improvement support to LAs and Directors of Children's Services.

The DfE's connections included mainstream schools and alternative provision schools, Further and Higher Education, and Ofsted. They are also connected to LA leadership and Child Protection.

The Ministry of Justice

Participants described the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) as being responsible for the criminal justice system, including all statutory work with children and young people in the youth justice system (for example, Programmes such as Turnaround and Youth Justice Board pathfinders). MOJ, specifically via the Youth Justice Board, also provide a lot of the funding for Youth Offending Teams²⁴.

The MOJ have connections with the DfE, Policing Minister, the Home Office, courts, and with the other national government departments.

The Home Office

Participants described the Home Office (HO) as the lead department for coordinating the Government's SV response. They play a coordination and funding role, and run programmes such as Project ADDER, the Trusted Relationship Fund and the Prevent programme. They were described as having a 'big impact' in terms of funding. For example, funding the police. Their engagement with communities and CYP is indirect, via delivery partners. However, some participants described HO culture as being focused on 'stamping out crime' rather than seeing a more holistic picture of young people involved in crime.

The HO has a relatively higher number of connections to other parts of the map, compared with the rest of national government. These connections are with all other national government departments, the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), VRUs and the police. The HO has relationships, directly or indirectly, with most individuals/organisations in the system.

The relationship with the police was described as fluctuating depending on changes in Government, as ministerial changes were felt to lead to differing policies. Relationships with wider stakeholders around serious violence were described as sometimes difficult,

²⁴ This description is based on the views of participants. Although Youth Offending Teams do have a statutory caseload, the Turnaround programme has voluntary participation and the Youth Justice Board Pathfinders are test pilots.

due to the HO policy on migration. The participants said Migration policy has resulted in lack of trust from some groups towards authority figures.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Participants described DLUHC as playing a role in preventing involvement with SV, with a focus on tackling anti-social behaviour. Some participants felt this could mean their work is not as joined up with that of other government departments, who take a more holistic approach regarding the journey CYP may go on to involvement in SV.

DLUHC have connections with some but not all of the other national government departments (DfE, MOJ, HO, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), as well as with LA Early Help teams (via the Supporting Families programme) and Housing.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Participants said that DWP encounter young people aged 16-24 in the context of Universal Credit (UC) and supporting them to find employment. Employment is relevant as it is seen as a diversionary factor away from involvement in SV.

DWP have connections with most of the national government departments (DfE, MOJ, HO, DLUHC, DCMS, DHSC), as well as with the Work and Health Programme (which supports gang members and care leavers who are 18+, with finding and staying in jobs), Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and employers²⁵.

The Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

Participants described DCMS as having a big impact through its funding, with £560m put into youth services, for universal rather than targeted provision. DCMS provide funding to Sport England, the National Lottery, LAs and other youth work services and youth groups.

DCMS have connections with most of the national government individuals/organisations (DfE, MOJ, the Policing Minister, HO, DLUHC, DWP and DHSC), as well as with Sport England, LA youth work teams and grassroots youth groups and outreach.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID)

Participants described DHSC and OHID as having a role to play regarding CYP support provision.

²⁵ This description is based on the views of participants. JCP is the delivery arm of DWP. JobCentres exist in local areas and have partnership managers who engage with other partners. JCP could therefore be seen as a regional local actor.

The health sector provides health advice and treatment, and in this capacity works directly with CYP. Some participants described the health sector as sometimes less present on the issue of SV than other parts of government. They were felt to be the least aligned with the rest of the system, particularly when discussing SV among CYP. Their approach to issues was described as more medicalised. For example, their intervention being limited to providing care and treatment for injuries, and not dedicate any time to considering the wider situation for the CYP. This approach was seen to limit involvement in tackling issues such as SV in a more strategic way.

DHSC have connections with most of the other national government departments (DfE, MOJ, HO, DLUHC, DWP, DCMS and OHID), as well as with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and multi-agency safeguarding boards, mental health services, A&E, GPs, sexual health clinics and advisers.

Regional decision maker individuals/organisations

Next we come to regional decision makers and funders, as shown in Figure 3. Regional decision makes and funders (individuals and/or organisations) have responsibility for shaping policy and funding for a defined geographical area. Most of the regional decision makers have a policing, crime or justice focus.

Figure 3. Regional decision makers²⁶



²⁶ [Explore the full map online](#)

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Participants described the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) as owning commissioning, mostly for police resources, but also having a grants process to commission grass roots and community organisations, regarding early intervention. Their role was felt to be about holding the police to account.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's connections included the Home Office and VRUs.

Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCs)

ROCs provide a range of specialist policing capabilities to police forces, which help them to tackle serious and organised crime effectively. They sit between local policing and national interventions. Participants described ROCs as varying between regions. Their only connection on the map was with County Lines coordination centres, at grassroots level.

Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and Violence Reduction Partnerships

VRUs are not a statutory service but are key players in galvanising the response from statutory services. Participants described them as leading on coordinating the local response to youth violence, through networking, partnership-building, and commissioning.

Participants described VRUs as defining the problem, identifying who is facing issues and where; developing a plan, reporting this plan back, and using it to put together their spending objectives. They then convene leadership meetings to make sure these things happen (essentially the 'task and finish' group for the national response to addressing youth violence in England and Wales). They are seen as the key body in galvanising change, as they have free reign in making decisions at their level, can get initiatives signed off by the HO and have a lot of influence over statutory services. However, one VRU noted that they do not have mandatory power²⁷, which can create conflict with other individuals/organisations in the system who do have this. Another VRU felt that a more collaborative approach was needed in their local region, rather than individual organisations working on separate issues.

Participants described VRUs have many connections with other individuals/organisations on the map. For example, with the Home Office, the Youth Endowment Fund, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (though participants said that there can be tension

²⁷ Mandatory power is a type of authority that someone has to control or influence others. It is a legal right to act or not act, and the person with this power can change legal relationships. This power must be exercised as instructed, without any discretion.

here and a lack of clarity between roles), and with various parts of LAs, the police and schools.

Local Community Safety Partnerships

Participants described that Local Community Safety Partnerships do local strategic work, with some responsibility for youth violence. They bring together participants to address safety. For example, around the issues facing women and girls or gangs. They have some funding capability to commission interventions. They may also deliver their own in-house youth work provision.

Local Community Safety Partnerships have connections with VRUs, Youth Justice Boards and LA leadership and child protection.

Youth Justice Boards

Participants described that by law, every LA must have a Youth Justice Board. They are always multi-agency, with certain bodies that are mandated to sit on the boards. Youth Justice Boards report to both the Safeguarding Board and the Local Community Safety Partnership²⁸. They are also connected to the police.

Safeguarding Boards

Participants described safeguarding boards as having three statutory partners – the police, LAs and Health. These three partners have clear mandatory lines of reporting to the Safeguarding Board, and have a range of mandatory responsibilities. All or most of the regional tier of the map will report to the Safeguarding Board, not necessarily in a mandatory or governance way, but for information-sharing and partnership working.

Safeguarding Boards were seen as are relatively well connected, with links to LA Early Help and vulnerable children teams, as well as with MASH, the Youth Justice Board, Ofsted HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, and OHID.

Mayors

Participants described mayors in London, and for combined authorities, as having a mostly economic remit. However, they were thought to play a role regarding Housing and Health in some regions (for example in Greater Manchester). Participants thought this created cross-over with the SV agenda, meaning that some mayors have significant power in particular instances.

²⁸ This description is based on the views of participants. There are a number of difference actors in this space including: 1) The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales is the national level organisation; 2) Youth Offending Teams deliver the interventions; and 3) Local youth justice partnerships, which may have a board, are the LA multi-agency governance bodies in each area.

Participants also thought deputy mayors in Police and Crime have a major role, with their own funding and a role both in commissioning victim support services and influencing what LAs commission locally (including youth services and voluntary sector provision). They also have a role in convening partnership working.

Mayors' only connection on the map is with LA leadership.

Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health Boards

Participants described Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Health Boards sharing data on CYP presenting as needing treatment as a result of involvement in SV. This helps inform local services set up in response.

CCGs and Health Boards' only connections are with the HO and DHSC.

Main entry points into the system

The term 'entry point' describes how CYP first enter the system of support. From what participants told us, we concluded that **the two most common entry points are via schools and the police**. The voluntary and community sector is also an entry point, but to a lesser extent.

Schools / education system

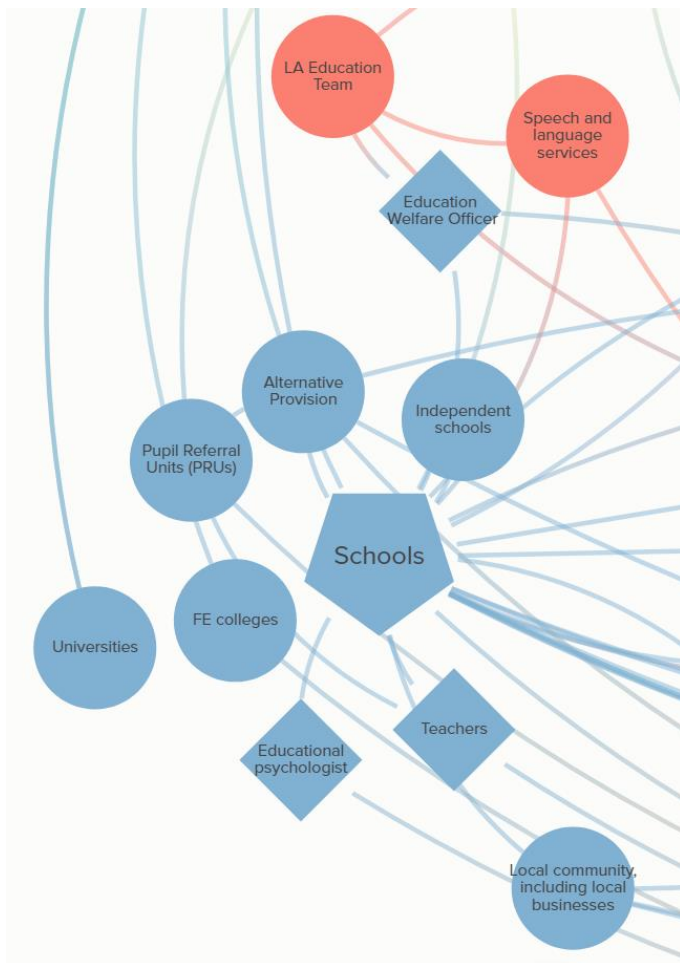
Participants described that within schools, teachers and other professionals have direct contact with CYP. This contact provides them with the opportunity to be alerted to warning signs. For example, reduced school attendance or behavioural issues. As shown in Figure 4, **schools are organisations with one of the highest number of reported connections to individuals/organisations in the map**. This reflects their ability to signpost children to external support.

Key connections for schools included with CYP themselves, and their families. Schools also had connections with other local schools and other types of schools. For example, mainstream state schools, independent schools and alternative provision schools.

Some schools were also in touch with SV focused organisations, such as a VRU, MASH and/or the police. Schools and the police often have close working relationships, with some schools reporting that police officers regularly visit their schools to work with CYP identified as being at risk.

Schools are also embedded in the local community. For example, they have relationships with local businesses such as fast-food restaurants and corner shops. Local business owners can flag CYP behavioural issues outside of school hours. Schools also reported having awareness of VCS organisations locally who can provide support to at risk CYP.

Figure 4. Schools²⁹



Police / justice system

The police and justice system were described as another common entry point into the system of support for CYP (see Figure 5). Police officers often have direct contact with CYP. For example, they may encounter them on local streets, when making arrests. Probation officers also work with some CYP after offences have occurred³⁰. Participants also mentioned the British Transport Police’s National County Lines programme as an example of this specific to SV, where CYP using trains for County Lines activity are identified.

The police also have multiple connections with other individuals/organisations on the map. Ultimately their remit comes from the Home Office. They were connected to various

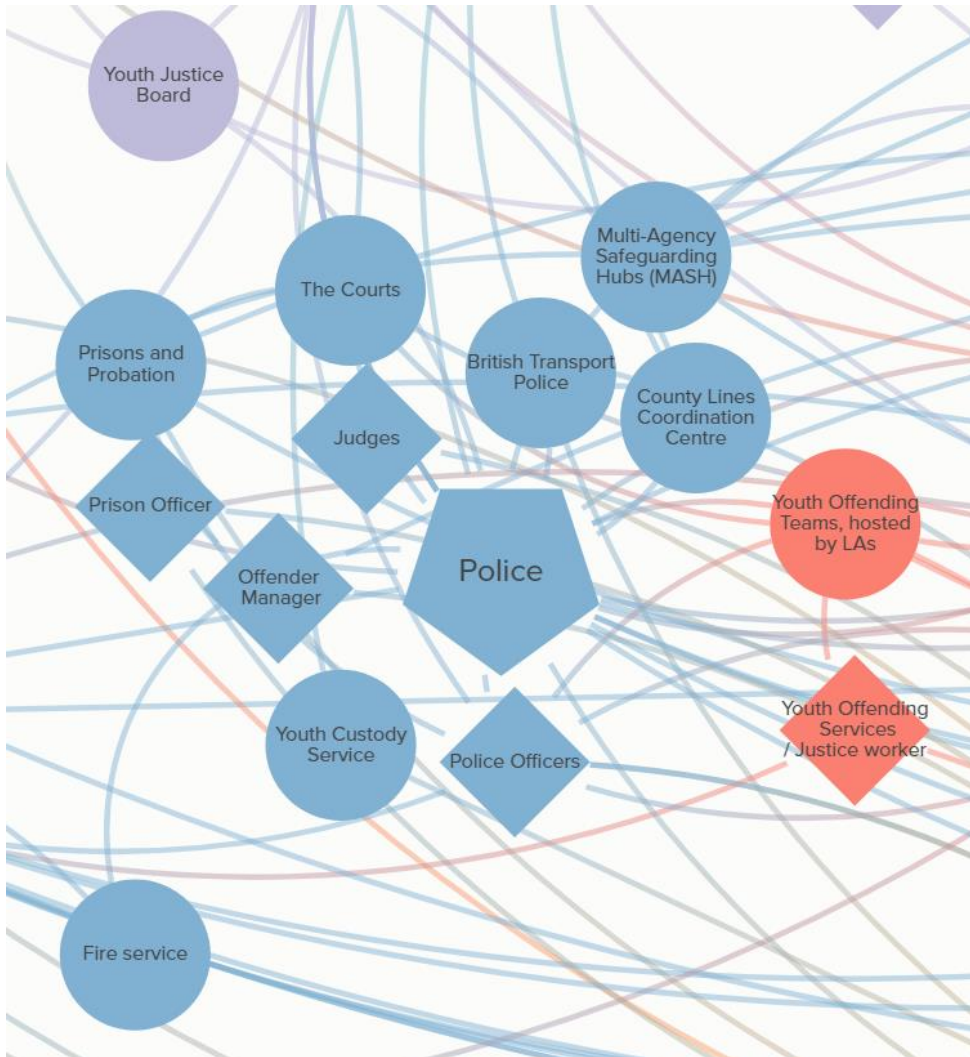
²⁹ [Explore the full map online](#)

³⁰ This description is based on the views of participants. Depending on the age of the CYP, Youth Offending Teams may be working with the CYP after an offence has occurred.

