

EVALUATION REPORT

# LNK Educate

Feasibility and pilot study report

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 **National Centre  
for Social Research**

 **YOUTH  
ENDOWMENT  
FUND**

## About the Youth Endowment Fund

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

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

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

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

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## About the evaluator

NatCen Social Research is Britain's leading independent non-profit research organisation with a mission to produce great research with a social purpose. As Britain's leading centre for independent social research, NatCen have over 50 years' experience of listening to the public and making sure their voice is heard. Their research helps the government and charities make the right decisions about the big issues, and they are passionate about ensuring its widest possible impact on the world around us.

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This project was carried out in compliance with ISO20252.

# Executive summary

## The project

LNK Educate is a school-based programme for nine- to 14-year-olds that aims to reduce involvement with crime and violence. The programme aims to encourage and support young people to adopt strategies for dealing with conflict and negative emotions and to remain in mainstream school so that they are less likely to get drawn into crime and violent behaviour. LNK Educate combines a series of universal workshops for all children, with targeted one-to-one mentoring for children identified as being at high risk of exclusion and future involvement in crime and violence. Six universal workshops are delivered by teachers, and each lesson centres on a video about knife crime and its consequences. Topics include the psychological impact of knife crime on families and friends, sentencing, medical facts and police powers to stop and search. Teachers use resources (including suggested discussion topics and activities) provided by LNK Educate to deliver workshops. The targeted mentoring component is then delivered by LNK mentors who provide weekly one-to-one sessions for up to 12 months.

YEF funded a feasibility and pilot evaluation of LNK Educate. The feasibility study aimed to ascertain how LNK Educate is implemented and explore participants' experiences and views of the intervention. To answer these questions, the study used interviews and discussion groups with four LNK mentors, three members of the LNK management team, seven teachers and 16 pupils. The pilot evaluation then aimed to identify appropriate outcome measures for the project, ascertain the level of pre- and post-intervention change in these outcomes, explore the sample size required for future, larger-scale evaluations of LNK Educate, detail how young people are selected for the programme and examine the feasibility of conducting an impact evaluation. One hundred and ninety-one young people across five schools participated in the pilot study (112 completing the universal component and a further 79 also completing the targeted intervention). Pupils were invited to complete a pre- and post-programme survey featuring the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a measure of behaviour, and the Student Resilience Survey (SRS). The evaluation ran from spring 2020 to October 2022 and was therefore impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring both the delivery team and evaluator to adapt to challenging circumstances.

### Key conclusions

The training provided to deliver both the universal and targeted components of LNK Educate was deemed to be helpful by teachers and mentors in the feasibility study. Teachers noted some gaps in training content. While core elements were delivered in line with the intended model, implementation of both the universal and targeted elements in the feasibility study was variable.

In the feasibility study, teachers reflected positively on the workshop session content and typically described young people as engaged during lessons. They also perceived young people to have a good relationship with mentors. COVID-19, and subsequent school closures, was a significant barrier to delivery; other barriers included teachers lacking knowledge in specific areas and a lack of resources for some lessons. Facilitators to delivery included the support provided by LNK Educate and the extended length of mentoring.

Young people in the feasibility study reported that their mentors were relatable and trustworthy; they also described their mentors as caring, honest and non-judgemental as well as having a sense of humour. LNK staff, teachers and mentors perceived that the programme resulted in a range of positive outcomes for pupils.

The pilot study found that it was feasible to use the SDQ and the SRS as outcome measures for LNK Educate. The measures align with the intervention's logic model for children receiving targeted mentoring; however, they are less well aligned with the universal workshop component.

Recruitment of schools to the pilot study was generally satisfactory. However, two of the six originally sampled schools declined to participate due to the data archiving requirement. To evaluate LNK Educate via a randomised controlled trial, LNK Educate would need to more consistently select children for the targeted mentoring component

and apply a compliance measure for the targeted mentoring group to better understand the extent to which this component is delivered and scale up to a considerably larger number of schools.

## **Interpretation**

The training provided to deliver both the universal and targeted components of LNK Educate was deemed to be helpful by teachers and mentors in the feasibility study. Teachers found the training clear, easy to understand, useful and interesting. They also reported that the training had increased their confidence to deliver LNK Educate workshops while the small number of mentors interviewed also reported feeling well prepared following training. However, teachers also noted some gaps in training content, including insufficient information on the legal aspects of knife crime.

Core elements of LNK Educate were delivered in line with the intended model in the feasibility study. Lessons followed the set format (of watching a prescribed video, followed by a class discussion), and weekly one-to-one mentoring was delivered to young people where children set action plans with mentors who then monitored progress against goals set. However, various elements of the implementation of both the universal and targeted components were shown to be variable in the feasibility study. The universal element was not always delivered before the targeted mentoring; some schools enabled pupils to opt out while others didn't, some schools had mentors present in workshops while others didn't, children selected for mentoring were identified by different people across schools and information was not always shared with young people in advance of mentoring starting. While LNK Educate is designed to be flexible and meet the needs of the young people receiving the intervention, much of this variation deviated from the original model.

In the feasibility study, teachers reflected positively on the workshop session content and resources and typically described young people as engaged during lessons. They also perceived young people to have a good relationship with mentors. COVID-19, and subsequent school closures, was a significant barrier to delivery. Other barriers included teachers lacking knowledge in specific areas and a lack of resources for some lessons. Facilitators to delivery included the support provided by LNK Educate and the extended length of mentoring. Teachers perceived that the length of the programme facilitated greater engagement from young people and supported rapport and relationship building. The external status of LNK as an outside organisation was also perceived to support engagement, making it easier for young people to confide in neutral and independent adults. Young people reported that their mentors were relatable and trustworthy; they also described their mentors as caring, honest and non-judgemental as well as having a sense of humour. LNK staff, teachers and young people interviewed in the feasibility study perceived that LNK Educate led to a range of improved outcomes for pupils. These included greater knowledge and awareness of knife crime and improved empathy, mental wellbeing, self-belief, behaviour and anger management.

The pilot study found that it was feasible to use the SDQ and the SRS as outcome measures for LNK Educate. The measures align with the intervention's logic model for children receiving targeted mentoring; however, they are less well aligned with the universal workshop component. A future trial should consider collecting different measures for the universal group. There were mixed pre- and post-test results, with young people in the targeted mentoring component showing improvements in SRS-measured empathy, while those in the workshop intervention group demonstrated declines. However, without a counterfactual group who did not receive the programme, we are unable to be sure that these effects are attributable to the programme. Recruitment of schools to the pilot study was generally satisfactory. However, two of the six originally sampled schools declined to participate due to the data archiving requirement. To evaluate LNK Educate via a randomised controlled trial, LNK Educate would need to more consistently select children for the targeted mentoring component, apply a compliance measure for the targeted mentoring group and scale up to a considerably larger number of schools.

YEF has opted not to proceed with further evaluation of LNK Educate at this stage.

## 1. Introduction

Lives Not Knives (LNK) is a youth-led charity with a mission to prevent knife crime, serious youth violence and school exclusions. The charity aims to engage, educate and empower disadvantaged young people and support them to enjoy their lives and improve their future prospects.<sup>1</sup> As part of achieving these aims, LNK developed LNK Educate, which is a school-based programme that combines a universal workshop approach via a series of lessons with targeted one-to-one mentoring for young people. This report presents the findings of a feasibility study and pilot study of LNK Educate.

### Background

In 2019, LNK were awarded a Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) grant to roll out the LNK Educate programme, a primary and secondary school intervention for young people aged primarily between nine and 14, which is delivered across the Croydon area.<sup>2, 3</sup> In this section, we provide an overview of the overarching aims of LNK Educate, the development of the programme and the format of delivery.

#### What are the overarching aims of the programme?

LNK Educate aims to encourage a ‘whole-school approach’ (i.e. everyone at the school working to achieve the programme’s aims together) as part of early intervention to reduce school exclusions and the number of young people getting involved in youth violence and knife crime. Alongside educating and raising awareness of the issues surrounding knife crime via universal lessons delivered to whole year groups, the programme aims to work closely with, and mentor, young people who are identified as being at highest risk of school exclusion and getting drawn into crime and violence.<sup>4</sup> The programme aims to encourage and support young people to adopt strategies for dealing with conflict and negative emotions (i.e. sadness) and to remain within mainstream school so that they are less likely to get drawn into crime and violent behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

#### Development of the programme

LNK was founded in 2007 in response to increasing youth violence, gang culture and youth crime in the UK.<sup>6</sup> The organisation began as an awareness campaign with the intention of preventing young people from

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<sup>1</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/>

<sup>2</sup> See further: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/funding/who-we-fund/lives-not-knives/>

<sup>3</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that LNK Educate delivery was prioritised for Years 7–9 (age 11–14) at secondary schools, but some schools also delivered the programme to Years 10 and 11.

<sup>4</sup> Participant characteristics as set out in the LNK’s application for YEF funding include having a criminal conviction, being a looked-after child, being at risk of school exclusion/having been excluded from school, being frequently truant, having a family member with a criminal conviction, being at risk of gang membership, being in a gang, having low levels of educational achievement, having suffered abuse/early childhood trauma, having been victim of crime, displaying antisocial behaviour and having a history of weapon possession (e.g. a knife, a gun).

<sup>5</sup> See further: <https://resources.livesnotknives.org/about-programme>

<sup>6</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/about/story>

carrying knives as well as increasing awareness of knife crime statistics among adults, including parents.<sup>7</sup> Following 10 years of delivering roadshows to schools about knife crime and youth violence, LNK received Home Office funding in 2018 to create resources to help schools and teachers play a greater role in early preventative work with young people.

The development of the LNK Educate school kit and resources evolved from the LNK team's lived experience, their experience of working with young people and the findings of 15 focus groups conducted with young people, youth workers, teachers and parents. Young people who had been mentored by LNK (but not as a part of the LNK Educate programme) also helped to inform the programme design and development. In particular, they provided feedback around what they had needed to help reduce their risk of being excluded from school as well as their overall reflections on being mentored.

LNK piloted the delivery of some elements of LNK Educate between January and March 2019.<sup>8</sup> Roll-out of the full programme began in October 2019; however, as described throughout this report, the COVID-19 pandemic caused some disruption to the full roll-out and delivery of the programme.

### **What is the format of the programme?**

School-based programmes designed to reduce school exclusions and in turn promote better outcomes for young people (i.e. by reducing the number of young people getting involved in youth violence and knife crime) can take a universal, a targeted or a tiered universal and targeted approach (Gaffney, Farrington & White, 2021). Universal programmes are also referred to as 'whole-school' programmes; they take a broader approach and try to impact more young people, sometimes by addressing issues within the school as a whole. By contrast, a targeted programme works more specifically with a smaller group of young people who are already demonstrating 'problem behaviours' (Gaffney et al., 2021). In line with this, the LNK Educate programme adopts a tiered approach comprised of a universal element (lessons) and a targeted element (one-to-one mentoring). The universal lessons are intended to be delivered by LNK-trained teachers, while the targeted mentoring sessions are intended to be provided by LNK-trained mentors; both elements should be delivered consecutively in schools. The objective is for LNK mentors to be positive role models and use their skills and own lived experiences to help improve the prospects of the young people that they work with. For example, some LNK mentors have experienced social exclusion and challenging home environments, as well as being the victims and/or perpetrators of crime.<sup>9</sup>

### **Intervention/programme**

This section provides an overview of each component of the LNK Educate programme.

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<sup>7</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/about/story>

<sup>8</sup> LNK have clarified that the pilot was a trial of the teacher training and delivery of lesson resources and did not include the mentoring element of the programme. LNK have reported that during the pilot phase, 20 teachers delivered the LNK Educate lessons to 5,000 students.

<sup>9</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/about/team>

## **Lessons: Universal component**

The universal lessons aim to educate and raise awareness among young people of the issues surrounding knife crime. The universal component of LNK Educate is delivered in schools by teaching staff to all pupils in the target year groups (in primary schools, these are Years 5 and 6; in secondary schools, these are Years 7 to 9, with some secondary schools also delivering the universal component to Years 10 and 11). LNK provides training for teaching staff to equip them to deliver lessons to pupils using LNK Educate resources, which includes a 'Teacher Resources Pack'.<sup>10</sup> This pack features six video interviews with different people on a range of topics relating to knife violence. As described on LNK's website, each of these videos covers different aspects of knife crime.<sup>11</sup> This includes its psychological impact on family and friends, the legal concepts around sentencing, medical facts and information about police powers to stop and search. The intention is that the videos will help to expose a variety of 'myths' surrounding these subjects. The videos are also accompanied by suggested teaching plans and activities to use in order to help maximise participation from young people. They include:

- A set of aims and objectives for the lesson.
- Some instructions around lesson structure.
- A fact sheet on the relevant topic area.
- A class task, such as writing a short story, letter or poem or role-play.

The intention is that the resources are delivered by teachers across six lessons.<sup>12</sup>

## **One-to-one mentoring: Targeted component**

Once the lessons have been delivered, teachers are asked to identify young people across the year groups who have received these lessons and may benefit from one-to-one mentoring from an LNK mentor. Each mentor works with a maximum of eight mentees per school. This means, for example, that in a school with two mentors, teachers would identify up to 16 young people, and in a school with three mentors, teachers would identify up to 24 young people. This element of LNK Educate is targeted towards young people who are considered to be at 'high risk' of school exclusion or getting drawn into youth violence, which suggests they could require additional support from LNK (see footnote 3 earlier in this chapter). However, the process of selecting pupils/young people into the targeted element varies across schools and does not adhere to fixed selection criteria. The intention is that teachers and LNK mentors will work together to make the selection. They consider how pupils responded to the universal element as well as existing knowledge of the pupils and who they think may benefit from the one-to-one mentoring the most. Other key figures within

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<sup>10</sup> LNK reported that between 2020 and 2022, 460 teaching staff were trained (323 in 2020–2021 and 137 in 2021–2022).

<sup>11</sup> The resources are accessible at a password-protected website: <https://resources.livesnotknives.org/>

<sup>12</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that they suggest schools deliver one lesson per week. However, the schools are able to decide how often to schedule LNK lessons based on their curriculum and overall timetable.

the school, such as the Safeguarding Lead or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Lead, may also contribute to the decision.

LNK mentors then deliver an introductory workshop<sup>13</sup> to the young people who have been selected for the mentoring programme before the one-to-one sessions begin. While mentoring sessions are designed to allow for flexibility in structure, the intention is that sessions will include a review of goals set at the last session – including what worked and what was a barrier to achieving the goal/s – a review of upcoming challenges and signposting to other support as needed. Mentoring sessions also involve a positive review of distance travelled and reflection on ultimate goals and ambitions, with the aim of motivating young people to fulfil their potential and improve their prospects.

The intended mentoring period is up to 12 months. During this period, mentoring occurs weekly at the school during term time. The aim is for each session to last around 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the mentee's engagement; however, sessions can also last longer than this. Additional drop-in sessions with mentors are available twice weekly, offering flexibility for additional support. Young people can also attend the LNK Youth Hub and summer programme described below.<sup>14</sup>

### **Additional components of LNK**

LNK also run a number of activities that are not part of the LNK Educate programme. These include educational roadshows, an interactive youth hub and a six-week school summer holiday programme. Further details can be found in Technical Appendix A.

### **Report structure**

This report presents the findings of two studies: a feasibility study and a pilot study of LNK Educate. First, we describe the feasibility study, which aimed to assess early programme implementation to support decisions about programme refinement and whether the evaluation should proceed to the pilot stage. Next, we report on the pilot study, the main objectives of which were to investigate the potential of LNK Educate to reduce the risk of youth offending and identify appropriate primary outcome measures for the intervention. Building on this, we present our assessment of the readiness of LNK Educate for a future trial and provide insights into how such a trial could be designed.

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<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of this report, 'workshop' refers to the information session delivered by the LNK mentors to young people who have been selected for LNK Educate mentoring. 'Roadshows' refers to the larger events that are part of the wider LNK team's delivery and work with schools, as described in the section below.

<sup>14</sup> See further: <https://resources.livesnotknives.org/about-programme>

## 2. Feasibility study overview

### Research questions

The YEF commissioned NatCen to conduct a feasibility study of LNK Educate during the academic year 2019/2020. However, due to the challenges and delays in conducting school-based fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic, the timings were extended, and recruitment and fieldwork were conducted over the academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. The study aimed to assess early programme implementation to support decisions about programme refinement and whether the evaluation should proceed to the pilot stage.

Table 1 provides an overview of key research aims and accompanying research questions, as set out in the study protocol (Roberts, Scott & Fugard, 2021).

**Table 1. Research aims and questions**

Research aims and questions	
Aim	Question
Assess early implementation and delivery of LNK Educate from the perspectives of LNK staff (management team and mentors) and service users (teachers and young people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How and why are schools recruited to LNK Educate?</li><li>• How is LNK Educate implemented in practice, and what adaptations are made to delivery?</li><li>• What are participants' experiences of the programme, including key facilitators and barriers to implementation and delivery?</li><li>• What are participants' views on the perceived impacts of the programme?</li></ul>
Support decisions about intervention refinement	What are the possible next steps and recommendations for delivery?
Inform whether to proceed to a pilot evaluation and a suitable research design	What research design is suitable for a pilot evaluation?

### Success criteria and/or targets

To transition from feasibility stage to pilot stage, the LNK Educate programme needed to be:

- Implemented as intended, with consistent delivery as intended across schools in terms of the number of lessons, topics covered and format used.
- Considered acceptable and engaging across delivery staff and young people, according to the qualitative data collected.

### Ethical review

Ethical approval was obtained from the NatCen Research Ethics Committee ahead of recruitment and data collection. Before taking part in data collection activities (an interview or discussion group), participants were provided with information on what taking part in the research would involve, including information on the topics that would be discussed and how data would be used. This information was provided in writing via an information sheet and verbally before the start of each research encounter (see further, Chapter 3). At the beginning of each interview and discussion group, it was made clear to participants that taking part

was voluntary, and NatCen would take steps to maintain participants’ anonymity. However, caveats around the small sample size (see further, Chapter 3) were explained. The NatCen disclosure policy was also described, including the circumstances in which confidentiality may be breached (i.e. a disclosure that the participant or someone that they identify is at risk of serious harm).

## Data protection

NatCen stored and handled all data securely and confidentially in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Only the research team and approved third parties listed in the privacy statement (i.e. the agency that transcribed the qualitative data) had access to the data collected as part of the feasibility study. Participant data were transferred via a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

NatCen were the data controller and processor. This means that NatCen were responsible for deciding the purpose and legal basis for managing the data. The legal basis was legitimate interest. This means that NatCen believed there was a good reason to collect and manage these data and that the data were needed to evaluate and learn about the LNK Educate programme. Using these data did not interfere with individuals’ interests, rights or freedoms.

NatCen issued information sheets to all relevant parties. This also included a link to the privacy notice, which was published on the study website (see further, Chapter 3).

## Project team/stakeholders

**Table 2. Delivery team<sup>15</sup>**

Delivery team	
Title and institution	Role
LNK management team	Design of LNK Educate; set-up and delivery of the programme, including overall oversight, liaising with the schools running LNK Educate and training school staff to deliver the programme.
LNK mentors	Supporting the setting up of the programme, including training school staff to deliver the programme. Delivery of the one-to-one mentoring.

**Table 3. Evaluation team (feasibility)**

Evaluation team		
Name	Title and institution	Role
Caroline Turley	Director of Crime & Justice, NatCen (until July 2021 and from September 2022)	Quality assurance
Dr Tina Haux	Director of the Centre for Children & Families; interim Director of Crime & Justice, NatCen	Quality assurance
Ellie Roberts	Research Director, NatCen (until December 2021)	Principal investigator. Overall study lead. Senior oversight. Data collection.

<sup>15</sup> To maintain anonymity, we have not included the names of the delivery team.

Dr Jennifer Barton-Crosby	Research Director, NatCen (from January 2022)	Project manager and reporting. Took over as overall lead from January 2022.
Jane Kerr	Senior Researcher, NatCen	Data collection, analysis and reporting
Lana MacNaboe	Researcher, NatCen	Data collection, data management, analysis and reporting
Arjun Liddar	Researcher, NatCen (until January 2022)	Fieldwork and data management

### 3. Feasibility methods

#### Participant selection

##### LNK staff

Interviews were carried out with LNK mentors who deliver the targeted element of LNK Educate. Interviews were also carried out with the LNK management team who oversee training and programme delivery in schools. LNK management supported the recruitment of LNK staff; a member of the NatCen research team briefed them on the approach to recruitment and provided information sheets to circulate to the LNK mentors (see Technical Appendix B) and wider LNK management team (see Technical Appendix C). Interested LNK staff members were invited to get in touch with NatCen directly using the study email address or phone number. Alternatively, they could register their interest with the LNK management staff member overseeing recruitment, who would then, with their permission, securely share contact details with the NatCen research team. An interview (via Microsoft Teams) with a NatCen researcher was then arranged for a time and date convenient for the participating LNK staff members. All research encounters were paired depth interviews with either two mentors or two members of the LNK management team.

Four mentors and three members of the LNK management team took part in a paired depth interview between December 2020 and May 2021.<sup>16</sup>

##### School case studies

The feasibility study was originally designed to be a case study approach whereby data collection with teachers and pupils/young people would be undertaken in two schools (a primary and a secondary school). However, due to a range of reasons, including the many pressures schools faced accommodating research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school fieldwork experienced significant delays. In response to these challenges, we adopted a more flexible approach and extended participation across a greater number of schools to help manage any undue burden on schools. As such, school fieldwork took place in two phases:

##### *Phase 1: May–July 2021*

- Four interviews with teachers across three schools
- One discussion group and four in-depth interviews with pupils/young people at one school

##### *Phase 2: May 2022*

- Three in-depth interviews with teachers across two schools
- One discussion group, one paired depth and three in-depth interviews with pupils/young people across two schools

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<sup>16</sup> One member of the LNK management team took part in an initial interview and a follow-up interview.

### *Selecting schools*

The target was for LNK Educate to be delivered in 10 schools over two years. NatCen worked with LNK to select primary and secondary schools that were receiving LNK Educate to participate in the study. The selection process involved LNK approaching the schools to ascertain whether they would be willing to participate in the feasibility study and, if so, which encounters they would be able to accommodate. NatCen provided LNK with a general information sheet for schools to help support this initial approach (see Technical Appendix D). The general information sheet provided an overview of the evaluation, what participation would involve, the research activities to be carried out as well as contact information for the NatCen research team. If a school was willing to take part, they were asked to contact the LNK team, who then shared (with their permission) the contact details of a nominated lead contact at the school who would be willing to discuss the research further with the NatCen team and be responsible for setting up the fieldwork encounters.

Following this process at Phase 1, five schools expressed an interest in taking part in the research and were contacted by NatCen. However, some found it challenging to accommodate the research, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, only three took part in the feasibility study during Phase 1. This ranged from a single teacher interview to a case study comprising both teacher and pupil research encounters. Two more schools were approached for Phase 2, and both agreed to take part in both teacher and pupil encounters. Therefore, five schools took part in the feasibility study.

### *Selecting pupils/young people*

NatCen worked closely with the nominated lead staff contact in each school to support recruitment of pupils. The NatCen research team sent school leads a briefing document (see Technical Appendix E), which stated what participation in the research would involve and provided information sheets tailored for parents/carers and pupils (see Technical Appendix F).<sup>17</sup>

The school lead or LNK mentor working at the school arranged for parents/carers of pupils who had taken part in the LNK Educate programme to receive the relevant information sheet. Depending on school preference and time frames, this information sheet either contained an 'opt in' or 'opt out' form for parents/carers to complete and return to the school lead (see Technical Appendix F).

Following the opt in/opt-out period, selected pupils/young people were provided with the relevant information sheet, depending on whether they were being invited to a group discussion or individual interview (see Technical Appendix G for the discussion group information sheet and Technical Appendix H for the interview information sheet). The discussion groups would focus on experiences of the universal element and the in-depth interviews on experiences of both the universal and targeted elements of the programme. If pupils/young people did not want to take part in the research, they were asked to let the person who gave them the information sheet know.

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<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of the process, school leads were offered a telephone call with a NatCen researcher, during which they could ask questions about any element of the pupil recruitment and data collection processes.

The final stage involved the school lead working with the NatCen research team to arrange dates for researchers to visit the school to carry out the research activities.

In total, 16 pupils/young people took part in either an in-depth interview, paired depth interview or a discussion group across three schools.<sup>18</sup>

*Selecting teachers*

As part of the introductory information sent to interested schools, NatCen invited the LNK Educate school lead to take part in an interview and up to six teachers who had delivered the LNK universal element to take part in a discussion group. Schools fed back that they were unable to accommodate teachers taking part in a discussion group, so individual in-depth interviews were conducted instead with either the school LNK lead and/or teachers who had delivered the universal element. School leads were provided with tailored information sheets (see Technical Appendix I) to help support this recruitment. If teachers were interested in participating, a telephone or face-to-face interview with a NatCen researcher was then arranged for a time and date convenient for them and, where relevant, on the day when NatCen would be visiting the school.

Overall, seven teachers took part in an interview across five schools.

**Summary of sample**

Thirty individuals took part in the feasibility study. Table 4 provides an overview of the intended and achieved samples broken down by each participant group.

**Table 4. Intended vs achieved sample**

Intended vs achieved sample		
Participant group	Intended sample	Achieved sample
LNK staff (mentors)	4	4
LNK staff (management team)	3	3
Teachers	11	7
Pupils/young people	16	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>

The achieved sample for teachers was slightly lower than intended due to busy schedules and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>18</sup> Five schools took part in the feasibility study, but the pupil encounters were only conducted across three schools. Nine pupils/young people participated in discussion groups, and seven pupils/young people participated in an in-depth interview/paired depth interview for this research.