SV related individuals/organisations such as VRUs, MASH and Youth Justice Boards. They also had direct connections with schools and the fire service.

However, the police were described as being limited in their ability to intervene until a crime has been committed, so are unable to take action where CYP are at risk, before the situation escalates. Participants expressed frustration about this. Some participants also felt the police were also slow to act; for example, only intervening after multiple reports.

Figure 5. Police³¹



Voluntary and community sector (VCS)

Participants described how the VCS encompasses many different types of locally and nationally focused charitable and community organisations (see Figure 6).

³¹ [Explore the full map online](#)

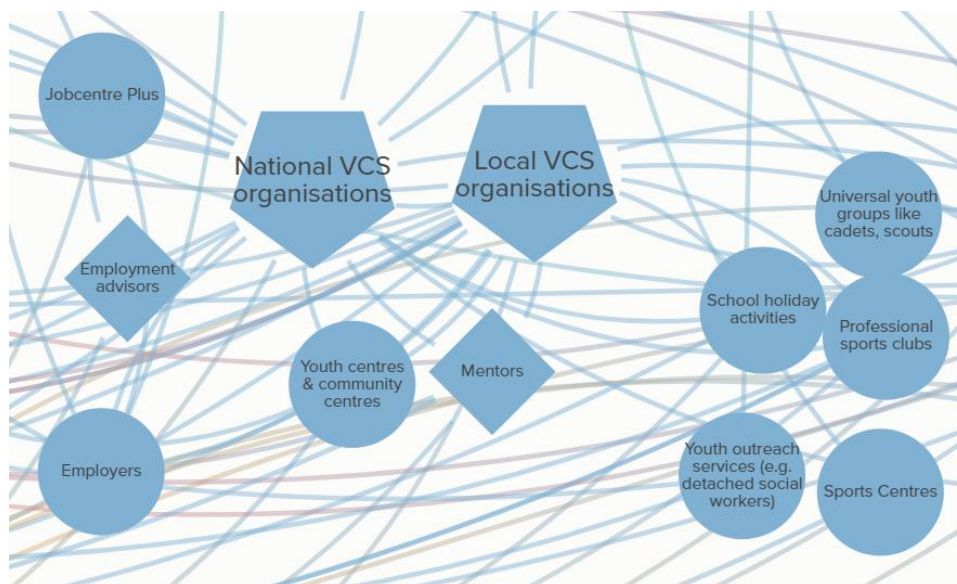
Some VCS organisations have a specific focus on support for those at risk of SV. There are also VCS with a related and/or complementary focus. For example, youth/community centres, sports centres and clubs, and other youth activities.

Although SV is not the direct focus of this second group of individuals/organisations, participants perceived them to **provide a space where CYP feel comfortable and can form positive relationships with adults. These positive relationships can lead to CYP disclosing information**, which means that VCS organisations can share information with other individuals/organisations in the system (for example, with schools).

Although a frequent entry point for CYP into the system of support, CYP can also start receiving support from VCS after they have entered the system another way. For example, after going through the criminal justice system.

National and local VCS organisations were very well connected to other individuals/organisations on the map. They have links with the police, schools, LAs, grassroots organisations and some national participants (for example, Citizens Advice, Sport England and the National Lottery). VCS organisations also generally have good relationships with each other in local areas. Indeed, some mentioned what a strength this was in terms of knowledge sharing.

Figure 6. Voluntary and community sector (VCS) ³²



³² [Explore the full map online](#)

LAs

Participants described how different parts of LAs are connected to most other areas of the map (see Figure 7).

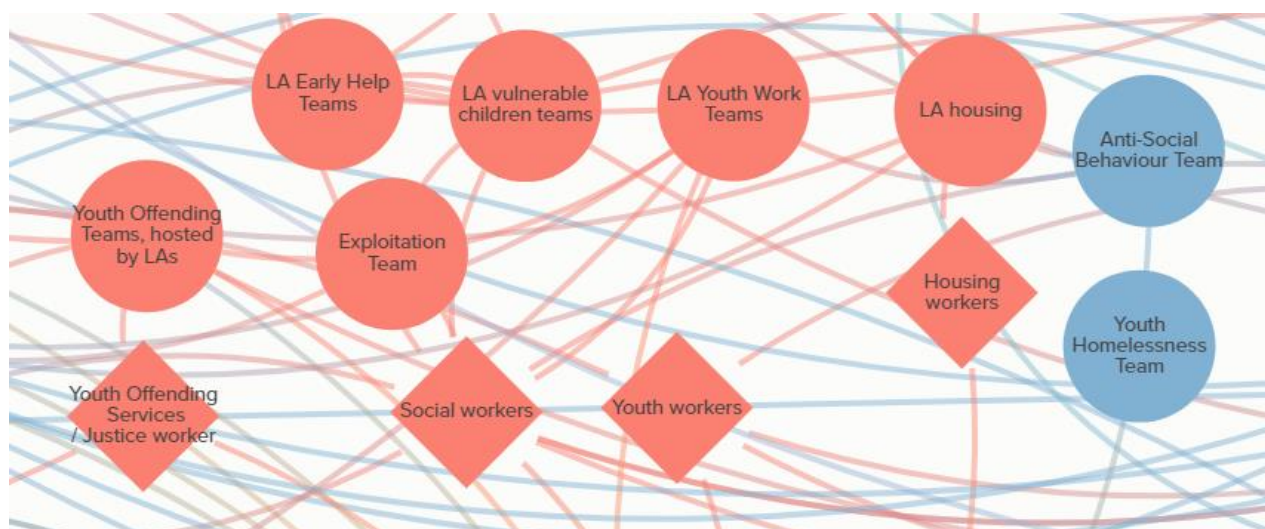
For example, social care provision has to be organised through LAs. LA social care support was not identified as a main entry point into the system in itself. However, it is a key point of referral after CYP have been identified by other entry point individuals/organisations.³³

LA individuals/organisations, more so than other individuals/organisations, are not only involved with CYP themselves, but also with their families. Increasingly, LAs are looking at contextual factors outside of the home, which have historically been beyond their remit. For example, considering the influence of CYP's peers and the risk of exploitation.

However, this was seen as a complex area of the system. Different teams have different remits, and these can vary between LAs. This can therefore be difficult for CYP to navigate. Additionally, the criteria for social care involvement are strict, which can prevent CYP from accessing the support they need.

In summary, **LAs were seen as well-placed to provide support in the wider-family context. However, it is not always possible for CYP to access this support.**

Figure 7. LAs³⁴



³³ Although it is worth noting that often CYP may already be known to them in other ways, for example, by having been in the care system.

³⁴ [Explore the full map online](#)

Health

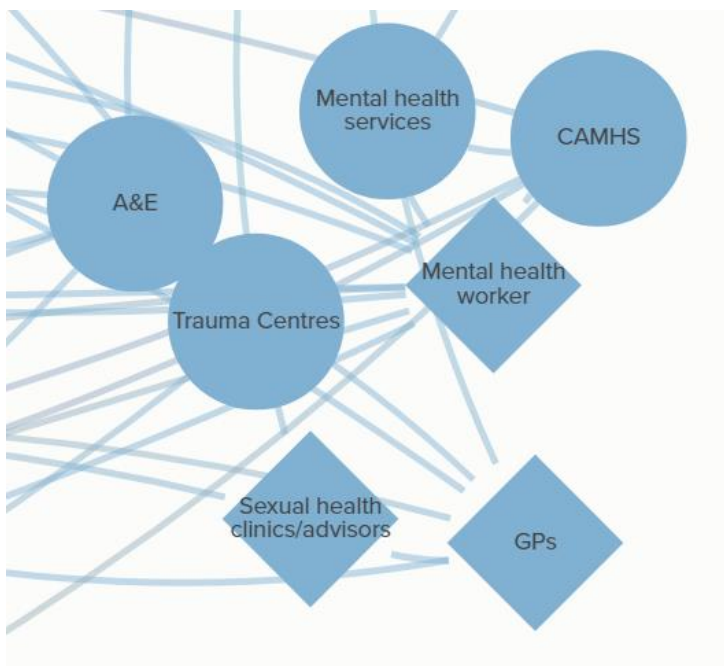
Several participants commented that health is often missing from the conversation around SV risk (See Figure 8). The Office for Health Improvement Disparities (OHID) was cited as an example of this misalignment with the rest of the system, due to its approach being described as medicalised.

Participants described health services as dealing with broader health outcomes, and only recently (in the past 5 years) starting to consider youth violence as part of their work. Liaison and diversionary services were cited as examples of the work that is being carried out.

CYP may present to the health system with an injury once they have become involved in SV, yet links to other areas of the system are limited. Mental health in particular is an area where participants said there is potential to support more CYP. However, resources and capacity are seen as limited in this area.

In summary, **although health individuals/organisations are present in the system, they were not felt to align fully with the rest of the system, therefore their involvement is seen as limited.**

Figure 8. Health individuals/organisations³⁵



³⁵ [Explore the full map online](#)

What national and regional funders and practitioners *think* the system looks like from CYP perspective

According to the national and regional funders and practitioners' map (see Figure 9 and Figure 10 below), CYP have many connections to the system. National and regional funders and practitioners identified CYP as having a primary or secondary relationship with multiple individuals/organisations. This indicates that, **in theory, CYP can interact with many potential sources of support.**

Figure 9. Individuals/organisations with direct connections to CYP³⁶

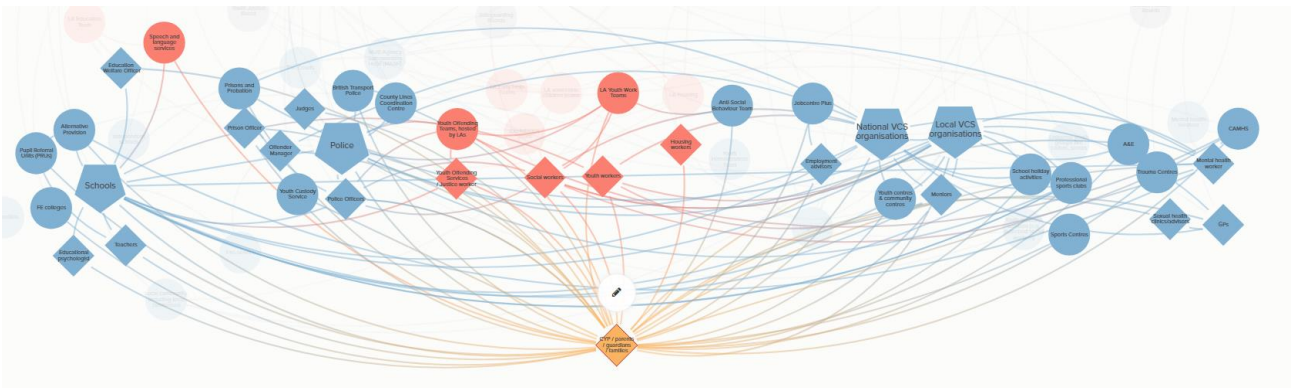
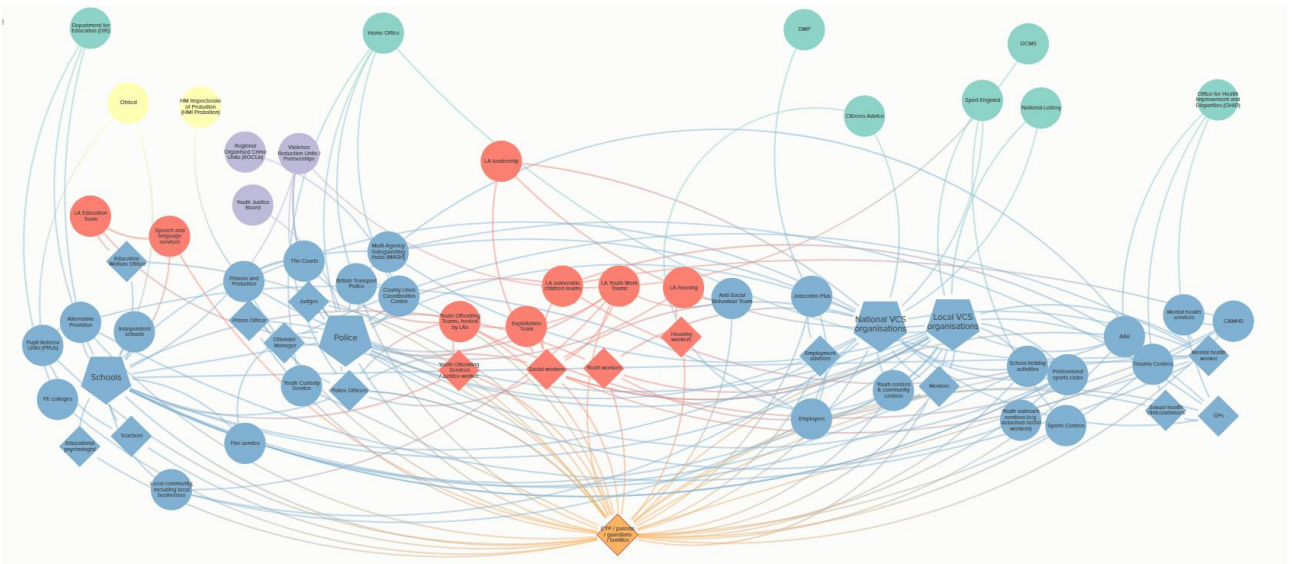


Figure 10. Individuals/organisations with direct connections to CYP and those connected to those individuals/organisations³⁷



2.2. Children and young people map

It is important to note in this section that we were only able to speak to five CYP and was unable to talk to any CYP in Birmingham, therefore this should be considered when reading this section of the report.

CYP described a far less complex system and identified fewer connections that the other participants. As we were only able to speak to a small number of CYP, we can only comment on the individuals/organisations in the system that those five individuals

³⁶ [Explore the full map online](#)

³⁷ [Explore the full map online](#)

came into contact with. The map we have created to show the CYP perspective is therefore not intended to show all of the individuals/organisations that CYP come into contact with, but rather to illustrate how the system appears to some CYP.

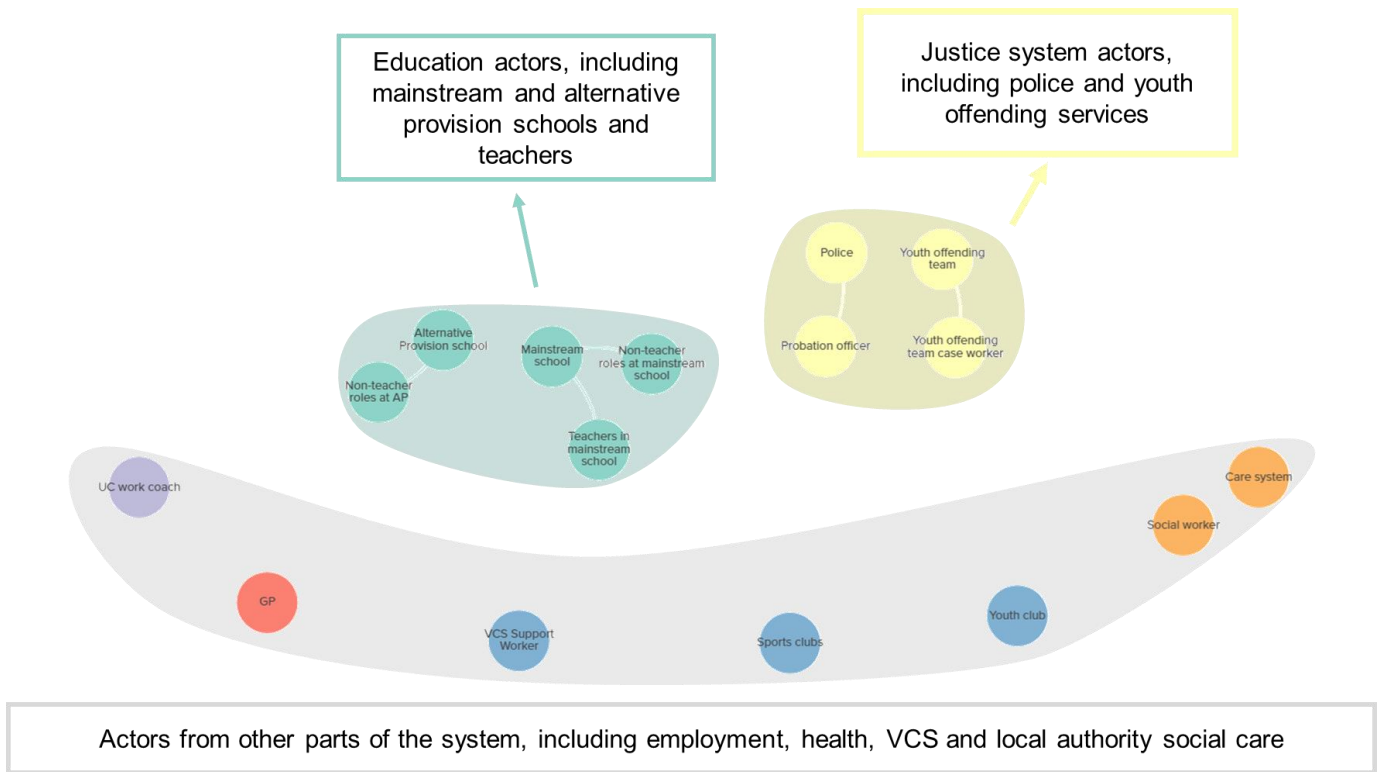
To allow us to develop the CYP map³⁸, we asked them firstly how they came into contact with the professional/practitioner that suggested they take part in the research. We then asked them to recall any other individuals or organisations they were in contact with before and after.

Please note that it was not always possible to determine whether we had captured every relevant individual/organisation that each CYP had come into contact with, because CYP may not always have been aware that contact with an individual/organisation was due to them being at SV risk. Similarly, the support they did tell us about may not always have been directly due to their SV risk, but for related factors (for example, behavioural issues or substance use).

Figure 11 shows a composite map, created by bringing together the feedback from the five CYP interviewed.

³⁸ [Explore the full CYP map online](#)

Figure 11: Summary view of the system map from the CYP perspective³⁹



³⁹ [Explore the full CYP map online](#)

As shown in Figure 11, **the CYP map has two main groups of individuals/organisations: those in education and those in justice.** This reflects the two most common ‘entry points’ identified in the overall national and regional funder and practitioner map. These are the only two areas of the map where participants described that there are clear connections, but these connections are only present within each area (and not between them).

The education area of the map includes the school(s) that CYP have attended, and staff they came into contact within those schools. Staff tended to fall into two categories: teaching and pastoral staff. Although the map of the overall system shows that different types of schools are closely connected, these connections were not apparent to the CYP (for example, they were not aware of any communication that may have taken place between organisations).

The CYP we spoke to commonly did not have a good relationship with mainstream schools they attended and the staff that taught them directly, seeing them as authoritarian relationships associated with receiving punishments such as detentions, rather than as a source of support.

That said, it was still common for CYP to have some positive individual relationships at school. Where CYP had a relationship with a member of staff at the school in a non-teaching capacity (e.g., school counsellor, engagement officer) or a member of teaching staff acting in a mentor or pastoral role (e.g., form tutor, head of year) these relationships were much more positive for CYP. These positive relationships usually included one-on-one contact with a focus on support instead of punishment; making these potential ‘trusted adult’ relationships.⁴⁰ For example, one CYP mentioned a relationship with a teacher who would challenge detentions where they believed they were unfair.

Where CYP had also attended an alternative provision (AP) school, this tended to be a more positive experience for them than they had had at a mainstream school. The reasons for this were that they felt the focus within the AP schools was on building relationships and providing support to CYP.

Despite there being potential examples of ‘trusted adult’ relationships found in the education part of the system, in practice these lacked the consistency needed for them to fulfil their potential. CYP often noted that they built a positive relationship at school, only for that relationship to end. For example, due to the staff member leaving,

⁴⁰ YEF define a trusted adult relationship as “an adult who is not a family member or friend, but is someone that has the knowledge, skills and capabilities to build trusted relationships and deliver specific approaches that support positive outcomes for a child or young person. Clear roles. Responsibilities and boundaries are established between a trusted adult and a child and young person”.

the CYP moving outside of that staff member's remit (e.g. moving to a new head of year at the end of an academic year), or due to the CYP leaving the school at age 16 or 18.

The justice area of the CYP map includes the police and youth offending services, and the specific individuals related to those services, such as probation officers or youth offending case workers. As identified in the overall system map, 'entry' into this area of the map was via being arrested by the police after committing an offence. The CYP understandably chose not to provide details about the offences and subsequent arrest, but they did reflect on their relationships with the individuals.

The participants explained that these relationships were usually short-lived, yet productive in that they did result in CYP being referred on to support designed to prevent them committing further offences. Despite the referrals, CYP did not seem to perceive the justice individuals/organisations as being connected to each other. Possibly, this is because the contact with the justice system stopped at the point of referral, leading to the impression that it is not one connected system. This is not necessarily an issue if the CYP receives the support they need, but does reflect the findings from other participants that the system is not as joined-up as it could be (see Chapter 3).

There were a variety of other individuals/organisations that CYP reported coming into contact with; however from the CYP perspective these were not connected to each other. For instance, a CYP may be in contact with a social worker, Universal Credit (UC) work coach or regularly going to a sports club but these three things feel completely isolated and separate from each other.

The overall lack of perceived connections for CYP suggests that for them there is not a visible 'journey' through sources of support. **Often support came from one source for a period of time, and then participants described that support ended (and often ended not when the CYP was 'ready' for it to end, but due to other reasons).** Although sometimes there is further support offered to the CYP, this is not always the case. Sometimes the next time CYP enter the system is after their situation has worsened.

CYP case study 1 –support system can lack a sense of ‘journey’ and connections

Kyle⁴¹ had previously been connected to the system as a teenager. After getting into trouble with the police, he was excluded from mainstream schooling and started attending an alternative provision (AP) school. Kyle felt supported and was doing well at the AP school, but left at 16.

At this point, Kyle essentially dropped out of the system of support. While he initially found work, he struggled with finding consistent work. This led to him claiming Universal Credit (UC). While participants identified UC Work Coaches as being part of the system of support overall, in this instance it was not apparent to Kyle. In fact, Kyle did not feel that their Work Coach was a source of support, but rather he felt pressure from the Work Coach to accept jobs that he did not think were suitable.

Throughout this time of being in and out of work, Kyle began to struggle with substance use. This led to him being arrested by the police and ultimately charged with an offence. At this stage DWP declared him unfit for work, ending his connection with their Work Coach (reinforcing the idea that this was not part of a wider system of support).

The offence did result in Kyle re-entering the system support, in that his Probation Officer referred him to VCS organisations to help him with his substance use and to boost self-esteem and aspirations. Despite this link, the Probation Officer still did not feel fully connected with a wider system of support from Kyle’s perspective, because contact with them stopped at the point of referral.

⁴¹ We have given pseudonyms to CYP to protect their anonymity, Kyle is not their real name.

3. What does this mean for support experienced by at risk children, young people and their families?

This chapter discusses how participants perceived the system shapes the experiences of CYP and their families, through the three lenses previously discussed: access, engagement and navigation.

3.1. Access

Identification – perceived different priorities and inconsistent funding seen to lead to a reactive system with a lack of preventative support for CYP

Participants described a complex system, even at a national policy level. This includes multiple funding streams and different government departments with different priorities. As departments have differing aims and remits, their approaches towards reducing the overarching goal of reducing SV are different. **Participants thought that this has unintentionally created a system with a reactive focus, rather than one with a focus on preventative support.**

A perceived need for sustainable funding focused on regional needs

Whilst government departments are fundamentally united in their goal to reduce SV, they were seen as having differing aims and remits. Policymakers interviewed and those on the ground, felt that their approach towards how to achieve this goal are often not aligned. For example, the Home Office (HO) were seen to have a focus on crime and is heavily involved in the justice elements of the system, whereas the Department for Education (DfE) provide more educational support, safeguarding advice and work more directly with services providing this support.

"Some of it is about culture, and some of it is about the jobs they have to do. The Home Office have a culture of preventing, protecting, stamping out crime, stopping county lines, whereas within the DfE our approach was very child centred.. protection. Sometimes the culture of different government departments don't match but the intention is the same."

National funder / policymaker

Participants reported that this can mean that the way that funding is given results in organisations being commissioned by multiple departments to deliver similar outcomes, but with differing approaches. Participants noted that organisations receive funding from multiple departments, drawing them in different directions instead of allowing them to take unified approach with the funding. For example, the Department for Work and

Pensions (DWP) may commission a local organisation to provide mentoring support for young people, whilst HO may commission the same organisation to ask young people to volunteer as community wardens.

"There is something to be said about so many different government departments approaching this group of children and not having as much consciousness as we could about the parallel processes in other departments."

National funder / policymaker

As a result, **participants reported that funding is not used in the most effective way, as the different remits of each department do not contribute to a regional holistic strategy.**

When government departments do not have oversight of what is happening within a specific region, it was felt that particular regions can become saturated with opportunities for support for CYP, whilst others can be forgotten about entirely. Organisations providing support on the ground often mentioned an 'ebb and flow' of funding in their region, as government priorities and focus shifts over time. **This funding pattern is perceived to result in a lack of long-term support to areas or organisations, and access points for CYP changing over time due to a constantly shifting landscape.**

"I'd love to see some more joining up around the funding that does come into the region... there are significant chunks of money coming from central government, but they all sit within different departments, and get filtered to different parts of LAs. The HAF fund, the youth investment fund... there's all this money sitting within departments and then it becomes a bun fight when it comes down to regions. How do we resource good quality services for young people without putting people through complicated commissioning processes to get their hands on money?"

Regional funder / policymaker

Participants reported a tendency to fund new initiatives rather than valuing existing provision

Regional funders and practitioners reported that there is a tendency for funding to be allocated to new initiatives rather than supporting and enhancing existing provision in the area. **Often, practitioners felt that existing provision will have already built the relationships with CYP at risk, the community more widely, and other organisations in the system; but this provision is being overlooked in favour of funding new projects and schemes.** Overall, participants perceived a need for longer-term, sustainable funding, which recognises the specific needs and existing provision within a region.

"Sustainability is our most pressing challenge ... because what we have learnt is you can't have a strategy that lasts three years, you need a ten-year strategy... long term generational strategies – and often the funding does not match the timeframe – so we have to have short term strategies to match the funding".

Regional funder / policymaker

Funding is perceived to be tied to particular outputs or performance indicators, which is seen to hinder preventative work

Participants reported that funding given to VCS organisations can often be tied to:

- **particular outputs.** For example, providing a certain number of summer activities, or a number of students enrolled in a mentoring programme.
- **specific performance indicators.** For example, reducing the percentage of CYP involved in gangs through mentoring programmes, which can be tracked as a short-term outcome.

When the majority of funding has this sort of focus, the programmes designed to achieve longer-term outcomes (which are harder to measure) can be under-resourced. **Overall, participants said the prescriptive nature of these outputs and performance indicators, makes it more difficult to use funds for preventative work.**

"We don't see the long-term preventative stuff anymore; they just want to get them off the streets during the summer holidays. The government says we've put 20,000 people through summer holiday anti-social behaviour programs, but life's not like that, because anti-social behaviour doesn't just happen in summer, it happens all the year round. They've stopped funding preventative stuff."

Local VCS organisation

"They're [Central Government] target driven, we're outcomes driven. We want to know what's happened to someone at the end of their journey, whereas many of the national departments just want to know they've started their journey. So what?"

Regional funder / policymaker

As a result, participants saw that access to the system for CYP is often delayed until they are already involved in SV, rather than used to attempt to identify and work with them when they are at risk. One example of this given by participants was that support around SV risk for children in primary school (Years 5 and 6) has been reduced over time, partially due to reduced funding. Consequently, they miss out on educative or preventative work before they are exposed to a higher risk of involvement in secondary school.

Another example raised by a national funder is that schools with at risk CYP will likely have limited resources and be situated in more deprived areas. As a result of this, rather than supporting disruptive CYP, they may find it less resource-intensive to suspend them in order to focus their attention on CYP who are easier to manage. This national funder perception is reflected in some of the individual CYP experiences of mainstream schools focusing on punishment rather than support.

"They [teachers] used to tell me 'You're not trying', and just put me in detention. They didn't believe me that I have ADHD."