### *Caveats relating to sample size*

This is a small sample, and the findings and conclusions should be considered in this context. Where it would help to preserve participants' anonymity, we sometimes attribute views and experiences to 'LNK staff' for LNK mentors and management team. We have also only differentiated between primary and secondary school findings in a small number of instances.

### **Data collection**

Qualitative research methods were used to explore how participants viewed and experienced the LNK Educate programme. Relevant insights from the qualitative data were also used to evaluate (perceived) programme outcomes to date.

Data collection was carried out during December 2020 to July 2021 and during May 2022.

### **LNK staff**

Paired depth interviews were carried out with LNK staff. Interviews were conducted by a NatCen researcher online via Microsoft Teams and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Topic guides were developed to ensure consistent coverage across participants; however, separate guides were developed for LNK mentors (see Technical Appendix J) and the LNK management team (see Technical Appendix K) to reflect the focus of their roles in relation to the LNK Educate programme.

For LNK management, the interviews explored:

- The need for LNK Educate/the aims of the programme.
- The implementation and governance of LNK Educate.
- Communication with schools and the level of training and support provided to the schools in preparation for delivery.
- How LNK Educate is delivered, including both facilitators and barriers.
- Perceived and expected outcomes and impacts of the programme.
- Key learning and hopes for the programme moving forward.

For mentors, the interviews explored:

- Aims of LNK Educate and how the mentoring element fits into the overall programme.
- Training and support provided for the LNK mentors, including strengths and areas for improvement.
- Communication with schools and the training LNK provides.
- How LNK Educate has been delivered so far, including facilitators and barriers, with a particular focus on the targeted mentoring element of the programme.

- Perceived and expected outcomes and impacts of the programme.
- Key learning and hopes for the programme moving forward.

### **Pupils/young people**

Seven in-depth interviews were conducted with pupils/young people who were receiving LNK Educate mentoring about their views and experiences of the programme. Two discussion groups and a paired in-depth interview were also conducted with pupils with a specific focus on the LNK Educate lessons. Some of these pupils had gone on to receive mentoring, although this was not the specific focus of the discussion. The discussion groups involved up to four pupils/young people. The interviews and discussion groups with pupils/young people were conducted by NatCen researchers in schools and lasted up to 30 minutes.

A single topic guide was developed for the interviews and discussion groups (see Technical Appendix L). The encounters were intended to explore young people's views and experiences of:

- The purpose of LNK Educate.
- The content and delivery of the programme.
- The impact the programme may have had on awareness and attitudes to youth knife crime and violence.
- Any suggestions for improvements to the programme.

During some of the discussion groups and interviews with young people, the NatCen research team also showed stills of the videos as a visual aid to help participants' recall of the lessons.

### **Teachers**

For teachers, an in-depth interview was conducted with a NatCen researcher over the phone or face to face that lasted up to an hour. A topic guide (see Technical Appendix M) was used to facilitate discussion around the following:

- Understanding of programme aims
- Communication and training and support received from the LNK team
- How LNK Educate has been delivered so far
- Perceived and expected outcomes and impacts identified for the young people taking part in the programme

### **Analysis**

With participants' permission, interviews and discussion groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. One interview participant declined to be recorded, and handwritten notes were taken. Interview and discussion group data were managed and analysed using Framework, a case- and theme-based approach to qualitative data analysis developed by NatCen (Ritchie et al., 2014). Key topics emerging

from the data were identified through familiarisation with the transcripts. An analytical framework was developed, and matrices relating to the different thematic issues were produced. The columns in each matrix represented sub-themes or topics, while rows represented each research encounter (interview or discussion group). Data were summarised in the appropriate cell and ordered systematically. The final analytical stage involved working through the summarised data, drawing out the range of experiences and views and identifying similarities and differences.

Where applicable, verbatim interview and discussion group quotations are provided in this report to highlight key findings in participants' own words. The value of qualitative research is in revealing the breadth and nature of the phenomena under study (Ritchie et al., 2014). Therefore, we do not quantify participants' views and experiences.

## **Logic model development**

A short light-touch logic model session was conducted between members of the LNK management team and the NatCen research team as part of the project inception meeting. Following this, as part of a redesign process that took place when the feasibility study was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see section on timeline in this chapter), a half-day logic model workshop was held remotely via Microsoft Teams in May 2021. The workshop was facilitated by NatCen and attended by three representatives from LNK Educate.

Prior to the workshop, NatCen carried out a review of relevant background documents that had been provided by LNK.

The workshop helped develop a model to visually represent the intended outcomes pathways of LNK Educate for:

- Young people receiving the universal and, where applicable, targeted elements.
- The parents/guardians of the young people receiving LNK Educate.
- The schools delivering LNK Educate.
- The LNK Educate programme and staff.

When facilitating the logic model workshop, NatCen researchers drew on the logic model guidance set out by the Kellogg Foundation (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). A backwards mapping approach was applied whereby the first step was to map the intended long-term impacts of LNK Educate (i.e. the long-term ambitions of the programme/what it hopes to achieve in three to five years' time). From here, the NatCen researchers worked with participants to work backwards to map the medium-term outcomes (changes in behaviour) that are needed to achieve the long-term impact/s and the short-term outcomes (changes in knowledge and skills) that need to occur before the medium-term outcomes can be realised. This process was guided by the question: 'If that's the change you want to see, what needs to happen first?'

Following the workshop, NatCen drafted the logic model and shared it with LNK. The logic model is described in detail in Chapter 7.

## Timeline

The feasibility study was originally due to commence in early 2020, which coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between March and July 2020, schools remained largely closed for most pupils in England.<sup>19</sup> During this time, schools transitioned to remote and online learning. As a result, the feasibility study was paused and remained so for most of 2020 due to continued disruption arising from the pandemic. Once the delivery of LNK Educate was able to return to largely pre-pandemic standards, the YEF, NatCen and LNK teams made the joint decision to carry out data collection in early 2021, with some preliminary activities taking place in late 2020. All school fieldwork had to be completed in July 2021 in advance of the end of the school year. At the end of this first phase of fieldwork, given that the intended number of encounters had not been completed, the NatCen team and the YEF made the decision to resume fieldwork and complete more encounters in the spring of 2022. It was hoped that this would help to maximise the range of teachers’ and young people’s experiences and views. This second phase of school fieldwork was completed in May 2022.

The extended time frame of the feasibility study had the potential to delay the pilot study stage. To inform YEF’s decision about whether to proceed to pilot, NatCen submitted a short internal report of the feasibility study’s emerging findings to YEF in the spring of 2021. Based on this report, YEF took the decision for the pilot study of LNK Educate to commence in June 2021; as such, the feasibility study continued after the pilot study had begun. The findings of the pilot study are presented from Chapter 9 onwards in this report.

Table 5 provides the study timeline.

**Table 5. Timeline**

Date	Activity
From spring 2020	Design of research recruitment and fieldwork materials
From summer 2020	Preliminary work to identify schools for evaluation activities
From autumn 2020	Recruitment of case study schools (pupils and teachers) and LNK staff
Dec 2020–July 2021	Fieldwork phase 1 – with LNK staff and schools
May 2021	Logic model workshop carried out; logic model written up
May 2021	Submission of interim findings report to YEF
July–August 2021	Data management of phase 1 fieldwork
May 2022	Fieldwork phase 2 – with schools
June 2022	Data management phase 2
July–September 2022	Analysis and reporting
October 2022	Produce combined feasibility and pilot report
November 2022–June 2023	Review process

<sup>19</sup> Schools in England were closed to most children between late March 2020 and early September 2020, although they remained open where necessary for children of keyworkers and vulnerable children with additional needs (Roberts and Danechi, 2022). *Coronavirus and Schools*. House of Commons Library. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8915/CBP-8915.pdf>

## 4. Feasibility findings: Programme context

This chapter provides an overview of the context of the LNK Educate programme. The chapter begins by presenting how LNK management, LNK mentors, schoolteachers and young people understand the aims of LNK Educate. Building on this, their views on the need for, and benefits of, the programme are outlined. How the LNK team recruit schools to deliver the programme, as well as how the programme is initially set up in schools, is discussed, followed by the LNK mentors' and teachers' experiences of the training and guidance received. The chapter concludes with considerations of how the programme is governed by LNK.

### Understanding of the aims of LNK Educate

#### LNK management and mentors' understanding

LNK staff defined LNK Educate as a programme that takes a preventative approach to young people being excluded from educational settings and getting involved in crime and violence. They described how the programme aims to achieve this by raising awareness of knife crime and youth violence alongside supporting, educating and empowering young people who may be in difficult situations. This includes young people who may be struggling educationally at school, who may have experienced some form of trauma or abuse or who may have challenging home environments, such as having a parent who is experiencing addiction or is in prison.

“I think the main aim [of LNK Educate] is to prevent the young people from getting into the wrong sort of situations whether that be crime or just taking their education not seriously enough. It's to motivate and advise and inspire the young people who may have difficulties at home or they're struggling with school. They may have learning difficulties and it's just to give them that extra push, give them that extra bit of guidance that they need.” **(LNK staff)**

These vulnerabilities are viewed by LNK management to increase young people's risk of school exclusion. One perspective among LNK staff was that school exclusions increase young people's risk of getting involved in crime and entering the criminal justice system; this is why the preventative approach described is considered so vital among LNK staff.

“When we're looking at the socioeconomic factors of, they could be in prison by this age, or they could get involved in crime, or they've gone through trauma, or something has happened, and we often wait until they get excluded from school to then help them, or to then put in any type of support. By the time that happens [...] UK prison system is made up [of] 50% of people who have been excluded from school.” **(LNK staff)**

Staff noted how the intention of LNK Educate is to guide and support young people around coping with negative emotions. They described how the programme also looks at ways to help young people enjoy and feel more comfortable in school as well as providing them with more positive role models through working with LNK staff. In doing so, the programme aims to divert young people away from pathways (behaviours and peers) that could lead to involvement in crime and other risky behaviours and towards alternative pathways that are more likely to yield positive outcomes for them.

With regard to the targeted mentoring element of LNK Educate, LNK staff noted how this part of the programme can be more responsive (for example, working with young people who are already involved in

knife crime) compared to the universal element, which is focused on prevention. However, LNK staff also described the overarching aim of mentoring to be preventative, that is, to support young people to address any underlying issues and difficulties that they may have, such as not enjoying school or difficulties in their home life, which may contribute to negative outcomes later on in their lives. As part of this, some mentors described how they took on the role of mediator between the young person and the challenges they may be facing inside and out of school. Moreover, mentors can share their own experiences of challenges for mentees to learn from. Lastly, LNK staff described how the programme has bolstered the support that schools provide young people, especially in the context of stretched resources.

### **Teachers' understanding**

One view among teachers at secondary schools was that the primary aim of LNK Educate is to reduce fixed-term and permanent school exclusions. Teachers working in both primary and secondary schools recognised how LNK Educate adopts a preventative approach and aims to raise awareness of knife crime among young people, including the risks of carrying a knife.

“Maybe to recognise that they're more in danger of being harmed by a knife if they was to carry a knife. Lots of young people are under the impression that they need to carry a knife for their own safety, and actually, it's carrying a knife that places them more at risk of serious harm or death.”

**(Teacher)**

Alongside this, teachers described how LNK Educate aims to support young people to help ensure that they are making the 'right' choices if they are faced with different 'risky' situations. This includes educating young people about the signs of criminal exploitation, such as older gang members grooming children and young people to join a gang. In addition, for primary school pupils, teachers viewed preparing young people to transition to secondary school where they may be more exposed to knife crime to be a key function of the programme.

“[P]reparing our children for the next step in the sense of they will be going to schools in [name of area], they will be in contact with lots of people and lots of kids who carry knives. That is the reality of the situation. We had to come to terms with the reality and find a programme which was helpful to move them on.” **(Teacher)**

The tiered approach of the programme also means that the universal lessons can educate a wide range of young people and not just those who are subsequently selected for mentoring sessions. The mentoring was perceived to help young people to unpick issues that may arise from being in a vulnerable situation – such as experiencing a traumatic event – before they start to look to antisocial sources like gangs to help address those needs.

### **Young people's understanding**

Young people understood the aims of LNK Educate as helping to improve young people's behaviour, such as being more respectful of those around them and not engaging in actions that may harm others. They also recognised how the programme specifically aims to increase awareness and understanding around knife crime so that young people do not carry knives or commit knife crime.

“I think they try and help us not to be rude to other people, not to carry something that can hurt other people, because if you hurt someone, you’ll always do harm to families and friends by taking someone they care about.” **(Young person)**

Young people described how the mentoring element provides young people with support, enables them to share any concerns that they may have and helps to keep them safe.

## **Views on need for and benefit of the programme**

LNK staff reported how LNK Educate was developed to help address existing needs around knife crime awareness raising and training in schools. Prior to this, the LNK team could not meet schools’ requests to deliver LNK roadshows (see further, Chapter 1). As such, developing the programme and training teachers to deliver the LNK resources to whole year groups were intended to help address some of this need while increasing the reach of the programme.

A further gap that LNK Educate addressed was the need for authenticity in the delivery of programmes designed to prevent serious youth violence and knife crime. LNK staff had noted how other companies and organisations used actors to raise awareness among young people about knife crime; however, they considered it important to draw on people with lived experiences through the use of videos.

The schools delivering LNK Educate are in areas that are considered to be ‘deprived’, and teachers spoke of their concerns over the levels of knife crime, violence and youth involvement in crime. Secondary and primary school teachers described how some young people are already engaging in crime or are perceived to be at risk of getting involved in crime. To this point, teachers noted that some young people have been exposed to violence as a result of family members being involved in violent crime, including knife crime. While these examples indicate that there is an existing problem that needs addressing, looking forward, teachers described a clear need for a programme with a preventative approach to knife crime to stop these issues arising in the first place.

“We wanted to find, I guess, a network that would support them to prevent that. This is the thing I really like about Lives Not Knives; it’s about prevention rather than just firefighting after the problem has arisen.” **(Teacher)**

However, some misunderstanding around the need for the programme among teachers was also described by LNK staff. That is, some teachers had questioned the presence of the LNK team in the school, as they did not feel the school had a knife crime problem. To address this misunderstanding, LNK staff would explain the programme’s preventative focus.

Echoing the views of LNK staff and teachers, young people also saw a need for and the value of having LNK Educate at schools. Young people expressed concerns around their local area being unsafe and a need to help manage the risks of being exposed to gangs when moving from primary to secondary school and to help prevent young people carrying knives in the future.

“It’s pretty crucial, because I don’t want to see people going around the place stabbing everyone. That’s not the kind of world we live in. I want to live in a happy world where everyone’s nice and peaceful.” **(Young person)**

Young people also valued how the programme's mentoring element had enabled them to speak confidentially with a trusted adult other than a teacher or parent.

## **Recruiting schools to deliver LNK Educate and setting up the programme**

The approach to recruiting schools to LNK Educate initially focused on where knife crime and related issues were perceived by the LNK team to be most prominent in Croydon, particularly North Croydon. Schools in these areas were approached to take part first; however, some of these schools suggested other schools required support more urgently. The LNK team then approached all the schools they had previously worked in via email, including those in which they had delivered other mentoring, roadshows and support services. In addition, some schools had learnt about LNK Educate by contacting the LNK team to see what support they could provide.

In the first year of delivery, LNK management specified that they worked across four schools, which increased to six schools in the second year. Once the target of 10 schools was met (five primary, five secondary), other schools that showed interest were provided with information about other ways to engage with LNK (e.g. via roadshows or informal mentoring).<sup>20</sup>

During the set-up phase, LNK staff described becoming familiar with each school's safeguarding policy and working with them to tailor delivery to their specific needs. LNK staff reported how they tried to select a male and a female mentor for each school so that young people could indicate their preference. This initial phase also involved LNK staff working closely with the school to ensure that all the necessary documentation, for example the Disclosure and Barring Service (DSB) checks for the LNK mentors, were in place before programme delivery.

Before LNK commence teacher training, they typically deliver a presentation to the school about the programme to help engage their staff. LNK staff also explained that teachers are required to sign a contract saying they are committed to a whole-school approach to delivering LNK and that this will involve working with the LNK mentors. This was felt to be important to help ensure a consistent approach and messaging for young people.

“Nothing can change if just one person's trying to change it. We can shout and rant and rave about it, the importance of all of us having the same approach for that child, and them having some type of stability and having the same conversations with all of us.” **(LNK staff)**

### **Facilitators to recruitment and set-up**

Facilitators to school recruitment and setting up the programme included:

- **Schools identifying an immediate need for the programme.** LNK staff explained how some schools were experiencing issues with young people bringing knives to school.

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<sup>20</sup> LNK staff reported that over the two-year period, three schools dropped out from the programme part-way through delivery; however, LNK staff were able to recruit two replacement schools.

“[T]wo schools [...] started straightaway in [month], specifically, after I emailed them, got back [to] me within 24 hours saying, 'We've just had a kid bring in a knife. We need the help right now,' and we managed to get that set up within a few weeks. They got the training sorted within a week, and then the delivery in the [week and month]. So that was immediate response, whereas other schools were a bit slower and more delayed.” (LNK staff)

- **The relationships LNK had already developed with most of the schools in the area.** This meant that the LNK team felt they were in a good position to make the initial approach to schools about delivering LNK Educate.
- **Providing clear and helpful information to schools.** One school reported how LNK had provided clear information on the programme’s criteria and what was required from the school to deliver the programme. LNK staff also spent time explaining why certain elements of their approach were important to programme delivery. For example, some schools expressed concerns that having LNK Educate would make it appear that the school had a knife crime problem, and they had not wanted the mentors to wear 'Lives Not Knives' hoodies. LNK staff spoke to schools about how the mentors’ appearance was an important part of them being more relatable to young people. Furthermore, they explained how mentors would be recognisable to young people who were not being mentored but who may value speaking with them so that they could also approach the LNK team directly. Schools were reported to respond well to this.
- **Engaging with parents.** Although not initially intended as part of the set-up stage, LNK staff also organised some parents’ evenings so that parents could meet them and learn about the programme. One view among LNK staff was that these had worked well and had helped to facilitate programme set-up. As described above, some schools had concerns that running LNK Educate may create the impression among parents that there was a knife problem at the school; however, from their experience of running the parents’ evenings, an LNK staff member reported that parents’ concerns centred on who would be working with their children.

### **Challenges and barriers to recruitment and set-up**

LNK staff noted how **liaising with a range of different school staff could pose challenges to recruitment and set-up**. These included delayed responses from school staff due to their other responsibilities, changes to the lead contact within the school and the need to involve all heads of years in secondary schools (this was less of a challenge in primary schools because LNK Educate was only delivered to Years 5 and 6).

LNK staff also identified a number of barriers to overall programme set-up due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Sickness and absence among teachers, including the main teacher contact for LNK, young people and mentors.
- Once schools reopened, some readily agreed to have the LNK team in the school, while others were more reluctant. Where they were allowed to deliver LNK Educate in schools, LNK staff had to be aware of and work with the different COVID-19 guidelines between schools.

## Training and guidance

### Training delivered to LNK mentors

The LNK mentors reported how they had received in-house training as well as training from external providers to help them perform their role effectively. This included training on effective mentoring skills and how to build relationships with young people and communicate with them effectively. Mentors also described receiving training on a range of specific topics, including mental health, domestic violence, safeguarding, sex education and C-cards training.<sup>21, 22</sup> They spoke about how the training prepared them to work with young people and that they were then able to draw on knowledge gained from the training during discussions with young people.

In addition to training, the LNK staff noted how the LNK management team had created a handbook for mentors. This provides information and resources around the skills needed to work with young people, such as listening, mentoring, disclosure and safeguarding and signs that a young person may be experiencing abuse.

Mentors reported feeling supported in their role and able to ask the LNK management team to organise more training sessions where needed. Alongside the training described, mentors valued the ongoing guidance and support in place. For example, counselling sessions are available at a discounted rate as and when needed to support mentors with the challenges of their role. In addition, mentors spoke about how the team tries to come into the office on the same day each week to complete their paperwork and provide informal support. Mentors explained that such ongoing support and guidance are crucial for their mental wellbeing, which is necessary for them to perform their role.

Finally, mentors described the value of the more informal learning and training that comes from working alongside other mentors with a range of backgrounds and expertise.

“[T]o be honest, a lot of our training is kind of bouncing off of each other. We all have different backgrounds, so for example I'm quite good [describes skills]. Another one of our colleagues used to be [describes skills]. We all have our different [...] [skills], so a lot of the training actually is kind of like peer-to-peer training as well.” **(LNK staff)**

### Training delivered to schools

Teachers deliver the universal element (i.e. the lessons and resources, see further Chapter 1) to young people. To prepare teachers for this, LNK staff and teachers described how the LNK management team and more experienced mentors had delivered training to schoolteachers, tutors and pastoral teams. The training

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<sup>21</sup> The C-card scheme is aimed at young people who can register to get a range of contraceptives, information and advice. Having C-cards training means that the mentors can issue C-cards to young people to receive advice around sexual health. For further information, see: <https://www.icash.nhs.uk/contraception-sexual-health/c-card-scheme>

<sup>22</sup> LNK previously facilitated youth work qualification level three as part of its training for mentors. They no longer run this, although one view was that mentors who had worked for LNK longer and had been on this training could still share the learning with newer mentors on the team.

was intended to be delivered face to face, but some was moved online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The training was reported to range from 90 to 180 minutes.<sup>23</sup> Training typically includes:

- Introducing LNK, the team and their backgrounds and showing videos about how the programme started.
- Information and statistics about knife crime.
- Information on the purpose of LNK Educate. This is intended to inform teachers about the rationale for programme delivery at the school and how the LNK mentors can provide additional support for young people.
- The programme's processes, including the mentoring referral system for young people at risk of exclusion and who are at risk of criminal and gang-related activities.
- Taking the teachers through the universal lessons and resources, including explaining each lesson and its importance, and sharing ideas on how to deliver the lesson content and activities.
- Other areas that teachers might not have been routinely trained in, for example signs that may indicate young people might be involved in/about to join a gang, such as the use of two phones, which could imply that they are involved in selling drugs.

The training sessions also include opportunities for the teachers and other attendees to ask questions.

As noted, during the COVID-19 pandemic, training moved online. A member of the LNK team described how some of the best sessions they delivered were online. However, some of the LNK team preferred in-person training, as it was felt to be better for engagement and for answering questions.

“[A]rguably, [remote training is] less effective because obviously I think measuring engagement [...] getting feedback from teachers at the time, being able to answer their questions, a lot of teachers shy away in a 100-person Zoom call.” **(LNK staff)**

#### *How training was received by teachers*

The LNK team internally evaluate their training by gaining feedback from teachers, with an evaluation form given out after every training session. Schools were perceived by LNK staff as valuing the training and guidance, especially as some of the information may have been new to them, and they may have felt uncomfortable delivering lessons on an unfamiliar topic.

“The knowledge that they gain from the teacher training, from the workshops that they do with the class, it teaches them as well because they're now aware of things that they weren't before. They now feel that they've grown in confidence to be able to tackle things if they are to come in the future, with our help and without really.” **(LNK staff)**

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<sup>23</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that the training was intended to last approximately 90 minutes.

Teachers reported how they had found the training clear, easy to understand, useful and interesting. They also felt they had the opportunity to ask questions. The training had increased their confidence and had been key in preparing them to deliver the universal element.

“I think the training was very clear. There was no confusion as to what was delivered [...] We had time to ask questions. They was contactable via email or telephone if we was unsure about something, and it was just really self-explanatory... We had teachers of [traditional academic subject] delivering this, and they had no issues delivering it, at all.” **(Teacher)**

Schools also valued the relaxed and unscripted approach of the LNK trainers. This was reported to encourage buy-in to the programme from teachers and help them to absorb the content of the session.

In addition to the training described above, LNK staff spoke about how the LNK team were in schools on an ongoing basis to offer continued support to teachers. Ongoing guidance and support for the schools from LNK is discussed further in Chapter 5.

### *Gaps in training for teachers*

When LNK Educate was first rolled out, some teachers had concerns about not having enough information to deliver the programme. In addition, when the LNK team first delivered the training, they provided handouts and USB sticks to teachers to look at resources on their personal computers. However, this was challenging for technical reasons, for example the video files being too large or teachers being unable to use a USB stick at school. LNK management reported that these issues have since been addressed. In particular, LNK staff described how the development of LNK’s online portal of resources had helped address concerns about insufficient information.

Current gaps in the training identified by teachers included insufficient information on relevant laws, such as the age at which someone could be arrested or what would qualify as a weapon. This meant that they could sometimes feel ‘out of their depth’ delivering the lessons because of their perceived lack of experience in the area. To help address this, one teacher described how they had done some extra research in order to feel more prepared.

Some teachers suggested having more frequent (i.e. yearly) LNK training. This appeared to have happened in some instances and supported teachers to feel more confident in delivering the lessons. One teacher described how, after the second time they had received the training, they had felt more able to ask the young people open questions instead of closed questions, which they thought facilitated engagement. A further benefit of more frequent training relates to turnover of teaching staff. Teachers noted how the LNK team’s lack of awareness of changes in teaching staff meant that a teacher had delivered the programme’s resources with no training (although mentors were present).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> LNK clarified during the review process that within the agreement with schools, it is specified that only staff who have received the training should be responsible for delivering the lessons to young people.