CYP

Participants believe this contributes to a reactive system, with CYP being more likely to already be involved in SV at the point of identification, **unintentionally creating an environment where the likelihood of involvement with violence is not addressed effectively for those at risk.**

"LAs can get trapped into being reactive, rather than developing stronger prevention models and diversionary programmes for young people."

Regional funder / policymaker

A lack of rural provision is reported as resulting in reduced access

Practitioners reported that ensuring that there is CYP access to provision in rural areas is difficult, especially where local transport networks can be under-funded or lacking. Funding can often be allocated to SV hotspots, but CYP within rural areas of these hotspots (e.g., in Northumberland) may struggle to access funded services. For example, if a CYP attends a school in a more urban area but lives in a rural area, they are unlikely to be able to access provision on a weekend without the school bus that they use during the week. Whilst the shift to Zoom or Teams meetings following the pandemic helped organisations to provide some support to these individuals, delivering work on the ground was still felt to be difficult in rural areas.

"There is a lack of access to services, and a lack of support to enable [CYP] to access key services... that's a huge challenge."

Regional funder / policymaker

Entry points and referrals – while there are multiple entry points, support for CYP at risk of SV is perceived as inconsistent across cases

National and regional funders noted that there are multiple entry points for CYP and they may also be referred to a wide range of organisations. They will likely receive a varied

response depending on the service, the skillset of the staff who work there, and the service's capacity and funding. **All of this was reported can in turn result in inconsistent outcomes for CYP.**

Parts of the system are perceived to be under-used as entry points for CYP

The term 'entry point' describes how CYP first enter the system of support. The main entry points that have been identified are:

- arrest by the police
- teachers or school counsellors identifying behaviours linked with SV involvement
- CYP disclosing issues to VCS organisations in their local area
- identification by or referral to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)

Participants perceived these to be **under-used as entry points for CYP, particularly for preventative work.**

Arrest by the police

One typical entry route participants described is when CYP are arrested by police and enter the criminal justice system. Whilst common, this entry point is, by definition, too late for prevention work to take place.

Participants said that accessing the system in this way can contribute to a perception of an 'offender identity' when, in reality, CYP can be both victims and perpetrators of violence at the same time. For example, CYP can have a "criminalised" experience, even if they have been victimised or coerced by gangs, resulting in county lines involvement. This was felt to reduce the police's effectiveness in preventative work, as those at risk do not want to engage for fear of being criminalised in this way.

"[We're] coming from two different places... police are very much a punitive service and we're a support organisation."

Local VCS organisation

Participants also reported that CYP can be arrested by the police but be released with no outcome or further referral. They saw this as a missed opportunity to give the CYP access to the wider system of support.

However, the police can refer to Youth Offending Teams or social workers to provide support. If the crime is of a serious nature, the police will send the CYP through the court system where they can be referred to pre-court diversion services, or community resolution panels to take into account the CYP's circumstances and decide the best course of action. Participants reported that unfortunately this approach happens only

occasionally because, in their view, the police are over-stretched and can struggle to tackle each individual case in the best way. This can result in CYP potentially receiving time in prison rather than additional support.

"The remit is likely too stretched for what they are meant to be. The police's remit is probably very warped... they have to do too much and that's likely the case for all public sector organisations, which is part of the issue."

National funder / policymaker

The police can also be fundamental in sharing information with other key individuals/organisations, such as schools, social workers or Early Help Teams to help support the young person. However, some national funders and practitioners felt **this is not happening as often as it could be**. They thought this was likely related to training issues (e.g., not knowing what signs to look for), and a capacity issue, as referrals and data sharing involves a lot of paperwork. There may also be a bias in decision-making (e.g., ethnic minorities tend to be more likely to be channelled through the justice system which can lead to the young person being treated as a criminal), though participants noted that police-led initiatives are attempting to tackle some of these issues.

The police themselves have acknowledged that referrals do not happen as often as they should, preventing CYP from accessing the system of support. They reported long wait times for local authority provision, which can hold things up. For example, participants noted referring to Youth Justice Services can take six to seven months, by which time it is too late for the CYP. At this point, they may have already been arrested for re-offending and then the police are forced to direct them into the justice system.

"I just feel that if we got the secondary stuff right. The initial incident we're generally alright with. The secondary stuff of following it up with organisations, if we got that bit right, we wouldn't be having the incidents happening now."

Police, Safer Schools Partnership

CYP case study 2 – lack of effective support following arrest

Ryan⁴² was arrested for an SV related offence. While this did result in him being referred to a Youth Offending Team, he was only in contact with them for a limited period. In that time, the Youth Offending Worker gave Ryan advice about potential college courses he might be interested in, but did not provide the holistic support Ryan needed to overcome the barriers preventing him from attending (mental health issues and a complex home life).

Ultimately, this referral had limited impact on Ryan, and he was able to recall very little about it.

“I don’t even remember them.”

Teachers and school counsellors identifying behaviours

CYP spend a lot of their time within the education system, making it a constant in their lives. Similarly, teachers or school counsellors spend much of their time with CYP, and collect information that may be related to SV risk (e.g., attendance data). Participants said that this makes them well placed to spot changes in behaviour or attitude, linked to signs that a child may have become involved with county lines, gangs, or is experiencing violence within the home. Schools are also important due to their strong connections with other parts of the system, as outlined in the system map.

Participants felt **schools have potential to be involved either by educating teachers/staff and providing them with the resources to identify young people at risk of SV involvement; or through VCS organisations being present in schools to engage CYP in conversation directly, giving the CYP space to raise issues.**

In the view of some participants, **neither approach is happening as much as it ideally should, however.** Some national funders and practitioners believed that schools with lower levels of disruptive behaviour can avoid engaging with SV provision as they do not see a problem, or the problem is not large enough to spend limited funds on whole school educative programmes, again reinforcing the lack of early identification. On the other hand, they saw schools with less funding and higher levels of CYP with disruptive behaviour as being less able to involve themselves with programmes designed to

⁴² We have given pseudonyms to CYP to protect their anonymity, Ryan is not their real name.

educate CYP around SV risk, leading to more reactive services being required to deal with the consequences later.

"Funding plays a massive part in all of this... there are places out there, but they cost double sometimes of other services because they only take on five children a week. The cost is then put on to the school... but they only get £5,000 a year for that child. A serious case review is £25,000 for one year."

Local VCS organisation

VCS organisations offering individualised support to CYP

Another main entry point to the system is the offer provided by VCS organisations in the CYP's local area. **Participants noted that this is one of the only entry points that a CYP may choose to access of their own accord.** They can also, after receiving a referral, choose from a variety of organisations, such as a martial arts class, a football club, or drama club, to find a particular organisation which resonates with them. These services can help by removing young people from the streets, to prevent involvement with gangs. Some can additionally help to educate CYP and families on SV risk in their area.

Participants also noted that **VCS organisations can provide an opportunity to build trusting relationships with adults who could become role-models and / or help signpost the CYP to further support**⁴³. These trusting relationships can in turn create a safe space for CYP to disclose issues that might indicate they are at risk of involvement in SV.

Practitioners reported that, currently, **referrals to VCS organisations are not seen to be as frequent or proactive as they could be.** This can result in CYP being turned away from statutory services, without being offered alternative sources of support, when they could have been signposted to a VCS organisation in their area that might have supported them instead. This has left VCS organisations feeling under-valued and overlooked by the system as a whole.

"What I think there's still a bit of discord between is voluntary and statutory services. Voluntary and community pick up a lot of stuff that statutory services haven't got the capacity to deal with at the moment. I don't think there's the recognition from statutory services of how much impact and influence on a young person's life the VCS can have... on diverting the young person away from crime or serious violence."

⁴³ YEF define a trusted adult relationship as "an adult who is not a family member or friend, but is someone that has the knowledge, skills and capabilities to build trusted relationships and deliver specific approaches that support positive outcomes for a child or young person. Clear roles. Responsibilities and boundaries are established between a trusted adult and a child and young person".

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)

MASH were identified by national funders, and some regional funders, as being an important entry point for CYP at risk of being abused or experiencing abuse. This included some government departments, a regional local council and a violence reduction partnership. The aim of the hub is to avoid some of the problems presented when navigating this complex system. Any individual can refer CYP to MASH, who will then conduct a Safeguarding Assessment to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria for receiving additional support. MASH have a range of contacts at different organisations at their disposal and experience in triaging cases to decide where CYP should be referred to⁴⁴.

Whilst there are criteria for CYP to meet, allowing anyone to refer to MASH removes the need for any prior contact with the system to receive help. For example, a parent or teacher could get in contact with MASH on the CYP's behalf without the CYP having to have spoken to a counsellor beforehand or having been previously assessed. MASH also have a dedicated helpline for schools, making this easily accessible following identification of the CYP by a teacher or counsellor, for example.

However, practitioners who engage directly with CYP at risk of or exposure to SV did not report much awareness of the MASH. Participants thought that there was also a possibility that the eligibility criteria are too strict when conducting assessments; likely related to the capacity of services which the MASH refers on to. Furthermore, MASH do not exist in every borough, and some have built better local connections than others. For example, the MASH in Haringey is reported to work well, but in some other regions it is thought to be less prominent or involved. This could result in mixed experiences for CYP and families within the system when using this entry point.

Eligibility criteria and 'gatekeepers'⁴⁵ – entry criteria to statutory services are perceived to be too limiting

Another identified entry point in the system is that of statutory services, such as CAMHS or Children's Social Care Services. However, participants described that there are very few of these types of services where support is immediately available. Participants reported that **Demand usually exceeds supply, leading to strict eligibility criteria and long waiting lists**. Schools and other local organisations reported a feeling that

⁴⁴ This description is based on participant views. MASH provide a single point of access to advice, information and support services for professionals working with vulnerable and at-risk children and young people. Their governance, processes and setup between partners can vary from place to place.

⁴⁵ 'Thresholds' means the criteria a CYP needs to meet to access a service, while 'gatekeepers' means individuals or organisations that control access to a service.

Children's Social Care Services are pulling back from the offer of support with SV, with Children's Social Care Services being used less as a point of referral, or with fewer or less detailed updates from them for cases of SV.

"They used to refer young people to us, and we used to be part of the Child Safety Group... but they're not using us as much as they did."

Local VCS organisation

As a result of this limited capacity, participants reported that statutory services have become less well used as an access point. Further, other individuals/organisations in the system have reported feeling isolated as they are unaware of where else they can refer to, when statutory services are less accessible. Overall, participants described CYP often cannot get support from statutory services until they have already become involved with SV. This reinforces the idea of a system which reacts rather than prevents, due to a lack of resource.

"Children's [Social Care] Services is a gap – it's not connected. We've got examples where we've referred kids who have been involved in serious stuff and Children's [Social Care] Services aren't picking it up."

Regional funder / policymaker

3.2. Engagement & navigation

Building trusted relationships is key to supporting CYP, and ensuring that CYP feel able to disclose issues

Findings from the research indicated that CYP and families tend to mistrust statutory services. Participants reported that CYP and families perceive that statutory services are not there to support them and may in fact be there to monitor or penalise them, such as through the involvement of police or parole officers.

Participants noted that, because of this mistrust, **it is hugely important that CYP feel they are listened to by any organisation/individual providing them with support.** For example, CYP reported mainstream schools having put them in detention without giving them the opportunity to explain their behaviour. Participants, including CYP, felt that Alternative Provision settings tended to be better equipped to deal with these issues because of the additional focus on the CYP's needs and interests, and pastoral care. Similarly, police might penalise CYP who are perpetrators of serious violence but fail to listen to the CYP to understand how they may also be a victim of SV themselves.

Participants, including CYP, emphasised the importance of CYP's relationships with a trusted adult, as the CYP is, within the context of a trusted relationship, much more likely to disclose issues and is more likely to be receptive to support that they are being offered.

“Once you realise they want to help you, you can start talking.”

CYP

Another important result of building these trusted relationships, reported by participants, is **having a role model which the CYP can look up to, or relate to** (e.g., an older male for male CYPs, someone of a similar ethnicity)⁴⁶, which can give the CYP something to aspire to. Participants argued that, if the CYP feels that they cannot relate to the person giving them guidance or advice, they are less likely to believe that they are able to improve their current situation. This can lead to the CYP disengaging from the service.

Participants reported that one of the current problems with the system's ability to nurture these trusted relationships is the difficulty of key worker support within schools being assigned to each year group, rather than assigned to individual CYP. This means that **CYP can struggle to build consistent relationships with key workers who will change each year they go through school**. This lack of consistent trusted relationships was felt to potentially result in negative consequences (e.g., being excluded from school) when the trusted individual leaves, or the young person moves up a year group.

Once issues are identified, participants said it can be too slow and difficult to refer CYP on to further help

Participants reported that, across the system, communication between statutory organisations and VCS organisations is lacking, with statutory services having disengaged due to capacity issues. Participants believed this was leading to VCS organisations struggling to build relationships with police, social workers, youth offending teams and others. **VCS organisations reported feeling isolated and disconnected from the rest of the system** and were sometimes struggling to refer CYP on to other organisations for preventative work, until the situation escalates to a point where the statutory criteria are met.

There was a perception amongst VCS organisations and schools that, in recent years, statutory Children's [Social Care] Services have been playing an increasingly less prominent role in supporting CYP with SV risks. Their criteria are perceived to be too strict and, according to participants, they are not well connected with other organisations. Some schools therefore reported choosing to rely on the relationships that they have made on their own initiative, outside of these statutory

⁴⁶ CYP themselves did not express a preference for matched demographic role models in this research, it was other research participants that suggested this.

services, as they feel that the referral process to these statutory services would take too long to help the CYP when they need it.

Referring to statutory social services in the transition between children's social care services and adult's services is seen as incredibly difficult (age 17-18).

Between the ages of 16 and 18 a CYP will start a "transition" to adult services. Legally, CYP's children's social care provision must continue until adult provision has started, or until the young person has been assessed as ineligible for adult care and support. However, this transition can be difficult, with a potential lack of planning, continuity of care and, following a transition assessment, CYP can find themselves ineligible for adult services. Additionally, once CYP are over 18, not only does the shape of support and the type of services available change, many systems of support that were available to CYP, both statutory and non-statutory, do not exist for adults.

"Young people don't suddenly cease to become children at 18 and don't need support anymore. A lot of support does immediately stop at 18 and services operate in that binary way."

National funder / policymaker

Furthermore, participants outlined that even when similar systems of support do exist for adults, successfully referring CYP to those adult services can be difficult. This was felt to be due to the limited resources and strict criteria of statutory services.

"Our frustrations with support lie with adult services. It's a complete barrier to try and get a referral through the door."