## **LNK governance**

LNK staff described how the LNK chief executive officer (CEO), an operations manager and a project manager have oversight of LNK Educate delivery. In particular, the project manager plays a significant role in the day-to-day programme governance. LNK staff reported how the project manager supervises the team of mentors who deliver the targeted element. As part of this role, the project manager was also the first point of contact with the schools during the set-up phase of the programme and helped to ensure that all the necessary paperwork required for the LNK team to work in each school was in place. They liaised with a wide range of individuals at the school, including the safeguarding lead, the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the behavioural units. The project manager also set up the teacher-training resources and assigned mentors to the different schools. LNK staff described how they valued the ongoing support and guidance in place from LNK management.

## 5. Feasibility findings: Experiences of delivering LNK Educate

This chapter outlines the views and experiences of primary and secondary school teachers, LNK mentors and LNK management staff regarding the delivery of LNK Educate. The chapter begins by setting out teachers' views and experiences of delivering the universal element of the programme, including facilitators and barriers to delivery and support for teachers from LNK. Next, views and experiences of delivering the targeted element (mentoring) are presented, including the process for selecting young people, the structure of sessions, how progress is monitored and facilitators and barriers to delivery. The chapter concludes with recommendations for improvement of LNK Educate, based on feedback from LNK mentors and primary and secondary school teachers.

### Delivery of the universal element (lessons)

#### Which children receive the lessons?

LNK staff explained that the LNK lessons are delivered to all young people in Year 5 and Year 6 in participating primary schools and all year groups in participating secondary schools.<sup>25</sup>

#### Young people's consent to participate in the lessons

The extent of young people's choice to withdraw from the LNK Educate lessons varied across the schools that participated in the study. Some teachers reported that if something in an LNK lesson caused young people to feel uncomfortable, they were provided with the option of leaving the lessons and either receiving support from a member of the pastoral team or taking part in a non-LNK activity with a teaching assistant. However, other teachers reported that young people were encouraged to stay in the lesson and participate in the first instance before alternative options were provided.<sup>26</sup>

#### Who delivers the lessons?

The universal element of LNK Educate is intended to be delivered by teachers; however, some schools were also given the option of having LNK mentors sitting at the back of the classroom to support teachers or young people. In other schools, mentors were initially present to either lead or co-facilitate the first one or two lessons before handing delivery to the teachers. However, teachers reported that there was some confusion around who was responsible for leading the session as a result. Moreover, they suggested that it would have been useful for mentors to be present in all LNK lessons, as they are able to contribute more relevant insight and guidance on the topic area than teachers.

“At the beginning, it was a bit muddled of who was leading the sessions, and it would have been nice to have had them in each session, I think, for the children to get a real value. They could bring their

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<sup>25</sup> As noted, Year 7 to Year 9 were the target year groups in secondary schools; however, some schools also delivered the lessons to Years 10 and 11.

<sup>26</sup> During the review process, LNK clarified that the training materials for teaching staff specify that young people should always have the option to leave the lesson if distressed.

own stories to it and their own advice to it, which I feel like I don't have enough of to give to the children.” **(Teacher)**

As part of this, some teachers found that the young people were more responsive to the lesson content when it was delivered by LNK mentors. As such, consistent mentor presence may facilitate young people’s engagement in the programme.

### **What is delivered?**

Teachers described how each session consisted of a similar format, delivered in line with the intended model of delivery: introduction to the topic, showing a video, a discussion about the video (including questions), followed by an activity (e.g. writing a poem). Although activities differed across schools, an example of a recommended activity delivered consistently was role-playing.<sup>27</sup> Finally, young people were provided time at the end of the lesson to reflect on what they had learnt and discussed.

Although there was broad consistency in lesson format, there were also differences in delivery across schools. This was encouraged by LNK, as the programme was not designed to follow a rigid structure; therefore, LNK suggest schools adapt the resources to meet their young people’s needs. Adaptations made across schools included:

- Changes to resources to account for some young people having personal experience of knife crime, including removing one of the planned videos from the lessons.
- Incorporating additional information or activities into lessons. For example, some teachers reported adding information about stereotyping to the resources to illustrate that physical appearance<sup>28</sup> should not be used as a basis for assumptions about gang involvement.

### **Views on lesson content and resources**

Teachers generally reflected positively on lesson content and the resources provided by LNK to support delivery. The resources were considered easy to use (including easy to access via the LNK website), ‘self-explanatory’ and useful for instigating difficult conversations with young people around knife crime. Teachers felt that the resources enabled young people to empathise with the people in the videos, as they showed their lived experience of knife crime. As such, teachers reflected that the LNK Educate lessons engaged young people by showing them the impact that knife crime can have in real life, rather than just in theory.

“They [LNK] also give you a good idea of what happens when you are the person who gets caught with a knife and the process that happens after that, which gives the kids a very good idea of the reality of the situation and a lot of the programme that they deliver is about the reality. They are using real people. They are using people that you would see, the lawyers and the doctors and the sister and friends.” **(Teacher)**

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<sup>27</sup> For example, young people would have to consider both perspectives of people mentioned in the video (e.g. mother of assailant and victim) and related impacts.

<sup>28</sup> The examples of appearance provided by the participant were ethnicity and clothing.

Additionally, the resources – particularly the videos – prompted young people to consider the wider impacts of knife crime (e.g. the impacts on secondary victims, such as friends or family members) alongside the impacts on the victim or the perpetrator. Similarly, some primary school teachers expressed the view that understanding the impacts of knife crime will help to shape young people’s value systems, which they identified as being important for behaviours and attitudes of young people when transitioning to secondary school.

“[W]e need to get to a point where they have a value system which incorporates the fact that they don’t need to be carrying knives. They are going to be going down one particular route rather than the other. I know there were victims in my class, but they can make better choices. So that was the push for making better choices not only outside, but also in the class.” **(Teacher)**

Teachers considered the lesson resources to be pitched at the right level for delivery in that they were of relevance to young people but ‘not too information heavy’. Some felt that the content was pitched at a level that would also be appropriate for young people with special educational needs. However, this view was not reflected by all teachers, with one of the videos<sup>29</sup> being described as ‘too much’ for young people in Years 5 and 6 and more appropriate for those in Years 7 and 8.

### **Facilitators to lesson delivery**

Teachers expressed the view that the realistic and relatable nature of the resources (particularly the videos) facilitated buy-in from young people and helped to encourage open discussions about knife crime. The flexibility of the lesson plans, namely that lessons could be shaped or adapted to meet young people’s needs and be responsive to what they wanted to understand about knife crime, was also noted as a facilitator of successful lesson delivery.

“[S]essions like that where you can go off-piste and you can allow the students to direct that session in a way they want it to go to get their questions answered, I think that's really helpful.” **(Teacher)**

Teachers viewed mentors’ presence during lesson delivery (and their presence in the school more generally) to be supportive for both teachers and young people. Teachers mentioned that the presence of mentors helped to increase their confidence to deliver the programme. They also felt that the mentors were ‘well versed’ in answering challenging questions that young people asked around the topic of knife crime. For young people, they noted that mentors provide a neutral source of support and guidance during the lessons.

“[I]t's advice that's coming from somebody completely neutral that they're more likely to listen to and act on.” **(Teacher)**

In addition, teachers found the mentors’ visibility in lessons to be an effective way of initiating contact between mentors and the young people who go on to be mentored as part of the targeted element.

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<sup>29</sup> The teacher stated that they could not remember which video it was.

Finally, teachers thought that it worked well to deliver the universal element to all young people in a class, as the lessons uncovered some concerns and vulnerabilities that the teachers were unaware of. As a result, some young people were identified as being suitable for mentoring who otherwise would not have been selected.

“[W]e would never have known what was going on in those kids' lives because they had never raised any red flags in terms of their behaviour or their academia.” **(Teacher)**

### **Barriers to lesson delivery**

Across schools, there were some scheduling barriers that impacted lesson delivery. For example, LNK staff explained that delivery often takes longer in secondary schools due to the greater number of classes per year group compared with primary schools. In addition, they described how, in secondary schools, there were teacher-resourcing complications with scheduling the LNK lessons around exam preparation.

Some teachers fed back that running lessons in the afternoon was preferable to morning lessons, as young people who arrive at school late miss key aspects of the lessons when they are scheduled in the morning. Moreover, it was explained that young people who have attendance and punctuality issues are typically those who the school and programme would want to target.

Teachers identified the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent school closures as significant barriers to lesson delivery. As part of this, due to the sensitivity of the topics covered in LNK lessons, teachers were reluctant to deliver them online when schools were closed.

“[I]t's not really a topic that we want to deliver online or virtually, to make the children do by themselves, because it's not a topic that they can do that alone with because we need to ensure that they're getting the right factual information that they need.” **(Teacher)**

One further barrier discussed by some teachers in relation to delivering the lessons was their limited knowledge of and confidence in the topic area. The lack of confidence derived from a feeling that the LNK training was insufficient in preparing them to deliver the content and deal with young people's vulnerabilities. Other teachers described how some newly qualified teachers felt 'out of their comfort zone'. As such, some teachers initially struggled with delivery; however, they reported feeling more confident once they had familiarised themselves with the content.

“We did have some newly qualified teachers who felt it was a little bit out of their comfort zone. It wasn't a subject that they taught, and we worked very quickly in turning around [their] mindset that the safety of children is everybody's business.” **(Teacher)**

Finally, teachers noted that some lessons did not have resources provided by LNK, which meant they had to create their own lesson materials.<sup>30</sup> Teachers explained that this proved difficult, as they are not experts in the field of knife crime awareness.

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<sup>30</sup> It is not clear from the data why some lessons did not have resources provided by LNK. During the review process, LNK reported that all lessons have resources and were unsure of why this error occurred.

## Young people's engagement with the lessons

Some teachers described how young people were very engaged with the content of the lessons, which they felt was a result of learning new information about knife crime and session structure (i.e. the open discussion format). This engagement was demonstrated by young people asking lots of questions about the consequences of knife crime and using the lessons to reflect on the impacts of their own behaviour. Teachers also used strategies to encourage more engagement from young people, such as asking them to recap the content of the previous session at the start of lessons.

However, positive engagement of young people was not consistent, with some teachers reporting varying levels of engagement across the different classes they taught. For example, one teacher described how the young people in one class asked relevant questions, while the other class was unable to relate to the content of the lessons, which the teacher attributed to their lower levels of emotional maturity.

“When I did it with my first class, really engaged, got some really mature responses, and they asked questions that were relevant to their age and relevant to experiences they've been in. For example, they might have said, 'I took a pen out with me. Does that qualify as a weapon?'. My class were very quiet with it this year. They're quite young emotionally, and for a lot of them, I don't know if they could really... relate to some of the stories.” **(Teacher)**

A further challenge to engaging young people noted by teachers was that some found it difficult to contribute their views or experiences in the lesson environment. Namely, that the lessons were carried out in a classroom with others, which made some young people feel less comfortable engaging in sensitive conversations.

“Barriers are it's not easy for the kids to talk about real stuff in a big classroom situation. That's a massive barrier for a couple of my kids. So, then we have to provide a different conversation where they can just do that one-to-one conversation and then that's part of the programme.” **(Teacher)**

## LNK provision of formal and informal support to teachers

Informal and formal support was provided to teachers by LNK staff. For example, the LNK management provided ongoing informal support as well as scheduling formal meetings to discuss progress and for teachers to provide regular feedback on young people.<sup>31</sup>

While some teachers did not feel confident delivering the LNK lessons, others described how the training provided by LNK supported them to feel comfortable and confident delivering the lessons. In particular, LNK staff's willingness to provide help and support throughout delivery was highlighted. Similarly, mentors described providing informal support to teachers on a day-to-day basis as well as exchanging relevant information about young people with teachers, which could be used to inform the focus of mentoring sessions and/or provide context to a pupil's behaviour in class.

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<sup>31</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that three progress meetings with teachers were held over the course of a year.

“We have direct contact with them, and it also allows us to catch up with each other and identify certain things that happened that day. For example, a teacher might stop me in the hallway, let me know that a certain kid has gone through something and that I should bring it up in the session. Vice versa, I'll let them know what's happening and what to look out for in class, so it's that kind of two-way discussion that allows them to do their job better and for us to be more thorough with our sessions.” **(LNK staff)**

Teachers reported that the LNK staff were reliable, approachable, willing to work collaboratively and maintained regular and clear communication.

“[T]here wasn't a time I called them that they didn't answer the phone. There wasn't a time I sent them an email that they didn't respond.” **(Teacher)**

### **Delivery of the targeted element (mentoring)**

LNK staff explained that each mentor delivers mentoring sessions across three schools between Tuesday and Thursday each week, with a minimum of 20 young people assigned to each mentor across the different schools.<sup>32</sup> Mentors described how they typically see each of their mentees once a week.

### **Selecting young people for the targeted element (mentoring)**

#### *Eligibility criteria*

Teachers and LNK staff reported that multiple factors are considered when selecting young people for mentoring sessions. Teachers explained that young people who are identified as being most at risk of school exclusion, engaging in knife crime, engaging in, or being groomed to take part in, gang activity are eligible for LNK mentoring. Teachers felt that the LNK guidance on the selection criteria was very clear, and therefore, there were no issues faced with the selection process.

Some teachers had also been instructed to select young people for mentoring based on factors such as behaviour, self-esteem and self-confidence. This aligns with LNK staff accounts in which they explained that mentoring is open to young people with a range of different needs and situations that have the potential to contribute to later involvement in antisocial behaviour and gang activity (e.g. difficult home lives). Mentors also described how they sometimes continued to provide mentoring sessions if a young person no longer met the criteria but enjoyed the sessions and found them beneficial.

“If they find it beneficial, we're never going to turn a child away, but if they turn around and say, 'Actually, I don't think I need this,' we might then talk to our project manager and say, 'So-and-so doesn't really need mentoring anymore, doesn't want it,' and then we might make another referral.” **(LNK staff)**

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<sup>32</sup> During the review process, LNK clarified that each mentor works with a maximum of eight young people per school.

## **Who was involved in the selection process?**

Mentors reported varying levels of involvement in selecting young people for mentoring. One approach is for mentors to actively make suggestions for referrals based on interactions with young people outside of the classroom context. Alternatively, mentors may identify a young person from LNK lessons that they think would be suitable for mentoring and make a recommendation to the teacher/s. Although mentors suggested that teachers are best placed to make the referrals due to their more rounded knowledge of the young people (in line with the approach suggested by the LNK resources), they did think that their recommendations had been taken on board by the teachers.

Another approach to the selection of young people, described by LNK staff, is where both the teacher and LNK mentor produce separate lists of referrals, which are then sent through to LNK management to be compared and the young people assessed based on their suitability (see section above on eligibility criteria).

However, LNK mentors were less involved in the selection process in some schools. For example, sometimes, a joint decision had been made between teachers, safeguarding leads and pastoral leads or between safeguarding leads and the head of year.<sup>33</sup>

## **Extent of young people's choice to participate**

There were differing views among LNK staff and teachers regarding the extent of young people's choice to receive the mentoring sessions. Some teachers described how young people are able to opt out if they do not want to be involved. In other schools, LNK staff reported that young people have a choice to engage in mentoring but are initially encouraged to give mentoring 'a chance' before opting out. However, in some schools, it was noted by teachers that if the young person's parent gave consent for their involvement, the young person would not have the option to opt out.

Regarding young people's choice in the mentor-pairing process, LNK staff reported that the only reason that mentees would change to a different mentor would be due to practical reasons, such as lack of mentor capacity.

## **Parental consent**

As part of informed parental consent, LNK staff reported that parents' evenings on LNK Educate and mentoring are offered (see Chapter 4); however, this has been primarily provided to parents of primary school pupils. LNK staff also noted that there have been some challenges around the delivery of these workshops, including parents who are not mentee parents attending as well as limited parental attendance among those whose children have been selected to receive mentoring.

Generally, LNK staff noted that schools are responsible for establishing contact with parents and obtaining their consent, which is typically done via a consent letter; however, LNK staff also support schools with this. Some schools took an 'opt-out' approach to parental consent. Teachers from these schools specified that

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<sup>33</sup> During the review process, LNK clarified that they were always involved in selecting young people for the mentoring element of the programme.

although they did not ask for parental consent, parents were made aware of the mentoring taking place and were 'happy' for their children to be involved. However, in other schools, active consent was sought from parents as a necessary condition for young people's involvement in mentoring. In these schools, teachers reported that there was a degree of reluctance from some of the parents. This was due to both parental concerns about why their child was perceived to need the mentoring or what the mentoring would entail, given the name of the organisation.

"It's the name, Lives Not Knives, when parents first hear that, they come up with all sorts. It manifests all sorts of connotations, doesn't it, like knives, and it's like some parents are on the defensive straight away." **(Teacher)**

### **Pre-mentoring introductory workshops**

LNK staff explained that one-hour workshops are delivered in schools, which serve as introductory sessions between mentors and all newly selected mentees (see further, Chapter 1). These sessions involve mentors introducing themselves, providing information on their backgrounds and their reasons for wanting to support mentees. The mentoring sessions typically start a week after the workshop has been delivered. However, teachers differed in their views and understanding about what constitutes an LNK workshop and whether these had been delivered consistently across schools. For example, some teachers were not aware of the workshops and what they entailed and did not think they had been offered within their school.

### **Overview of mentoring in schools**

The delivery of mentoring differs across mentees and schools, as the programme aims to be tailored to each young person to meet their needs. LNK staff described the purpose of mentoring as supporting young people by allowing them to feel heard and helping them to realise their life goals, which in turn discourages them from turning to crime.

"They just need someone to hear them; they don't feel heard at home, they don't feel heard at school. That sort of neglect and stuff like that could definitely be detrimental to their self-confidence. Just a whole lot of anger issues, emotional development, all of that needs support [...] it's just helping them realise their passions, stick with their passions, because when children are engaged in certain things and they look forward to certain things in their life, gang life and crime just doesn't seem as appealing to them. It's giving them that boost that they already have within themselves and helping them realise that and form into a fully well-rounded human being really." **(LNK staff)**

### **Content and structure of targeted sessions**

The first mentoring session was described by LNK mentors as 'a guiding session' in which they explain the format of the mentoring sessions and outline the ground rules, for example that young people can withdraw at any point and that the conversation will be confidential, but there are caveats to this (e.g. if a safeguarding concern is raised).

At the onset of the mentoring process, mentors described using worksheets with their mentees to prompt discussion and build rapport with them, which is in line with the intended model of delivery (see Chapter 1).

Mentors also described using worksheets as part of developing weekly plans and setting targets with their mentees.

Mentors and teachers felt similarly about the structure of the targeted sessions. Both described how mentoring sessions generally followed the format of the mentor asking how the mentee is, asking what has happened since the last session (including updates from any incidents), discussing areas the mentee needs to improve on, setting some targets and evaluating whether existing targets have been met. This is largely in line with intended delivery outlined in the LNK resources. However, LNK mentors explained that the structure of each session is highly dependent on mentee need and is tailored appropriately. Mentors spoke of occasions when the intended structure of a particular session would be abandoned because of issues the mentee was facing at the time.

“If I've got a kid and he's just venting and venting, that was his space to kind of let go. I'm not going to set targets that week because he needed the space to digest that, process that, and adding targets would be added stress for him. It's gauging when and when not to do that.” **(LNK staff)**

Mentors described how they are able to have some autonomy in carrying out their role to respond appropriately to young people's needs, provided that they follow the core requirements of the mentoring process (e.g. following the safeguarding procedures and completing the required worksheets with the young people).

### **Monitoring young people's progress**

Mentors explained that target setting within mentoring sessions is a way of monitoring mentee progress, e.g. setting a target of not getting detention in the week following the mentoring session. LNK mentors also use psychological wellbeing scales (e.g. to measure levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, happiness) as part of their progress monitoring.<sup>34</sup> They described how these scales are administered to young people at the beginning and end of the mentoring programme, which allows mentors to assess whether the mentees' wellbeing scores improve over the course of the mentoring programme.

Other strategies for monitoring young people's progress include mentors maintaining weekly records and session notes. Mentors explained that these notes are used to generate weekly updates and reports summarising the sessions that have taken place, their content and outcomes. In addition, the notes form the basis of the summary reports for each young person the mentors are working with, which are provided to schools on a six-weekly basis. Teachers noted that these can be particularly helpful to support referrals of young people (e.g. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] referrals to social services) and, for young people in Year 6, to pass relevant information to secondary schools. However, mentors described having to

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<sup>34</sup> LNK mentors administer the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS; <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>).

maintain mentee records as ‘a nightmare’ and ‘overwhelming’ due to the time required to write summary reports every six weeks, which increased mentors’ workload.<sup>35</sup>

### **Relationship between mentor and mentees**

Teachers felt that young people had a positive relationship with their mentors, looked forward to them coming into school and enjoyed participating in the mentoring sessions. Teachers and mentors viewed the most important factors to relationship building between mentors and mentees to be rapport, mutual respect, transparency and how relatable the mentor is to young people. In particular, relatability was viewed as an integral aspect of developing the mentoring relationship. It was suggested that because mentors have ‘lived experience of the same kind of lifestyle’, the mentoring relationship provides an environment in which young people can speak with someone they can relate to and therefore may find it easier to open up about their own personal experiences.

“It was really helpful that our students saw [the mentors] not as teachers or staff in school. They were somebody from outside the school, and being younger and a bit more hipper, that was really helpful. They could relate to them!” **(Teacher)**

Rapport building was also viewed by teachers and LNK staff as essential for the mentoring work to produce positive results and that without those strong relationships, the work would be ‘meaningless’. LNK staff felt that a ‘mentoring relationship is different to any other relationship [young people] probably have in life’, as they are able to be open and transparent about any experiences or issues without facing repercussions associated with talking to a teacher or parent (e.g. being disciplined). For example, they can seek guidance and support for any concerns they may have and any issues around relationships, home situations and incidents at school. However, teachers reported that while mentors maintain confidentiality, they also follow the school’s safeguarding and disclosure policy, which is explained to young people.

### **Facilitators to delivery and engagement of young people (mentees)**

Some teachers regarded LNK mentoring as a unique programme, describing it as the only programme that had worked with pupils for over a year (they noted that previous mentoring programmes delivered by other providers had only lasted around six weeks). In particular, the extended duration of the mentoring was felt to facilitate mentee engagement, as it had supported rapport building.

The fact that mentoring is provided by an external organisation was also viewed by teachers to facilitate young people’s engagement. Teachers suggested that it might be easier for young people to confide in an independent, neutral and trusted adult who can advocate for them, rather than a parent or a teacher.

Finally, mentors expressed the view that the worksheets they used with mentees supported mentoring delivery and engagement. These worksheets can be used to generate open and transparent conversations with mentees who are reluctant to open up verbally.

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<sup>35</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that this requirement has since changed to once a term (or three reports per academic year) because of concerns among LNK mentors over their workload.

“I think it works well for the students that don’t want to speak because even though they don’t want to speak, when they’re doing the worksheet, they’re basically answering all the questions that you’ve asked them that they don’t want to answer.” **(LNK staff)**

### **Barriers to mentoring delivery**

LNK staff cited the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated impacts as the main barriers to mentoring delivery. During the pandemic, there was a three-month period in which mentors were unable to see young people, and when the sessions resumed, the mentors felt that the rapport building that they had achieved previously with their mentees had been lost. Additionally, some young people mentioned to mentors during this period that they had forgotten about their involvement in the mentoring programme.

Some mentors described a lack of trust from some mentees, which meant that they were less likely to share and disclose information about any problems they might be having, such as problems at home. Mentors suggested that the lack of mentoring time with certain young people due to the pandemic may have contributed to a slow development of trust, as some mentees need more sessions before they feel comfortable opening up to their mentor. This in turn could have had an impact on the benefits of mentoring for these young people.

“[T]here are some people even now, even though there’s only six or seven weeks of the school year left, I still feel like I don’t know anything about them. They’re still not ready to open up because they could have really done with that extra time and then by now we might have had a different relationship.” **(LNK staff)**

A further barrier not specific to COVID-19 related to teachers’ workload. LNK staff noted that this meant that there could be a lack of relevant information on referral forms, such as whether young people had a mental health diagnosis or special educational needs.

### **Recommendations for improvement of LNK Educate delivery**

Teachers and mentors made recommendations for improvements to the delivery of LNK Educate lessons and mentoring sessions.

#### **Universal element (lessons)**

- Ensure that resources are provided for all planned LNK Educate lessons. This will prevent additional work for teachers who otherwise have to create resources to replace those that are missing from some lesson plans.<sup>36</sup>
- Adapt the resources for LNK Educate lessons to ensure that the materials are age appropriate and not too sensitive or disturbing for younger age groups. This could involve adapting existing materials or developing different materials for primary and secondary school pupils, for example.

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<sup>36</sup> As already noted, during the review process, LNK reported that all of the lessons have accompanying resources and were unsure of why this error occurred.

- Include LNK mentors across all LNK Educate lesson delivery, rather than only attending the first one or two lessons. Doing so would support both teachers and young people throughout the programme.
- Make the lesson resources more accessible for young people who have difficulty reading (e.g. those who have special educational needs or those who do not speak or read English fluently).
- Deliver more substantial mandatory training to teachers responsible for LNK Educate lesson delivery to support confidence with the lesson content. Ensure that this is delivered as refresher training on an ongoing basis for teachers.
- Add a new lesson where young people listen to ex-gang members and hear their real-life experiences to make the content of the lessons more relatable, meaningful and impactful.<sup>37</sup>

### **Targeted element (mentoring)**

- Increase the frequency of mentoring sessions, particularly for young people who require extra support.
- Recruit more youth workers/mentors to ensure that LNK mentoring can be rolled out across more schools and to enable mentors to dedicate more time to each young person.