Local VCS Organisation

As a statutory service, **participants felt that it's likely that the police are over-stretched** as they are expected to be involved with safeguarding, prevention, commissioning and data sharing. Police officers reported being aware that their preventative work was an important area they needed to improve on. However, whilst their communication may be good on the ground with the school or the VCS organisation, police often reported hitting barriers when trying to refer CYP to Youth Offending Teams or diversion services, explaining that referrals take too long, and by then it's too late for the CYP. These barriers were felt to be predominately related to the entry criteria increasing or lower availability of suitable services, driven by the budget cuts these organisations have experienced.

"[Northumberland County Council] have just reduced, decimated, their Youth Service which was the largest provider in the area. That's affected relationships..."

Local VCS Organisation

Participants felt that mental health services were particularly under-funded, and the capacity of organisations such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is lacking. This means that CYP cannot be referred, and entry criteria are increasing. Other mental health professionals such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) therapists, as well as speech and language therapists and youth workers were also felt to be lacking in capacity. Participants outlined how this meant that, for example, the police may have to deal with mental health problems in practice because referrals would take too long.

"[CAMHS] can't get to young people directly due to the waiting lists, and there's only so much that they can do to provide alternative services that come too late down the line."

National policymaker

However, participants reported that once a situation escalates, there can be an over-saturation of services for the CYP and family

National and regional funders reported that, whilst referrals are difficult and criteria for statutory services are high, once the CYP meets these criteria, certain systems of conditional support are triggered and there can suddenly be an influx of services. Participants believed **this results in CYP and families having multiple key workers and / or services, without clarity on who is responsible for what, or who is leading on their care and support**. This was felt to be partly due to a lack of communication between services, as well as with the CYP or families themselves. In theory, multi-agency planning meetings should be happening for families to avoid this scenario, but in reality participants reported that these do not always happen.

"To me, the biggest barrier of people working together is the lack of communication."

Local VCS Organisation

National funders and practitioners discussed how, as a result, CYP or families can become frustrated with the lack of joined up approach. This can reduce their engagement and motivation, and this is a key point where CYP or their families may slip through the net. They may choose themselves to leave the system and opt-out of support as communication is poor and they feel they are not being supported in a way that works for them, or they may also be lost within the system of referrals and the right people will not get in contact with them.

"We can build a strong relationship with the family but if the agencies are hesitant or cynical, it can be destructive to the process."

Local VCS Organisation

Furthermore, participants felt that the voice of the CYP and family can be forgotten about, within this incredibly complicated system, when they are the very people being talked about. Even professionals find it hard to navigate their way through the system, so the challenge it presents to CYP and families should not be underestimated.

"It's a complex landscape and environment for those that operate within it, but even more so for young people."

Regional funder / policymaker

4. Potential improvements to effectiveness of the system

Enhanced communication and data sharing within the system

Participants reported that there are many instances during the CYP's journey where the opportunity for data sharing exists but does not occur. For example, as discussed earlier, there are opportunities for police to share information more widely at the point of arrest, as well as for health services (e.g., A&E trauma response, GP services, mental health services etc.) to share data at an individual level. Information that health services collect about history of involvement with serious violence (such as the number of visits and the reason for visiting accident and emergency), alongside other personal details including date of birth, ethnicity, address, and family composition, was reported by participants as potentially useful information to share with others.

Part of the benefit of sharing this data described by participants includes preventing the CYP and family from becoming frustrated and disengaging from the system as a result of having to repeat themselves. This lack of data sharing is seen as likely due to a lack of clarity around what information sharing is desirable, and concern over the consequences of sharing information, including:

- not knowing what information can be shared, and with whom
- concerns over GDPR regulation when sharing information about CYP who are considered at risk
- concerns around the involvement of the criminal justice system when sharing information about CYP who may have been coerced into criminal action

To alleviate these concerns, participants thought **better structures need to be put in place to encourage those holding relevant information about the CYP to share it with others who could provide the CYP with further support.** For example, in some schools they have software where different teachers can record any issues for a particular CYP in one place, which can be accessed internally by pastoral care. This helps to build the bigger picture around the CYP and spot potential issues sooner by avoiding reliance on one teacher or individual to notice changes in behaviour.

"All professionals need to know their part and be held accountable to that part, to keep that child safe. It's all about sharing information... you have a huge responsibility when you know that a child is involved in situations like this, and everybody needs to work together."

Local VCS Organisation

Participants also reported the need to raise awareness amongst organisations and individuals that act as system ‘entry points’, of possible referral routes for CYP.

This needs to include raising awareness of alternatives to oversubscribed statutory services; and encouraging stronger relationships between the voluntary and statutory sectors. Voluntary services can particularly help to provide lower-level support to CYP who may not meet the eligibility criteria for statutory services.

Participants also noted the importance of improved communication with CYP and their families, to ensure that they are receiving provision which is working well for them. Often the system can lose sight of the needs of the CYP which can lead to the CYP disengaging from the system.

Creating effective leadership within a complex system

The system is complex, and participants identified a lack of joined-up working. Some national and regional funders noted there are **multiple regional strategic bodies with relatively equal status, which makes it unclear in certain situations who should be taking charge in the hierarchy of decision making.** There was a reported need for better multi-agency working, but a lack of clarity about what this looks like in practice.

Participants argued that **regional leadership can make the system work more favourably and effectively for CYP and their families** by inspiring a region-specific culture which puts the CYP at the heart of the system. However, this leadership is not always present.

As an example of this regional leadership, a participant talked about the VRU in Leicestershire as having a great diversion programme, because the lead used to be a youth offending service manager with on the ground experience of how to help young people. Another example participants gave of this was a VCS organisation in Northumberland who have created relationships between statutory provision, such as VRUs and police, to enhance communication and deliver more SV prevention and intervention work in their area by creating a community “hub” of local organisations.

“For something like serious violence, for LAs to do anything innovative, they need the backing of those local leaders.”

National funder / policymaker

Participants identified the opportunity for a few individuals to play this leadership role within their region, including, but not limited to:

- Directors of Children’s Services
- VRU directors

- Metropolitan mayors
- the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and
- the Chief Executive of the local council

For example, participants reported that VRU directors can be fundamental in ensuring communication between VCS organisations, preventing duplication of work and encouraging sharing of information. They are also seen as important in creating positive relationships with key participants, such as commissioning groups. These open lines of communication and stronger relationships can help the VRU directors to identify and allocate funding towards where it is needed most.

"Other people hold the money and send you things that are free, but actually every school situation is very different, and you could ringfence money for children within schools to be spent on youth violence and then schools could pick the groups that are going to be most effective for their particular school."

Regional funder / policymaker

Another example given is that mayors can play a key role in devolving power to a more local level. They can be agents for change, but are often only in power for a few years. It is important to ensure that the key points around strategy for tackling youth violence are carried forward to create a more sustainable system focused on the child at risk.

"They [mayors] have oversight of all of the government funded programmes within their locality, which is quite an important co-ordinating role when there's so many different funding streams coming into an area."

National funder / policymaker

Alongside this, participants said that local authorities may need to reconsider their own role, including whether other individuals/organisations in the system are better placed to provide local leadership around SV risks. With the system becoming more complex, it is possible that local authorities could benefit from delegating to others who have an overview of how the system works in practice.

"It's interesting to see where the LAs think that youth services fit... some LAs still see themselves as the lead, and that's not achievable."

Regional funder / policymaker

Integrating health services in the discussion of serious violence provision

To a degree, **national funders thought that health services were missing from the conversation around SV risk and could be more involved.** Indeed, some felt that health services (e.g., A&E trauma response, GP services, mental health services etc.) are the 'missing link' in attempting to join up the system of SV provision.

Participants reported that health services have only recently started to consider SV within their overall work. In working with SV cases, they typically respond through liaison and diversion services, signposting young people to further support. Whilst this is important, others within the system thought that they could be doing more.

Some participants reported that representatives of health services are difficult to get hold of, and struggle to attend meetings where information is shared on mitigating SV risk. Instead, health services may be taking a more individual approach, looking after each patient without engaging with the wider picture.

“Health is probably the overarching area that is not joining this all up. You’d hope that CAMHS and dedicated mental health services are doing that and are joining in with the whole family work but it’s not really happening. They’re typically taking a ‘here is my patient’ approach.”

National policymaker

From the perspective of health services, this may be due to a wariness of statutory services, as engaging wider statutory services in a CYP’s case can open doors to the criminal justice system for the CYP, who may be arrested or charged. This can be seen as protecting individual CYP from the justice system, but it may also be preventing wider support services from helping the CYP.

Participants reported that a more integrated, whole system approach should be taken by health services to ensure collaborative working that puts the CYP at the centre of the system. Participants said It is likely that health services in theory are willing to partake in this but are stretched due to lack of resourcing and funding. Better systems also need to be introduced to allow health services to share data at an individual level without instigating immediate action from criminal justice elements of the system.

CYP case study 3 –health services not being part of a holistic support system

An earlier case study in Chapter 2 described Kyle⁴⁷ who struggled with substance use, which was connected to him committing an offence.

Kyle had approached his GP for support with his substance use (it is unclear whether this was before or after the offence). However, his GP had informed him they were unable to help them until his substance use was under control. Ultimately, Kyle accessed support for their substance use via their Probation Officer.

It was not clear exactly why the GP did not help Kyle; potentially this was due to eligibility criteria or due to lack of capacity. Either way, this does feel like a potential missed opportunity for more holistic support for Kyle.

A good example given of how health services can engage with the system is in West Yorkshire, where a relationship exists between the integrated care board, the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership, and the VRU. They have a population health programme, focusing on health inequalities, and these factors both align with the purpose of the VRU and the root causes of tackling SV. The VRU are wholly onboard with their approach, and it appears to work well. In this region, health services are taking more of a strategic interest at a broader level, rather than just focusing on liaison and diversion services.

The role of schools in identifying and supporting children at risk of violence

Participants saw schools as highly important in the identification of CYP at risk of violence, for the simple reason that CYP spend the majority of their time there.

However, participants also recognised that schools are likely under resourced and over stretched, and therefore supporting at risk children can be difficult. Ideas are discussed below – including some which were introduced earlier in this report – for how schools and teachers can best support and signpost students to other organisations who can help.

One way in which participants said schools can become more involved with identification is through educating teachers by providing them with resources to identify children at risk. For example, one key indicator spoken about is persistent absenteeism from school, and another is when CYP begin to use unknown slang words

⁴⁷ We have given pseudonyms to CYP to protect their anonymity, Kyle is not their real name.

to communicate – these changes in behaviour can all be linked to involvement in SV or gangs. When these changes are noticed, schools and teachers could discuss any issues with the CYP directly or refer to further support. Examples of this include referring to in-house support (such as guidance counsellors), or external organisations such as MASH or local community support services. This would help shift the focus to more preventative support, rather than the system's current reactive focus.

“Children aren't going to go to Children in Need and aren't going to go to a teacher and say, ‘I need help’. Sometimes they don't even realize they're in a situation where they're at risk and they do need help. They're just... it's just their life.”

Police, Safer Schools Partnership

It is worth noting that many CYP at risk of involvement in SV often do not have a positive relationship with their school. They may consistently miss lessons and display disruptive behaviour in school. **Some CYP reported that alternative provision was a better option for them or wanted schools to ensure an offer of continued pastoral care that extended through academic years.** This is important so that CYP do not have to re-introduce themselves to a new support worker each year and can build stable relationships with trusted adults.

Being mindful of schools' limitations in terms of funding and resourcing, participants highlighted **schools building relationships with VCS organisations as an effective way of engaging CYP in the conversations around SV risk.** For example, some schools have brought in regular speakers and support from VCS organisations who run in-school or after-school programmes. There are many drama and sport organisations who engage with schools to provide CYP with a safe space to discuss any issues they are experiencing with a neutral adult.

Participants suggested **schools working closely with the police** as another approach with positive benefits. Some have invited School Safety Officers (SSOs) into the school on a regular basis, to educate CYP on the consequences of engaging with SV, as well as to nurture trust between CYP and police officers. This can also enhance the possibility of early identification of children at risk, as SSOs are trained to spot warning signs of involvement with SV. An example of this is a secondary school in Birmingham, who has created a good relationship with an SSO which has supported them in reducing SV risk.

"It's very positive, very useful... he will go and talk to children with us and let us know if our children are missing."

Regional funder / policymaker

5. Key themes

Drawing together all the findings, we have developed a set of themes about the system of support for CYP at risk of involvement in SV. Please note that all of these are based on *participant views and perceptions* of the system of support.

Funding is fragmented and provision is localised. Funding originating from government departments with different priorities means the system isn't completely 'joined up' while localised provision means CYP have varied experiences of support and outcomes.

There can be an overemphasis on a crime and justice focus. Parts of the system lead to CYP having a 'criminalised' experience. This discourages CYP and families from engaging and deters more joined up working, with other parts of the system (such as health) being wary of engaging.

Entry points to the system are currently used less frequently than they have the potential to be. Common entry points – schools, police and VCS organisations – are not being used to best effect due to lack of internal capacity or feeling isolated in tackling issues, due to lack of capacity elsewhere in the system.

The system unintentionally incentivises reactive support. Statutory services are oversubscribed, with strict entry criteria, making it difficult to refer CYP to them for preventative work. Statutory intervention tends only to be justified once the CYP situation has worsened, meaning the system perversely incentivises action only once CYP circumstances deteriorate. Funding is also tied to particular outcomes or performance indicators, which makes it difficult to use funds for preventative work.

CYP experience a system that swings from scarcity to an over-saturation of services. High entry thresholds for statutory provision mean that once they qualify for support, CYP and their families often experience a swing from little or no support to an influx of multiple services without sufficient communication between them. The 'excess' stage can cause CYP and their families to become frustrated with the lack of joined up working and to disengage.

Trusted adult relationships and support are not sustained. CYP emphasised the importance of a trusted adult who can listen to them and, potentially, act as a positive role model. However, these relationships are often not sustained, and they can be undermined by other factors that prevent them from being consistent. CYP tend not to experience a 'support journey', with referrals from one source of support to another.

Regional leadership is not reaching its full potential. Regional leadership can inspire the system to work more effectively for CYP, but this is reliant on individuals and not always present.