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<sup>37</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that they have now created a video with this focus.

## 6. Feasibility findings: Experiences of receiving LNK Educate

This chapter sets out young people's views and experiences of receiving the LNK Educate programme. It first outlines young people's experiences of receiving the universal element (i.e. the lessons), including how it was delivered and views on the format, content and style of delivery. It then presents young people's experiences of receiving the targeted element (i.e. the mentoring), including the selection process, how it was delivered and views on the format, content and delivery. The chapter concludes by outlining young people's suggestions for improving the LNK Educate programme.

### Experiences of LNK Educate lessons (universal element)

#### Communication about the lessons

During the interviews and discussion groups, young people were asked to reflect on when they had first heard about LNK Educate. Some young people had been given notice that they would be having an LNK lesson. For example, at one school, a young person described how they had been told a few days in advance by their teacher and an LNK mentor before the first lesson was delivered.

“Our teacher was like, 'We're going to have a Lives Not Knives lesson,' and basically [name of mentor] came in and said, 'We're going to have this,' blah blah blah, and a couple of days later we had it.”  
**(Young person)**

However, some young people were less sure of whether they had ever received the LNK lessons. This confusion may have been, in part, due to the LNK staff also delivering LNK roadshows and workshops in schools, which are different to the LNK Educate universal lessons delivered by teachers (as noted in Chapter 1).

#### Delivery of the lessons

As set out in Chapter 1, the universal element of LNK Educate is intended to be delivered before the targeted mentoring. However, there was some uncertainty among young people around whether they had received the lessons or mentoring first, with some young people implying that they received the targeted element first. This meant that some of the information covered during the LNK lessons was familiar to them, as they had already spoken about it during mentoring. Some young people also described how they had received the lessons twice in different year groups. This may have also made it more difficult for young people to recall the order of delivery.

#### Format and structure of the lessons

Young people explained that the format of the lessons had comprised watching an LNK video or videos about a topic related to knife crime followed by a class discussion. This included the class speaking about knife crime prevention and the reasons why people should avoid using knives and harming others.

“[W]e'd have a screen like this. Then we'll watch a little bit and then we'll be in a big circle and then we'll talk about the whole situation and they will ask us, 'Oh, what can prevent knife crime' and stuff like that. 'What are other ways to stay off the streets' and stuff like that, so they were – yes, basically educating us.” **(Young person)**

During some of the discussion groups and interviews with young people, the NatCen research team showed stills of the videos as a visual aid to help participants' recall of the lessons. However, it appeared that some young people may not have seen all the videos. Young people's recollection of the video content also varied, with some being able to provide more detailed accounts of the videos than others. Overall, where they were able to recall the details of the videos, young people described them as being about knife crime where victims, siblings of victims and professionals (such as a doctor and lawyer) shared their own experiences of knife crime and information about it.

"I remember the [...] video of the girl. Her brother had gotten stabbed at a party even though he wasn't in a gang or anything. He got stabbed because there were two gangs there and the other gang thought he was part of the gang that they're not friends with." **(Young person)**

In addition to being shown the videos, young people also reported how a lesson could include a class task or activity (see also, Chapter 1 and Chapter 5). In line with the flexibility of intended model of delivery, there was some variation within young people's accounts when describing the tasks and activities.

Finally, some young people spoke about how they had the opportunity to discuss the videos and their feelings during the lesson with the teacher and the class. The discussions also provided the opportunity to reflect on the key learning points from the videos. For example, one young person described how the class discussed that knife crime could happen without a reason. However, another view was that there had been limited opportunities for discussion after watching the videos, and/or their level of engagement in the discussion had been limited.

"I didn't speak to my teacher. A little bit, but most of the time I was just in the playground like, [...] what was happening? Then we just went off, so there wasn't that much talking about it, but it was still, everyone knew it was just going through our minds, like, how could that [the incident in the video] happen and why?" **(Young person)**

### **Experiences of lesson delivery**

Young people recognised the importance of receiving the lessons so that they could learn about knife crime and the associated dangers, alongside how to respond when faced with potentially risky situations as they get older.

"[I]t's important because people who [...] didn't get taught [about knife crime] when they were younger and then they just [committed knife crime] to let all their anger out and stuff like that. So I feel like that's why people get in trouble and stuff." **(Young person)**

Young people varied in terms of their familiarity with the information given in the videos. For example, some spoke about how they had been surprised by the video of the doctor, as they were unaware that a stabbing anywhere on the body could be dangerous and potentially fatal.

Videos containing new information also meant that the videos were shocking and confusing for some. For example, one of the videos shows a stabbing taking place at a party, illustrating how knife crime can happen when other people are around. This was felt to challenge preconceived ideas about what situations may be risky, as some young people felt that knife crime usually occurs when no one else is around.

Young people also found watching the videos ‘interesting’, ‘sad’ and ‘upsetting’, and they described feeling sorry for the people involved in one of the incidents portrayed. Young people described how the videos emphasised the need to keep themselves safe and to act cautiously when out alone or with others.

“[If I’m] on the streets and I see people just messing around, mucking around, I’m always like [...], and I go to the other side of the road.” **(Young person)**

Finally, one young person was concerned about their own safety directly after one of the lessons, although they went on to describe how these feelings had not lasted for long.

Alongside describing how the videos made them feel, young people also reflected on how the incidents portrayed may have impacted the victims involved. This included families of the victims of knife crime experiencing a range of emotions, such as sadness, anger and confusion. There was also some reflection among young people around the perpetrator’s motivations for committing knife crime. One view was that the perpetrator must have ‘hated’ the victim to stab them.

### *Key learning*

Young people reported two key learning areas around knife crime from the lessons:

- **A greater awareness of knife crime and its consequences**, including the harm it can cause not only to the victim but to their family members.

“[I]f you kill someone, you've just taken away a life and you're just going to make their family heartbroken and especially if they kill a sibling, they're going to feel all lonely if they don't have this person to play with or chat with.” **(Young person)**

- **That knife crime can happen without a reason, and anyone can be affected**; for example, anyone could be mistaken for being a gang member and/or be a victim of knife crime.

### **Facilitators to delivery**

Young people’s accounts also included discussion of the facilitators to the delivery of the LNK lessons. The following five facilitators were identified among young people:

- **Having the chance to ask questions** and check their understanding of the lesson content.

“To be really honest, I don't think there's anything they could change because every lesson, everything was different. We had our chance to answer questions and see if we were understanding, so there's nothing I would change.” **(Young person)**

- **The helpful presence of the LNK mentors** during the lessons. Young people described how mentors were able to answer questions, and some felt that they knew more about the lessons than the teachers.
- **The format of the session**. Taking part in the lessons with other young people that they knew was welcomed. Young people also found it useful to watch the videos first before having the follow-up discussion and questions to help aid understanding around knife crime. The discussion also provided a useful opportunity to hear others’ views. However, young people who had received the one-to-

one mentoring also expressed some preference for this element of the programme, as they felt more comfortable opening up to their mentor than to a group of people.

- **Individual pupil/young person motivation and engagement to learn.** One young person described how they were excited for the next lesson and enjoyed learning about new information so that they could share it with others. In contrast, it was suggested that a lack of interest in the lessons, for example, where a young person had other concerns or issues on their mind, could be a potential barrier to young people fully engaging in the lessons.
- **Post-lesson support.** Where in place, support following lesson delivery was also welcomed by young people. For example, one young person described how the LNK mentors had been at their school for a long time and were approachable. In addition, young people described feeling able to share any concerns and have discussions about the topics covered in the lessons with teachers and friends.

### **Suggestions for improvement**

While some young people reported that they would not change anything about the lessons, others shared some recommendations for future delivery. This included increasing the number of lessons and incorporating more art activities into the lessons as well as additional videos about different types of crime that may affect people, including, for example, gun crime. However, other types of crime, such as gun crime, may be outside of LNK's remit.

“[I] would say a bit more art as well because you could do more posters [...] I feel like more videos [...] I say that because if there were more videos, I feel like we could have learnt a bit more, because people can have different crime done to them. They can have knife crime. Some people have got killed with a gun or something.” **(Young person)**

### **Experiences of LNK Educate mentoring (targeted element)**

#### **Experiences of being selected**

##### *Information and communication about mentoring*

The process of providing and sharing information with young people in advance of the mentoring varied among the young people interviewed. Not all young people had received information in advance, with one young person describing how they had learnt that they would be receiving mentoring when the mentor collected them from their class. In contrast, other young people described how they had been told that they had been selected for mentoring by their school before it took place. The time frame for this ranged from being told the term before the mentoring started to being told by the school on the day that the mentoring began. In addition, one young person described how the school had contacted their parent/s about them being selected for this part of the programme.

Young people felt varying degrees of choice over whether to take part in the mentoring or not. Some young people felt they had a choice and that they could have told the school if they did not want to take part.

“I feel like the teachers picked who would need the support. Yes, and then the children could say if they did want to do it or if they didn't want to do it.” **(Young person)**

In contrast, other young people reported feeling as if it was not their decision to be mentored, although they had taken part. Reasons given for taking part, despite feeling like they lacked choice, included always wanting to have a mentor or because their parent had been keen for them to engage.

“[B]ecause my [parents] always wanted better for me, so I would have no choice but to do it.” **(Young person)**

Reasons given by young people about why they were selected included teachers choosing young people who they thought were in most need of support, which one young person interpreted as them being a ‘bad student’ in terms of their behaviour. However, other young people did not know why they were selected.

### *Views and reactions on being selected*

Young people’s initial reactions to being selected for mentoring can be grouped into three categories:

- **Positive and wanting to engage.** Reasons for this included:
  - Liking trying out new things and being proud that they had been selected because they believed in themselves and their potential to benefit from mentoring.
  - That taking part would mean that they could spend time out of traditional lessons, which they considered a positive outcome.
  - The benefits of having someone to speak with, for example about personal issues.

“[I] had a feeling I would like to talk to somebody about what's been going on with me and all the stuff that's going on in the world.” **(Young person)**

- **Willing to try it out.** One young person described how a teacher at the school told them that mentoring would really help them, so they decided to start the process and see how it went.
- **Initial reluctance to engage with this part of the programme** among what one young person described as ‘the bad kids’.

“When I first got selected, I wasn't really up for it because as I said, I wasn't always good. So you know the bad kids? They don't want to be put in something like mentoring because they're obviously seen as bad, so when we get that, we start misbehaving more.” **(Young person)**

### **Mentoring format**

As set out in Chapter 1, the targeted element of LNK Educate is intended to involve one-to-one mentoring between the LNK mentor and young person. This format was reflected in the young people’s accounts of mentoring, indicating fidelity to the intended delivery model. Similarly, mentoring sessions typically occurred weekly (although there was evidence to suggest that some young people could see an LNK mentor twice a week), which is also in line with the intended delivery model. Finally, mentoring sessions were described by young people as lasting between 15–30 minutes, which is shorter than the intended length of an hour as described in Chapter 1. However, the length of the sessions could vary, for example, if young people wanted to spend longer away from their lessons.

“Sometimes [s/he] just take me out for long, because [s/he] knows I like to miss lessons. So [s/he] tells me, if I find this lesson boring, just come and find [her/him].” **(Young person)**

The LNK Educate mentoring sessions are intended to take place within schools. This was reflected in young people’s accounts where they described the mentoring as typically taking place at school in a private and quiet room, which they welcomed. The sessions were also described by young people as being generally discussion based, which could include elements of action planning and goal setting. Further detail on the content of the mentoring sessions is provided in the next section.

### *Missed sessions*

The young people interviewed had been taking part in mentoring for up to two years. Although mentoring had been paused while the schools were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data suggest that aside from this, the mentoring sessions had taken place regularly.

Other reasons given by young people for missed sessions included the mentor or the young person being unwell or the young person not wanting to attend a session. One pupil noted that when a session was missed, the mentor picked up the discussion from where they had left it at the previous session.

## **Mentoring session content**

### *Content of discussions*

Young people’s accounts indicate that mentoring sessions are highly individualised and pupil led, with young people recognising that they have a choice over what is discussed. Topics of conversation typically include school, friendship groups, personal and home life as well as what has been happening since the last mentoring session.

“I decide what to talk about because of the things that have been happening the past weeks, and I like to get some stuff off my chest [...] It feels really good to talk about that and carry the weight off my shoulders.” **(Young person)**

Young people also noted how they had discussed shared interests with their mentor and had the opportunity to ask the mentor questions about their own lives, too. One pupil also noted the continuity between sessions and how their mentor framed the discussion around what they had previously spoken about.

In addition, young people reported that some sessions involved playing games, while some also noted that they were able to relax and use their phones during the sessions.