Reflecting on these findings, future research in this space could explore:

1. What a more positive, CYP-focused system map or support journey might look like, from the perspectives of CYP, their families and participants.
2. How the system might be incentivised to take preventative action before a CYP's situation worsens – tackling the paradox that, if preventative action succeeds, nothing 'serious' may have happened. A necessary part of this may be clarifying across the system which CYP to target this preventative work at.
3. How to address novelty bias in funding decisions, so that funding is more sustained and places appropriate value on organisations' existing relationships with CYP and other parts of the system. This is linked to point 2 above, in that the novelty bias can be partially linked to interventions that have not been able to evidence in the way that funders are looking for.
4. The potential of certain individuals and organisations to galvanise the system to work in a more effective, CYP-focused way; perhaps examining how to embed this better – i.e., whether changes in hierarchy or formalising of leadership responsibilities might systematically encourage this 'galvanising' leadership.
5. How to encourage a change in mindset to create a system that is more child-centred and avoids stigmatising for CYP, and to remove disincentives to parts of the system, such as health, engaging with support.
6. How support (and its funding arrangements) might better recognise the importance to CYP of a sustained relationship with a trusted individual.
7. The experiences of CYP when they enter the system, but support is not sustained (e.g. due to a trusted adult moving on, or difficulties referring on to further support).
8. The experiences of the wider family with the system, when a CYP is identified as being 'at risk'.
9. How to encourage better awareness of and communication between support organisations within a local region

Appendix A: Topic Guides

National / regional funder/policymaker:

Serious Violence Systems Mapping

National and Local Funders & Policymakers Topic Guide 60-90 minutes (using Draft Map version)

Respondent name:

Organisation name:

A Introducing the research (c.5 minutes)

Researcher to introduce research purpose, obtain informed consent:

- Interviewer introduces themselves – working for IFF Research, an independent research company.
- Interviewer introduces the aims of the research overall – We've been commissioned by the Department for Education and the Youth Endowment Fund to carry out an important national study of the services that children, young people and families might encounter when there's a risk of the child or young person becoming involved in serious violence, either as a victim or perpetrator. The aim is to map the provision that exists, as a starting point for exploring how well this works for children and young people.
- Add if needed: The Department for Education is the government department that is responsible for overseeing education and children's social care services in England, and the Youth Endowment Fund is a charity which aims to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence.
- Explain to all - We'll be speaking to children, young people and their families, and the professionals and practitioners who work with them, as part of the study, but we're starting by speaking to national and regional policymakers and funders like yourself, to explore the 'big picture' of what the system looks like, and how funding and policy influences this.
- Just to say, the research is not about Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces (APST) or Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed (SAFE) Taskforces, and is separate from the evaluations of these programmes.

- A lot of this session will be interactive, with us working together to map out what the system of support looks like. That said, we're not expecting you to know everything – having gaps in our map is okay! If you're unsure about something, just say so and we'll move on.
- We are, however, interested if you have recommendations of who else to speak to fill in any 'gaps'; and I'll also be asking for your thoughts on other organisations and individuals to approach, later on. The whole thing should last around 60-90 minutes – does that sound okay?

Before we get started, I am required to read a statement to you regarding research codes of conduct and confidentiality:

- **READ OUT:** "IFF Research is an independent market research company, operating under the strict guidelines of the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. This means that nothing you say will be attributed to you or your organisation. All individuals involved in the research will be kept completely anonymous in our reporting. All the information we collect will be kept in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only. We will also not pass any of your details on to any other organisation."
- "Under data protection law, you have the right to have a copy of your data, change your data, or withdraw from the research at any point. If you'd like to do this, or find out more, you can consult our website at iffresearch.com/GDPR."
- Just to remind you, participation is entirely voluntary and any information you provide will not be directly used to make funding decisions centrally but will help shape how services can better support children at risk of serious violence.
- If two or three participants in interview: Please can you treat what your fellow interview participants say, in confidence – not to be repeated outside this discussion.
- If any DfE / YEF observers present: Introduce them by name, and say they are independent observers who just want to hear what participants have to say, first hand. Reassure, that the observers will treat what is said as being in confidence.

Could you confirm if you're happy to continue on this basis?

PERMISSION TO RECORD: I would like to record the discussion so I don't have to take a lot of notes – the recording will just be for analysis purposes. All recordings will be securely deleted 6 months after the project is completed.

Do I have your permission to record?

Yes 1 CONTINUE AND

START RECORDING

No 2 CONTINUE

BUT TAKE NOTES AS GO ALONG

CONTACT DETAILS PROVIDED IF REQUESTED

B Introduction (c. 5 minutes)

B1 First of all, can you briefly tell me a little bit about your organisation and your role?

B2 And how does this relate to working with children, young people and families around serious youth violence? [if local policymaker/funder: in this region or local area]?

B3 If local policymaker/funder: What geographic area does your organisation cover, in relation to this type of work? PROBE: Does it cover any rural areas?

B4 One of the key challenges in addressing serious violence is the lack of any formal definition. For the purposes of this research, we are using the definition outlined in the 2018 Serious Violence Strategy. (Show card or post definition in the chat if on Zoom/Teams) There the government defines serious violence as “specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes emerging crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon”. However, just to reiterate, this research is focused specifically on children or young people and the support available to them. Do you have anything you want to add, or say about, this definition, to make it relevant to children and young people specifically?

B5 If local policymaker / funder, add: As part of this, we might need to touch on support for children and young people that isn't overtly about 'serious violence' – for example, when they need help with disruptive behaviour, or things like keeping themselves safe, having good relationships with other young people or around involvement in gangs.

C Plotting the system 'actors' (c.15 minutes)

So as I said, we're aiming to map out what the system of support looks like, for children or young people at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, either as victim or perpetrator. We're interested in both primary and secondary support – it might be directly about serious violence, or indirectly relevant to this.

Some of this support might be aimed at children or young people directly, some of it at their families. Some of it might be more directly about serious violence, some of it more general than this. We're interested in any kind of support that a child, young person or family might encounter which could safeguard against future involvement in serious violence. We are also interested in any organisations involved in coordinating, funding or shaping the support in this space for those at risk of serious violence. For ease, we'll call all of these organisations 'actors' in the system.

IMPORTANT: We're wanting to describe the system as it works now – rather than how it used to work or how it might look in future.

- If face-to-face: Researcher to bring out the draft map (printed large-scale), large sheets of flipchart paper and pens and brief the participant(s) that we now need to work together to plot out the main 'actors' in the system.
- If virtual: Researcher to explain how Zoom/Teams whiteboard function works, and show participants how to annotate. Brief the participant(s) that we'll now look at the map we have so far and ask them to reflect on it. We will then plot out anything additional together in Zoom/Teams using the Whiteboard function.
- The researcher should encourage participants to contribute as much as possible directly, but also be prepared to step in to plot out verbal contributions, if needed, to avoid detail being lost.

C1 So, here's the early draft of a 'map' of the system that's emerged from our discussions with stakeholders so far. From your point of view, what do you think of our main 'actors' within the system – is there anything you want to add or change? Just to reiterate, by 'actors' we mean any organisation that might be involved with a child or

young person at risk of involvement in serious violence, as victim or perpetrator. Add to early draft map (if on paper, use post-it notes to allow actors to be moved around).

Suggest that the 'actors' are placed on the map in a way that reflects the type of organisation – perhaps national funders/policymakers at the top, with local funders/policymakers in the middle and professionals/practitioners at the bottom; or national organisations in the middle with local organisations around them (be flexible, to respond to what participant feels makes sense to them. If participant suggests reordering the existing actors, make a note of what they suggest and update on the Zoom/Teams whiteboard / on paper if F2F).

C2 Which of these interact with CYP/families directly? And can you tell me which work with young people only and which include families as part of the intervention? Annotate map.

C3 And when we talk about work among children and young people around serious violence, what age range are you considering in scope? Probe around the lower age and upper age limits, for example is the upper age limit seen as 16, 18 or 21, and why.

C4 What other organisations are involved? These might be organisations that directly interact with CYP; and / or those that seem more peripheral to the issue, such as housing providers, for example. Add to map.

Explore organisations that a child, young person or family might encounter, as well as organisations involved in coordinating, funding or shaping policy in this space.

Ensure the participant includes their own organisation.

C5 If local policymaker/funder: What parts of this are specific to your region or local area?

C6 (c.10 minutes)

The discussion should continue seamlessly into this next section, with the emerging rough map, with system 'actors' plotted on it, being used as stimulus to talk around the role / remit of each actor.

Probe for all of the 'actors'/organisations plotted on the map:

C7 What do you think of our notes on the role or remit of each of these 'actors' in relation to children and young people around involvement in serious violence (as victim

or perpetrator)? Is there anything you want to add or change? Annotate rough map with these roles.

C8 What activities does each organisation do around this issue? Annotate map.

C9 What outcomes are these organisations trying to achieve? Probe as needed, for whether encouraging or punitive; preventative or something else. Annotate map.

D Understanding policy, funding and monitoring (c.10 minutes)

I'd like to spend a few minutes focusing on organisations involved in shaping policy and providing funding in this space – just in case this identifies further 'actors' to add to our map or clarifies relationships between organisations.

D1 Which (other) organisations shape policy in this space – are we missing any, on our map so far? What are their policy priorities? Which of our other 'actors' do they influence, through their policy priorities, and in what ways? Encourage participants to draw 'lines of influence' and annotate these with details of how this influence plays out.

D2 Who funds the organisations we've plotted out in this space so far – are we missing any, on our draft map? Add additional actors to map. On what basis is this funding awarded? How are outcomes monitored, and by whom? Annotate map.

D3 What impact does the way funding is awarded have on what these organisations can deliver around children and young people at risk of involvement in serious violence? Annotate map. What about things that are not funded at all, or not funded enough – what effect does this have?

D4 If local policymaker/funder: What parts of this are specific to your region or local area?

E Understanding relationships and referrals (c.15 minutes)

E1 How else do these 'actors' within the system interact with each other? Who has relationships with whom? What does each of these relationships aim to achieve or do? Again, we've started to add these but welcome your thoughts. Add further relationships to map as lines; and annotate with the nature of the relationships.

E2 What is the quality of these relationships – for instance, strong or weak, positive or negative? Why?

E3 What is the direction of these relationships (for example, are they two-way or one-way; collaborative or hierarchical)? Indicate on map.

Probe for organisations that interact with children, young people and families:

E4 At what points might each of these organisations encounter children, young people and families around the risk of becoming involved in serious violence, either as victim or perpetrator? We might want to think about (show card):

- Access: The user journey up to the point of accessing a service, including identification and referral, thresholds and ‘gatekeepers’;
- Engagement: The user experience of a specific service. This includes what engagement between CYP and their families, and the professionals / practitioners who work within these systems looks like, and how it is maintained;
- Navigation: The user journey within, between and out of services; including signposting and onward referrals.

Annotate map.

Probe as needed, to add to what’s already been covered earlier:

Again, building on what we’ve already started to add to our draft map here...

E5 What are the likely ‘entry points’ for children and young people or families needing support around serious violence? Who would they encounter first? Annotate map with entry points.

E6 What eligibility criteria or thresholds would need to be reached for CYP or families to get access to support from these different actors? Are there any ‘gatekeepers’ for specific services? Annotate map with any ‘gatekeepers’ or thresholds.

E7 What would happen next? What sort of signposting or referral is likely to be involved? How might these CYP or families be referred? Why? Annotate map with lines of signposting or referral.

E8 What sort of data on the individual CYP or families (needs of the YP, case history etc.) is likely to be shared and with whom? What does this achieve? Is there any other data sharing (e.g., of ‘bigger picture’ insight)? Why? Annotate map with lines of data sharing.

E9 Is there any other joint working or collaboration between actors? If so: To do what? Annotate map with other joint working / collaboration.

F Reflections on what this means to CYP/families (c.20 minutes)

If local policymaker/funder:

F1 Now that we've further developed our map, just to step back – in what ways is the 'shape' of what's going on here, specific to your region or local area? Probe: What other models of shaping policy, and funding and delivering support, around serious violence among CYP, are you aware of in other parts of England? What makes your region or local area different to these?

All:

F2 Reflecting on all this, how do these relationships, referral paths and data flows affect what these 'actors' in the system can deliver around children and young people's involvement in serious violence? Why is that? Annotate map with notes on this.

F3 What effect do you think this might have on children, young people and families' ability to access relevant services around risk of involvement in serious violence? Why? Probe: Are there children and young people / families who miss out on support? Who? Why?

F4 What effect do you think this might have on how engaging and motivating children, young people and families might find it, to deal with the organisations that they encounter in this space? Why? Probe: How might it affect their experiences of navigating between different actors in the system?

F5 What effect do you think this might have on how children, young people and families exit the system of support? Probe: What difference does this make to outcomes for children, young people and families? Why?

If local policymaker/funder and covering rural areas:

F6 How does this affect what's experienced by children, young people and families in rural areas? Why?

All:

F7 In what ways is all this leading to duplication in provision or gaps in provision around serious violence? Or inefficiencies of other kinds? Annotate map with notes on duplication / gaps.

What less-than-ideal (or even perverse) consequences does the system we've mapped out have and why? Probe: Is the system dysfunctional or 'out of balance' in any way? If so: How? What's causing this? Annotate map with notes on any areas of dysfunction and what's causing this.

INTERVIEWER: EXPORT WHITEBOARD AS PDF BEFORE CLOSING IT! IT WON'T SAVE OTHERWISE.

G Advice on further discussions (c.5 minutes)

We're speaking to other national and regional funders and policymakers in this space, as well as professionals and practitioners who work with children and young people.

G1 Are there any organisations you'd advise us to speak to? Any individuals? [if regional suggestions outside of Northumberland:] These individuals need to have plenty of knowledge about what is happening in their region, rather than a high-level view. They need to be able to understand the organisations and individuals involved as funders, and practitioners working with 'at risk' children and young people, as well as understanding relationships between them. What's their role, and why would you advise us to get their perspective on this? Make notes.

G2 In discussing this, are there any 'gaps' you're conscious of, in what you were able to talk about? If so: Broadly what were these? Who might we speak to, to fill in these gaps? Make notes.

Ask only if there is time remaining in the interview:

G3 We're particularly interested in exploring how the system of provision and funding around this issue, differs in different parts of England. Whilst we have finalised our selection of local authority areas to explore in this research, are there any [if local policymaker/funder: other] specific regions or local authority areas where you're conscious of there being different structures or relationships that might be worth us exploring in potential future research? If so: Where? Make notes.

H Final reflections and close (c. 5 minutes)

H1 What else would you like to add about this subject, if anything?

H2 If we needed to come back to you later in the study to sense-check some of our findings, would you be willing for us to approach you again? (Note – you could of course decline when approached later if you wish). Note whether willing or not.

Just to confirm, this research is on behalf of the Department for Education and the Youth Endowment Fund. We'll be keeping your confidential responses to the interview for analysis purposes and if you'd like a copy of your data, to change your data or for your data to be deleted then please get in contact with IFF Research. If you'd like to confirm that this is a legitimate piece of research, you can contact the Department for Education.

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

Finally I would just like to confirm that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct. Thank you very much for your help today.

Professionals/Practitioners

Serious Violence Systems Mapping

Professionals & Practitioners Topic Guide 60-90 minutes

Respondent name:

Organisation name:

Researcher – also check whether participant is helping arrange CYP / family discussions

A Introducing the research (c.5 minutes)

Researcher to introduce research purpose, obtain informed consent:

- Interviewer introduces themselves – working for IFF Research, an independent research company.
- Interviewer introduces the aims of the research overall – We've been commissioned by the Department for Education and the Youth Endowment Fund to carry out an important national study of the services that children, young people and families might encounter when there's a risk of the child or young person becoming involved in serious violence, either as a victim or perpetrator. The aim is to map the provision that exists, as a starting point for exploring how well this works for children and young people.
- Add if needed: The Department for Education is the government department that is responsible for overseeing education and children's social care services in England, and the Youth Endowment Fund is a charity which aims to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence.
- Explain to all – As you may already be aware, we'll be speaking to children, young people and their families, as well as national and regional policymakers and funders, as part of the study. We're interested in talking to you today to explore your perspective of what the system looks like, as a professional working with children and young people around this issue. This might include how your own work interacts with that of other organisations that children, young people and families might encounter, and how things like funding and policy might influence the work you can do in this space.
- Just to say, the research is not about Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces (APST) or Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed (SAFE) Taskforces, and is separate from the evaluations of these programmes.
- A lot of this session will be interactive, with us working together to map out what the system of support looks like. That said, we're not expecting you to know everything – having gaps in our map is okay! If you're unsure about something, just say so and we'll move on.
- We are, however, interested if you have recommendations of who else to speak to fill in any 'gaps'; and I'll also be asking for your thoughts on other organisations and individuals to approach, later on. The whole thing should last around 60-90 minutes – does that sound okay?

Before we get started, I am required to read a statement to you regarding research codes of conduct and confidentiality:

- READ OUT: “IFF Research is an independent market research company, operating under the strict guidelines of the Market Research Society’s Code of Conduct. This means that nothing you say will be attributed to you or your organisation. All individuals involved in the research will be kept completely anonymous in our reporting. All the information we collect will be kept in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only. We will also not pass any of your details on to any other organisation.”
- “Under data protection law, you have the right to have a copy of your data, change your data, or withdraw from the research at any point. If you’d like to do this, or find out more, you can consult our website at iffresearch.com/GDPR.”
- Just to remind you, participation is entirely voluntary and any information you provide will not be directly used to make funding decisions centrally, but will help shape how services can better support children at risk of serious violence.
- If two or three participants in interview: Please can you treat what your fellow interview participants say, in confidence – not to be repeated outside this discussion.
- If any DfE / YEF observers present: Introduce them by name, and say they are independent observers who just want to hear what participants have to say, first hand. Reassure, that the observers will treat what is said as being in confidence.

Could you confirm if you’re happy to continue on this basis?

PERMISSION TO RECORD: I would like to record the discussion so I don’t have to take a lot of notes – the recording will just be for analysis purposes. All recordings will be securely deleted 6 months after the project is completed.

Do I have your permission to record?

Yes 1 CONTINUE AND

START RECORDING

No 2 CONTINUE

BUT TAKE NOTES AS GO ALONG

CONTACT DETAILS PROVIDED IF REQUESTED.

B Introduction (c.5 minutes)

B1 First of all, can you briefly tell me a little bit about your organisation and your role?

B2 And how does this relate to working with children, young people and families around serious youth violence?

B3 What geographic area does your organisation cover, in relation to this type of work? PROBE: Does it cover any rural areas?

B4 One of the key challenges in addressing serious violence is the lack of any formal definition. For the purposes of this research, we are using the definition outlined in the 2018 Serious Violence Strategy. (Show card) There the government defines serious violence as “specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes emerging crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon”. However, just to reiterate, this research is focused specifically on children or young people and the support available to them. We appreciate this may differ from the definition you use, so do you have anything you want to add, or say about, this definition?

B5 READ OUT: Just to say, as part of this, we might need to touch on support for children and young people that isn't overtly about 'serious violence' – for example, when they need help with disruptive behaviour, or things like keeping themselves safe, having good relationships with other young people or around involvement in gangs.

C Plotting the system 'actors' (c.15 minutes)

So as I said, we're aiming to map out what the system of support looks like, from your perspective, when engaging as a professional or practitioner, with children and young people at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, either as victim or perpetrator.

We're interested in your own role, and any other organisations you have dealings with. This might involve both primary and secondary support – it might be directly about serious violence, or indirectly relevant to this. Some of this support might be aimed at children or young people directly, some of it at their families. Some of it might be more directly about serious violence, some of it more general than this. We're interested in any kind of support that a child, young person or family might encounter which could safeguard against involvement in serious violence.

We are also interested in any organisations involved in coordinating, funding or shaping the support in this space for those at risk of serious violence. For ease, we'll call all of these organisations 'actors' in the system.

IMPORTANT: We're wanting to describe the system as it works now – rather than how it used to work or how it might look in future.

- If face-to-face: Researcher to bring out large sheets of flipchart paper and pens and brief the participant(s) that we now need to work together to plot out the main 'actors' in the system.
- If virtual: Researcher to explain how Zoom whiteboard function works, and show participants how to annotate it. Brief the participant(s) that we now need to work together to plot out the main 'actors' in the system.
- The researcher should encourage participants to contribute as much as possible directly, but also be prepared to step in to plot out verbal contributions, if needed, to avoid detail being lost.

C1 We're going to start with the 'big picture' and then 'zoom in' on your own role. So, from your point of view, who are the main 'actors' within the system? Just to reiterate, by 'actors' we mean any organisation that might be involved with a child or young person at risk of involvement in serious violence, as victim or perpetrator. Add to map (if on paper, use post-it notes to allow actors to be moved around).

Suggest that the 'actors' are placed on the map in a way that reflects the type of organisation – perhaps national funders/policymakers at the top, with local funders/policymakers in the middle and professionals/practitioners at the bottom; or

national organisations in the middle with local organisations around them (be flexible, to respond to what participant feels makes sense to them).

C2 After participant has added own ideas, show card and prompt: How about these organisations – do any of these feature in the ‘system’, in your experience? ADD PROMPTS (ON SHOW CARD) FROM POLICYMAKER/FUNDER DISCUSSIONS.

C3 Which of these interact with CYP/families directly? And can you tell me which work with young people only and which include families as part of the intervention? Annotate map.

C4 What other organisations are involved? These might be organisations that that directly interact with CYP; and / or those that seem more peripheral to the issue, such as housing providers, for example. Add to map.

Explore organisations that a child, young person or family might encounter, as well as organisations involved in coordinating, funding or shaping policy in this space.

Ensure the participant includes their own organisation.

C5 As far as you know, what parts of this are specific to your region or local area?

D Understanding specific roles (c.10 minutes)

I’d now like to zoom in on your own role, and how it may interact with other parts of the system around children and young people at risk of becoming involved in serious violence (either as victim or perpetrator).

D1 What’s your role or remit in relation to working with children and young people at risk of becoming involved in serious violence (as victim or perpetrator)? Annotate relevant section of rough map with detail; or start new one overleaf to allow you to ‘zoom in’ on the detail (according to participant preference).

D2 And when we talk about work among children and young people around serious violence, what age range are you considering in scope? Probe: What age range do you work with, for this kind of work? Probe around the lower age and the upper age limits, for example is the upper age limit seen as 16, 18 or 21, for example, and why.

D3 What can your organisation offer to children, young people and families where there’s a risk of youth involvement in violence, either as victim or perpetrator? Probe: How do you work with them? Explore nature of role and whether it is, for example,

encouraging or punitive; preventative or something else. If not 'offering' anything, what other role do you play? Annotate map.

E How participant's role/organisation interacts with others in the system (c.10 minutes)

I'd like to spend a few minutes focusing on how you or your organisation interact with other actors and organisations in the wider system. At this point, we're interested in relationships between organisations.

E1 Are there any other organisations in the wider system, that influence your own work? Encourage participants to draw 'lines of influence' and annotate these with details of how this influence plays out.

E2 And how do you/your organisation influence other actors/organisations in the system, if at all? Annotate map.

E3 Who funds your/your organisation's work? Prompt if needed: And who funds your own work, that touches on youth violence specifically? On what basis is this funding awarded? How are outcomes monitored, and by whom? Annotate map.

E4 What does all this mean for how you/your organisation works, and what you prioritise? And what effect does this have on what you/your organisation can deliver around children and young people at risk of involvement in serious violence? Annotate map. What about things that are not funded at all, or not funded enough – what effect does this have?

E5 As far as you know, what parts of your experience of 'the system' are specific to your region or local area?

F Understanding relationships and referrals (c.20 minutes)

F1 Aside from influencing each other as we discussed above, are there any other ways you/your organisation interact with other actors in the system? Who has relationships with whom? What does each of these relationships achieve or do? Add further relationships to map as lines; and annotate with the nature of the relationships.

F2 What is the quality of these relationships – for instance, strong or weak, positive or negative? Why? Annotate map.

F3 What is the direction of these relationships (for example, are they two-way or one-way; collaborative or hierarchical)? Indicate on map.

F4 I'd now like us to think about how this will be experienced by the children, young people and families that you/your organisation works with. We might want to consider (show card):

- Access: The user journey up to the point of accessing a service, including identification and referral, thresholds and 'gatekeepers';
- Engagement: The user experience of a specific service. This includes what engagement between CYP and their families, and the professionals / practitioners who work within these systems looks like, and how it is maintained;
- Navigation: The user journey within, between and out of services; including signposting and onward referrals.

So, with this in mind...

Probe as needed, to add to what's already been covered earlier:

F5 At what point do you/does your organisation typically encounter children, young people and families where there's a risk of youth involvement in violence, either as victim or perpetrator? Annotate map.

F6 How are these children, young people and/or their families referred to you? By whom? Annotate map with lines of referral.

F7 And as far as you know, what are the likely 'entry points' for children and young people or families needing support around serious violence? Who would they encounter first? Annotate map with entry points, if known.

F8 What eligibility criteria or thresholds would need to be reached for CYP or families to get access to support from you/your organisation? Probe: Are there limitation to who you can work with, around this? Are there any other 'gatekeepers' involved, before they reach you? Annotate map with any 'gatekeepers' or thresholds.

F9 What would happen next? What sort of signposting or referral is likely to be involved? Probe: What's your/your organisation's role in this? How might these CYP or families be referred? Why? Annotate map with lines of signposting or referral on.

F10 What sort of data on the individual CYP or families (needs of the YP, case history etc.) is shared and with whom? Probe: What do you/your organisation receive, if anything? What do you/your organisation pass on, if anything? What does this achieve? Annotate map with lines of data sharing re: individual service users.

F11 Is there any other data sharing (e.g., of 'bigger picture' insight)? Why? Annotate map with lines of data sharing for 'bigger picture' insight.

F12 Is there any other joint working or collaboration between you/your organisation and other 'actors' in the system? If so: To do what? Annotate map with other joint working / collaboration.

G Reflections on what this means to CYP/families (c.15 minutes)

G1 Reflecting on all this, how do these relationships, referral paths and data flows affect what you/your organisation can deliver around children and young people's involvement in serious violence? Why is that? Annotate map with notes on this.

G2 What effect do you think this might have on children, young people and families' ability to access relevant services around risk of involvement in serious violence? Probe: How does it affect their ability to access your/your organisation's services? Why?

G3 Are there children and young people / families who miss out on support? Who? Why?

G4 What effect do you think this might have on how engaging and motivating children, young people and families might find it, to deal with you/your organisation? Why?

G5 How might it affect their experiences of navigating between different organisations in the system? Why?

If covering rural areas:

G6 How does this affect what's experienced by any children, young people and families that you/your organisation works with, in rural areas? Why?

All:

G7 In what ways is all this leading to duplication in provision or gaps in provision around serious violence, in your experience? Annotate map with notes on duplication / gaps.

G8 Are there any less-than-ideal consequences or barriers posed by the way your part of the wider system works? Or inefficiencies of other kinds? If so: How? What's causing this? Annotate map with notes on any areas of dysfunction and what's causing this.

INTERVIEWER: EXPORT WHITEBOARD AS PDF BEFORE COMING OUT OF WHITEBOARD WINDOW!

H Advice on further discussions (c.7 minutes)

We're speaking to other professionals and practitioners who work with children and young people, as well as national and regional funders and policymakers in this space.

H1 Are there any organisations you'd advise us to speak to? Any individuals? What's their role, and why would you advise us to get their perspective on this? Make notes.

H2 In discussing this, are there any 'gaps' you're conscious of, in what you were able to talk about? If so: Broadly what were these? Who might we speak to, to fill in these gaps? Make notes.

H3 If participant / practitioner involved in arranging discussions with children and young people / families: I gather you've very kindly been helping us set up some discussions with children and young people who've been at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, either as victim or perpetrator. My colleagues will stay in touch with you to make arrangements about this, but I just wanted to say thank you again for helping with this – and to give you the chance to mention if there's anything specific we need to come back to you on, to do with making these arrangements? Make notes of anything the participant feels is outstanding in terms of making these arrangements, and refer this to the recruitment team.

I Final reflections and close (c.3 minutes)

I1 What else would you like to add about this subject, if anything?

I2 If we needed to come back to you later in the study to sense-check some of our findings, would you be willing for us to approach you again? (Note – you could of course decline when approached later if you wish). Note whether willing or not.

Just to confirm, this research is on behalf of the Department for Education and the Youth Endowment Fund. We'll be keeping your confidential responses to the interview for analysis purposes and if you'd like a copy of your data, to change your data or for your data to be deleted then please get in contact with IFF Research. If you'd like to confirm that this is a legitimate piece of research, you can contact the Department for Education.

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

Finally I would just like to confirm that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct. Thank you very much for your help today.

CYP and families

SV Systems Mapping

Children, Young People and Families Topic Guide 60-90 minutes

Respondent names (children, young people, families):

Respondent names (professionals / practitioners, if present):

Organisation names (professionals / practitioners, if present):

A Introducing the research (c.5 minutes)

Researcher to introduce research purpose, obtain informed consent:

- Interviewer introduces themselves – I work for IFF Research. We do research to find out what people think about important issues.

- Interviewer introduces the aims of the research overall – We’ve been asked by the Department for Education and the Youth Endowment Fund to speak to children, young people and their families, about things like having good relationships with other young people, being able to learn at school and keeping yourself safe.
- Add if needed: The Department for Education is the part of the Government that looks after services for children and young people, including schools and colleges, and children’s social care. The Youth Endowment Fund is a charity that offers support to help keep children and young people safe.
- Explain to all – We’re hoping we might be able to spend some time talking to you about your own experiences with people and organisations that work with children and young people.
- Hopefully [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL / PRACTITIONER] has explained to you a bit about this already.
- You don’t need to tell us anything about how [you / your child] got into a situation where contact with these people or organisations took place. We instead want to hear about any people (outside of your family) or organisations you spoke to at this point, what you thought about this, and how you felt about speaking to these people or organisations. If you didn’t end up speaking with any people and organisations that work with children and young people, we’re still interested in hearing your views. This will help to improve how organisations work with children, young people and their families in the future.
- Our discussion today should last around 60-90 minutes. We’ll be doing some activities together as we talk, to help me understand your experiences. If there is anything you don’t want to talk about, or if you want to take a break, or stop completely, that’s fine – just let me know. I’m going to offer a break about halfway through, but you can let me know if you need one before then.
- Also, when we tell other people what children, young people and families had to say, we won’t use your name. No-one outside of the research team, and the [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL / PRACTITIONER] will know you spoke to us. And if you do change your mind about us including what you’ve told us today, you can contact us to let us know. We will be writing up what we hear from across all our discussions with children and young people, but this will be reported without naming anyone. For example, “...most people said this, or that.” Everyone taking part in this research will remain anonymous, which means your name, your school and the area you live in won’t be included, so that no one could work out that you had taken part.
- Make sure participant has understood and is OK with / has signed the consent form. ALWAYS READ OUT: The one thing I do need to say, is that if you tell us about

you or someone else you know being at risk of harm, we may have to let the authorities know.

- Does this sound OK?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- If parent/guardian present with child/young person, or professional/practitioner present with child/young person/parent/guardian, invite them to jog memories if needed about who child/young person/parent/guardian might have encountered at each point, but explain we want to hear first from the child/young person (then the parent/guardian) about what was discussed and how this felt to the child/young person (plus parent/guardian). (NB - professionals/practitioners are to be briefed on their role within the discussion, in advance.)

PERMISSION TO RECORD: I would like to record our conversation so I don't have to take a lot of notes – the recording will just be for me and the other researchers who work with me to listen to, to help us remember what you said. When we finish our report, we'll delete the recording.

Is it OK for me to record?

Yes 1 CONTINUE AND

START RECORDING

No 2 CONTINUE

BUT TAKE NOTES AS GO ALONG

CONTACT DETAILS PROVIDED IF REQUESTED.

B Introduction (c. 5minutes)

Rapport-building question topics to cover, as feels natural:

B1 If CYP participating: Interviewer and participating children / young people to share a conversation, e.g.: Where they are from and how they feel about it / Their journey to the

discussion venue / A topical issue or news story at the time of the interview (Key that the researcher displays keen and genuine interest in what the young person has to say here, to build rapport and encourage them to open up.)

B2 All: How are you today? How has your week been so far?

B3 If professional / practitioner participating: Ask them to briefly introduce themselves.

C Plotting the system 'actors' and exploring experiences of these (40 mins)

Thank you for telling me a little about yourself. What we'd now like to do is move on to an exercise, where we draw on a map some people [you / your child] have spent time with and then talk about how you felt about this.

We understand that [you / your child] had some contact with someone (outside of your family), or an organisation, that was intended to support with things like how to have good relationships with other young people, being able to learn at school and keeping yourself safe. Is that right?

You don't need to say anything about how [you / your child] got into this situation – what we're interested in, is who you spoke with, and how that happened.

This might include a social worker, a family worker or someone from a youth offending team that [you / your child] spoke to during this time. You can tell us about positive or negative things – there are no right or wrong answers, we're just interested in hearing what you have to say.

Also, if you'd like to take a break or stop at any point that's not a problem. Just let me know if you'd like to take a break, that's totally fine. It's possible that talking about your experiences today might raise some difficult feelings. As I say, do let me know if you'd like to take a break, and if you'd like to find out about some sources of support, I can let you know at the end of this interview. And I just need to remind you: if you tell us about you or someone else you know being at risk of harm, we may have to let the authorities know.

- If face-to-face: Researcher to bring out large sheets of flipchart paper and pens and brief the participant(s) that we now need to work together to plot out the main people they spoke to or were offered help by.
- If virtual: Researcher to explain how Zoom whiteboard function works, and show participants how to annotate. Brief the participant(s) that we now need to work together to plot out the main 'actors' in the system. The researcher should encourage participants to

contribute as much as possible directly, but also be prepared to step in to plot out verbal contributions, if needed, to avoid detail being lost (especially for children and young people themselves).

- The researcher will need to be flexible with this section, it may work differently for different people.

C1 So thinking about this, how did you first end up speaking to someone (outside of your family) about this situation? Probe: Was there anyone you spoke to about it?

Probe: Were you in contact with more than one person? Researcher explores all people / organisations; working with participant to add these to sheet of paper / shared screen.

Explore which one(s) they spoke with first, and why; and establish whether they spoke with multiple people at once. If multiple people, ask participant which they want to talk about first, and then talk about each in turn. If possible, researcher works with participant to put these organisations / these persons into an order, on the sheet of paper / shared screen (e.g., in the order they were in context with them, or the order they want to speak about them).

If parent/guardian present with child/young person, or professional / practitioner is present, draw on their help to add people / organisations and / or put them in order, if needed (but always check the views of the young person / family member first).

C2 Do you know anything about their job, or where they work? Add note.

- Again, if parent/guardian present with child/young person, or professional/practitioner present with child/young person/parent/guardian, invite them to jog memories if needed about who child/young person/parent/guardian might have encountered first, but explain we want to hear first from the child/young person (then the parent/guardian) about what was discussed and how this felt to the child/young person (plus parent/guardian).

C3 When you first met them, how did you feel about the idea of [you / your child] talking to them about this? Why?

C4 What were [you / your child] told about them, before [you / your child] met them? Probe for what they were told about what the individual would do or speak to them about.

C5 If speaking to them was your idea / if you chose to speak to them, how easy or difficult was it for [you / your child] to get to speak to them? Why do you say that? Prompt participant if necessary, to think about things like where the conversation took place, the time of day or day of the week, whether it was virtual or face-to-face, how easy / difficult it was to agree a good time.

C6 And did [you / your child] speak to them, in the end? If not: Why was that? How did you feel about that?

C7 If spoke: What did they talk to [you / your child] about? Did they offer you any help? What sort of help was this? Did you want this help? Did you see what was offered as 'help' or not?

C8 If spoke: How did you feel about what they talked about? Why? Probe: How comfortable or uncomfortable was this? How 'ready' did [you / your child] feel to talk about this?

C9 If offered help: How did you feel about the help they offered [you / your child]? Why? Probe: Did the help offered actually happen? If so: What did you think about the help that was offered / what actually happened? Probe: Was this what you expected? If different to what expected, explore how.

C10 [If parent / guardian: Was your child there? How did you feel about this? Why? How well did it work, having your child being there / not being there? Why do you say that?]

C11 If spoke: Was anyone else there? If so: Who? How helpful, or not, was this? Why?

C12 If spoke: Did they stay in touch with [you / your child]? If so: How? How often were they in touch? What happened, through them staying in touch? How did [you / your child] feel about staying in touch with them?

C13 If spoke: Did they say what would happen next? If so: What did they say? How did you feel about this? Why?

C14 All: And after this, did anything else happen?

C15 If nothing happened next: Do you know why nothing more happened?

C16 If something else happened: What happened next? How did this make you feel? Probe if not addressed: Did this change anything for you in terms of how safe, or not, you felt?

C17 If passed to another source of help: How were [you / your child] introduced to the next person you spoke with about this? How did you feel about how this was done? Why?

C18 Who spoke to [you / your child] about this situation, next? When did this happen? Probe: Was it at the same time, or before or after? Researcher to add actors to the sheet of paper / shared screen. This could take the form of a 'map' or 'journey' showing what happened over time, according to what the participant says.

C19 Do you know anything about their job, or where they work? Add note.

- Again, if parent/guardian present with child/young person, or professional/practitioner present with child/young person/parent/guardian, invite them to jog memories if needed about who child/young person/parent/guardian might have encountered next, but explain we want to hear first from the child/young person (then the parent/guardian) about what was discussed and how this felt to the child/young person (plus parent/guardian).

C20 When you first met them, how did you feel about the idea of talking to them about this? Why?

C21 What were you told about them, before you met them? Probe for what they were told about what the individual would do or speak to them about.

C22 How easy or difficult was it for [you / your child] to get to speak to them? Why do you say that? Prompt participant if necessary, to think about things like where the conversation took place, the time of day or day of the week, whether it was virtual or face-to-face, how easy / difficult it was to agree a good time.

C23 And did [you / your child] speak to them, in the end? If not: Why was that? How did you feel about that?

C24 If spoke: What did they talk to [you / your child] about? Did they offer [you / your child] any help? What sort of help was this? Did you want this help? Did you see what was offered as 'help' or not?

C25 If spoke: How did you feel about what they talked about? Why? Probe: How comfortable or uncomfortable was this? How 'ready' did [you / your child] feel to talk about this?

C26 If offered help: How did you feel about the help they offered [you / your child]? Why? Probe: Did the help offered actually happen? If so: What did you think about the

help that was offered / what actually happened? Probe: Was this what you expected? If different to what expected, explore how.

C27 If spoke: How much did they seem to know about [you / your child], when you met them? How did you feel about that?

C28 [If parent / guardian: Was your child there? How did you feel about this? Why? How well did it work, having your child being there / not being there? Why do you say that?]

C29 If spoke: Was anyone else there? If so: Who? How helpful, or not, was this? Why?

C30 If spoke: Did they stay in touch with [you / your child]? If so: How? How often were they in touch? What happened, through them staying in touch? How did [you / your child] feel about staying in touch with them?

C31 If spoke: Did they say what would happen next? If so: What did they say? How did you feel about this? Why?

C32 All: And after this, did anything else happen?

C33 If nothing happened next: Do you know why nothing more happened?

C34 If something happened next: What happened next?

Continue this process until all sources of support are mapped out and nothing further happened.

Probe as needed (depending on what has been said above):

C35 Just to check, did you speak about this with anyone from [show card]: school or college / a social worker / social care / the police / a youth offending team / a GP, doctor or nurse / a counsellor or therapist / a church, mosque or place of worship / a youth group / a housing association? If yes, explore where in the 'journey' they sit and use the questions above to explore what they talked about / did and what happened as a result.

C36 Was anyone else suggested to [you / your child], to speak to, about this, that you didn't end up speaking to? If yes: Can you tell me a bit more about this? Probe for who the person(s) were, what was suggested and why it didn't happen.

C37 And going back to that first person you spoke with [remind participant using person's / organisation's name and by showing them on the 'map'], do you know how they heard you might want to speak to them? Add note of any previous steps the participant is aware of.

C38 If know how the first person they encountered heard they might want help: How do you feel about them finding out like that? Why?

Check whether participants would like a 5-minute break. If yes, agree time to resume.

D Relationships and entry points (10 mins)

So we've looked at [all of] these people who [you / your child] spoke with about getting some help, to do with something like having good relationships with other young people, being able to learn at school and keeping themselves safe.

Show map / journey that you've created together.

D1 If had contact with multiple services: Did the different people you were in touch with, seem to have talked to each other about what they were offering you? How did you feel about this?

D2 If had contact with multiple services at once: Did you find it useful to be in touch with them at the same time? Why / why not?

D3 If had contact with multiple services: Did you think that some people or organisations you spoke to, offered you the same thing? If so: Did you find this helpful or unhelpful? Why?

D4 If had contact with multiple services: Do you think the different people you were in touch with, had a good relationship with each other? Why do you say that?

D5 You said [you / your child] first spoke to [NAME] about this. In future, who do you think that children and young people or families who need help should contact first? Why?

E Reflections on what children, young people and families experienced (20 mins)

Continue to show map / journey that you've created together.

E1 How did you feel about what these people did, or offered to do, for [you / your child]? Why?

E2 How helpful or unhelpful did you find all of this? Why?

E3 How much do you feel they listened to you? Why?

E4 If parent / guardian: How much was your child involved? If involved: How much do you feel they listened to your child? Why? All parents / guardians: How do you feel about that?

E5 Probe as needed: How much did you feel they understood what [you / your child] needed? Why?

E6 Probe as needed: How well did they explain to [you / your child] what they were doing, and why?

E7 During your experiences of speaking to people about this situation, was there anything that was missing, that would have helped you/your family? If so: What else did you need or want? What was the result of not getting this? Who do you think could have given you this extra help?

E8 Thinking about the people you spoke to about the situation, could they have done anything differently, or better? If so: What?

E9 Was there anything that [you / your child] didn't like about all of this? If so: What was this? How did this affect [you / your child]?

E10 On a more positive note, was there anything that was good about the people [you / your child] spoke to or any help you were offered? If so: What was this? How did this help [you / your child]?

If parent/guardian present with child/young person, or professional/practitioner present with child/young person/parent/guardian, ask:

E11 From listening to what happened and how this felt, is there anything you want to ask [name of child/young person/parent/guardian] about their experience?

E12 And is there anything you'd like to add, about why [name of child/young person/parent/guardian] might have had this experience? Explore whether professional/practitioner can offer theories about why certain parts of the 'system map' or 'journey' felt they way they did, for the child/young person/parent/guardian.

E13 For child / young person: And if you were to give some advice to other children or young people in a similar situation, what would you say?

F Thank and close (5 minutes)

Thank you very much for your time today; that's nearly the end of the interview. We really appreciate you sharing your experiences with us.

F1 Do you have any other comments or thoughts that you would like to add?

F2 Finally, do you have any questions for me?

Just to say again, what we've talked about will be used to write a report for the Department for Education and the Youth Endowment Fund. When we tell other people what children, young people and families had to say, we won't use your name. No-one will know you spoke to us. And if you do change your mind about us including what you've told us today, you can contact us to let us know.

If you have any questions about the research or would like to get in touch regarding what we have spoken about today, please contact me on [EMAIL].

If you'd like to check who the research is for, you can contact the Department for Education.

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

Finally I would just like to confirm that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct. Thank you very much for your help today.

Hand out text to give to respondent

Thank you for taking part.

If you would like to seek support with anything we've been talking about today, you may find the following organisations helpful.

- Childline: a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything. We're here for you online, on the phone, anytime. <https://www.childline.org.uk/> / 0800 1111
- The Mix: UK based charity that provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile. <https://www.themix.org.uk/> / 0808 8084994
- Young Minds: mental health charity for children, young people and their parents, making sure all young people can get the mental health support they need. <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/> / Text YM to 85258
- Samaritans: A registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland, often through their telephone helpline.

<https://www.samaritans.org/> / Tel: 116 123



Department
for Education



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