“We just chill on our phones, most probably, talk a little bit more and then most probably, the bell would ring and then I will look at what lesson I have and then I'll see [the mentor] next week again.” **(Young person)**

In addition to topics of discussion, young people talked about activities that they had completed in between and during mentoring sessions, for example the use of journaling between sessions and drawing on the entries as part of the weekly mentoring discussion.

## Action planning

Action planning and monitoring progress were described by young people as features of the sessions. They explained how the mentoring sessions involved working with their mentor to set goals and targets each week. This could include behaviour targets focused on their behaviour at school or how they interact with others. This was seen as a valuable part of the mentoring and had helped to encourage positive changes in behaviour. It was also viewed by young people as a good way of measuring the progress that they had made.

“[T]he targets have helped me and I don't even realise it. There are certain big targets that I'm achieving now that I wasn't even being able to achieve back then, because I think a long time ago, one of my targets was to try in my [detail of target] or something like that. Before, I'd never done a [detail of target]. [...] I had a [detail of target][...] and I was like, 'Oh, my! The targets are actually coming in handy.’” **(Young person)**

The use of an Outcomes Star-type tool was also noted.<sup>38</sup> For one young person, this was felt to help them focus on what changes and goals they needed to achieve.

Lastly, in addition to speaking about more immediate targets and goals, young people noted how the sessions had covered future ambitions and longer-term plans and how these could be achieved.

## Experiences of working with a mentor

Young people found their mentors to be relatable and recognised how mentors may have similar shared experiences with them. This could have a positive impact on young people, as they are able to learn from their mentor's experiences and consider how to apply this to their own learning pathway. Young people also described having a trusting relationship with their mentor, which they valued and considered to have a positive impact. This included helping them to understand different perspectives and enabling them to remain at the school (see Chapter 7 for perceived impacts of the mentoring).

“Me and [name of mentor] have a really good relationship. [She's/he's] very kind-hearted and [she's/he's] a lot of things and [she's/he's] actually a really good mentor as well. There's one thing that I would really like to do. I just want [her/him] to be mentoring me throughout my years in school because I feel like if it wasn't for [name of mentor], I would not be in this school.” **(Young person)**

Young people described the mentors as caring, honest and non-judgemental as well as having a sense of humour. They reported feeling comfortable talking to their mentor about personal issues, including topics that they may feel less comfortable discussing with others. As part of this, young people welcomed the one-to-one format of the sessions and generally trusted that the mentor would keep the discussion confidential. One view among young people was that if they were to share the same information with the school, their parents/guardians would be contacted.

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<sup>38</sup> Outcomes Stars are evidence-based tools designed to support positive change and greater wellbeing.

“[I] don't really like talking about myself outside of school because I like to keep it private, but I guess it's okay because I've got a piece of trust. [The mentor] doesn't know everything, but [she/he] knows the important things that [she/he] needs to know.” **(Young person)**

However, young people's accounts indicate that they may have been unaware that mentors are also bound by safeguarding policies and that there may be limits to the level of confidentiality they can offer.<sup>39</sup>

“Because when [the mentor] took me out, [she/he] said I can tell [her/him] anything. [She/He] isn't going to tell the teachers and the company and stuff like that. I feel like some of my friends, they just can't keep a secret.” **(Young person)**.

Young people also found mentors to be good listeners and easy to talk to, especially as the mentoring sessions continued over time. For others, feeling listened to and understood was demonstrated by the mentor typing everything they said on a laptop and asking them to clarify where helpful.

“[The mentor is] very understanding and [she/he] listens when I talk to [her/him]. As I'm talking, [she/he] writes it on the laptop so [she/he] doesn't really miss anything. When [she's/he's] finished, [she'll/he'll] come back and ask me again and ask me if I was sure about what I said, so yes, [she/he] listens.” **(Young person)**

However, some young people described how the mentor typing on a computer undermined their confidence in the confidential nature of the discussion.

“[B]ut the bad thing is, I don't really talk too much because [she/he] does it on the computer.” **(Young person)**

This indicates that greater clarity is needed from the mentors when explaining confidentiality to young people as well as the purpose behind writing up discussions on their computers.

A range of positive feelings were reported by young people after having a mentoring session. They welcomed how the session offered a quiet space for discussion away from the noisy classroom environment, and young people described feeling calmer, refreshed and relieved following a mentoring session.

“I feel refreshed [...] I get to finally get the stuff off my chest, and I'm ready to move onto the next lesson.” **(Young person)**

Finally, experiences of mentoring and progress made appeared to be dependent on the relationship a young person had with their mentor. This was especially evident where young people had worked with more than one mentor.

“[B]oth of them [the mentors] I play games with. I don't know why I feel like I've just had a connection with [name of mentor 1], so I opened to [name of mentor 1] in the first week. No, I think it was the first day when [she/he] came, but I haven't said stuff to [name of mentor 2] [...] I just feel like I had a connection with [name of mentor 1] and I feel I could trust [name of mentor 1].” **(Young person)**

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<sup>39</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that discussions about safeguarding and disclosure are communicated to young people, including in the introductory workshops.

However, while a change in mentors may be initially challenging, one pupil also described how after some time and the mentor becoming more familiar to them, it was like working with their previous mentor.

### **Suggestions for improvements to mentoring**

As with the universal element, young people shared minimal suggestions for improvement to the mentoring programme. Where there were suggestions, young people recommended:

- **The need for a more private and confidential room** for the mentoring to take place in. Although young people typically described the sessions as private, one view was that mentoring sessions could be disrupted by teachers coming into the room where the mentoring was taking place.

“I like it private, but I feel sometimes just random teachers walk in and stuff like that and interrupt and then it wastes our time and then I'll have to go back to class earlier.” **(Young person)**

- **Additional activities** during the mentoring sessions. Young people suggested that there should be more opportunities for more varied activities during sessions, such as art or more games.
- **Being able to speak with the mentor more regularly** so that they did not have to wait to discuss what had happened to them until the next scheduled mentoring session.

“[I] have to wait a whole week to talk to [the mentor]. Interesting things happen and then more time when I see [the mentor], then I forget what I want to ask [...] and stuff.” **(Young person)**

### **Wider LNK provision of support**

While not a direct focus of the feasibility study, young people within the sample who were being mentored had also made use of the wider LNK activities and provision outside of the school. Young people described how they had attended the drop-in sessions at LNK premises on Mondays and Fridays after school during term time and had taken part in the activities provided during the school holidays (see further, Technical Appendix A). One view among young people was that the holiday provision had helped them to meet new friends and to stop them feeling bored and making ‘wrong’ choices. This indicates a positive connection between the young people and LNK as an organisation, given that these activities are optional.

## 7. Feasibility findings: Logic model and perceived programme outcomes to date

NatCen researchers worked in collaboration with LNK staff to develop an outcomes-focused logic model for the LNK Educate programme (see Chapter 3). This chapter summarises the logic model before the perceived outcomes of the programme to date are presented.

### Logic model development

#### Overview of the outcome pathways

Figure 1 provides an overview of the outcome pathways that are presented in the logic model:

1. **Young people (YP):** this pathway presents intended outcomes for young people, including changes in understanding and knowledge of knife crime, engagement with LNK, behaviours, wellbeing and skills, with the aim of improving education, employment and crime-related outcomes.
2. **Parents/guardians (P/G):** this pathway depicts intended outcomes for parents/guardians, including changes in awareness, knowledge and skills to support their children.
3. **Schools:** the schools pathway outlines intended outcomes for schools, including changes in understanding, knowledge and skills of teachers to identify needs and safeguard and refer children to appropriate support.
4. **LNK Educate (LNK):** this pathway sets out the intended outcomes for LNK Educate, including LNK Educate staff members' skills and capacity to deliver support as intended with appropriate tailoring as well as eventual expansion and sustainability of the programme.

Taken together, all four pathways are intended to result in a whole-school and community approach being adopted to support the prevention of knife crime, along with improved outcomes for young people, their families and communities.

#### Explanation of the logic model: Defining outcomes and impact

The **outcomes** and **impacts** of the programme are organised around the type of change that should occur:<sup>40</sup>

- **Short-term outcomes** refer to changes in awareness, knowledge, skills, motivations and/or aspirations.
- **Medium-term outcomes** relate to changes in behaviours, practices, decisions and/or policies.
- **Impacts** are more aspirational and are what LNK Educate hopes to achieve in the longer term (i.e. after five or 10 years). Impacts refer to bigger social and systemic changes that occur as a

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<sup>40</sup> Outcomes and impacts can also be organised around how long they typically take to occur. As noted in Chapter 3, our approach to developing the logic model is inspired by the Kellogg Foundation.

result of an intervention/programme. Impacts are harder to measure and are more likely to be influenced by external factors.

In Figure 2 and Figure 3, the outcomes are displayed from shorter- to longer-term outcomes when moving left to right across the page. The elongated grey box at the far right of the model represents the intended impacts.

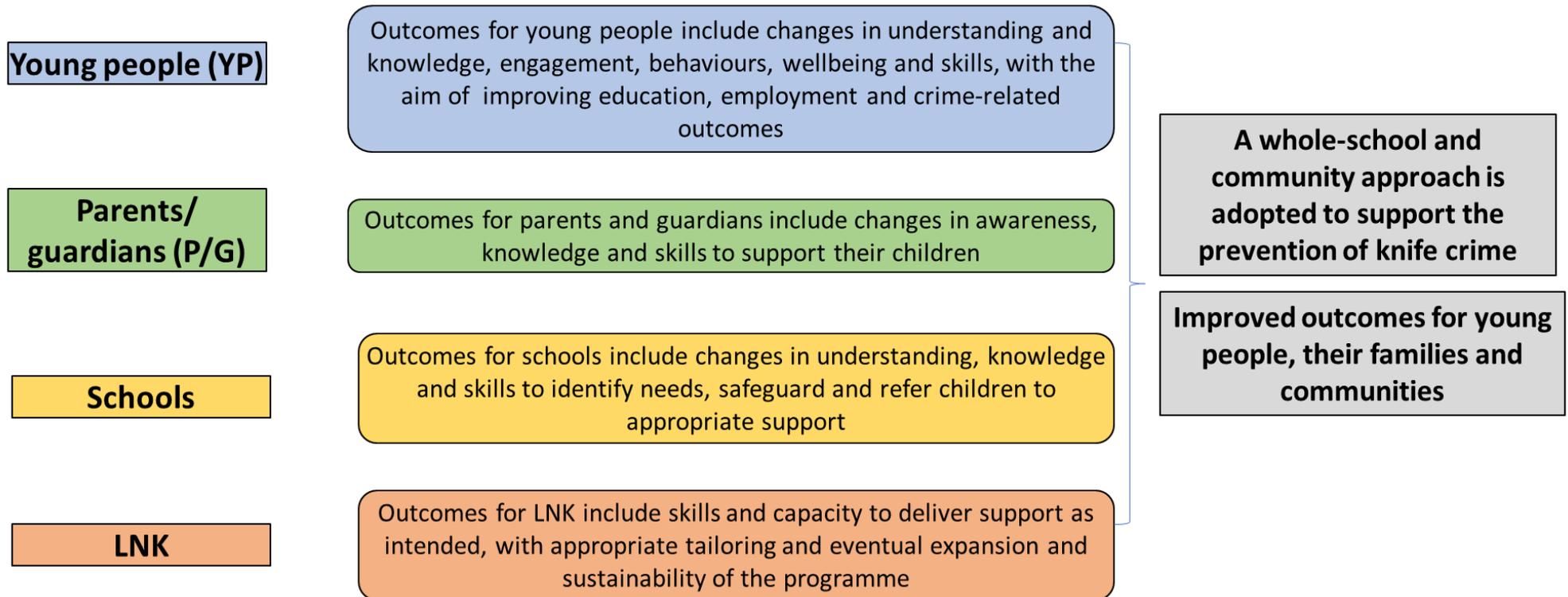
## **Description of the logic model**

### *Pathway 1: Young people*

In Figure 2, the 'Young people (YP)' outcomes pathway sets out the intended outcomes for the young people who take part in the programme, separated into the universal and targeted elements.

- **Universal element:** the first set of intended outcomes for the pathway relate specifically to the universal element of the programme. Therefore, these should be achieved by young people attending the LNK Educate lessons.
  - Firstly, participating in the LNK Educate lessons should result in a better understanding and changed perceptions about knife crime for young people (i.e. increased realisation of the significance of knife crime and its impacts) while simultaneously gaining more awareness of their rights and responsibilities (e.g. being aware of their legal rights if stopped and searched by the police).
  - As a result of increased understanding of knife crime and awareness regarding their rights and responsibilities, it is expected that young people feel better equipped to make a disclosure to a trusted adult (as needed, for example, around witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse).
  - Finally, as young people complete the universal element (and for those who move on to the targeted mentoring), it is hoped that they feel more able to access the wider support offered by LNK.

## Overview of outcome pathways for young people, parents and guardians, schools and LNK



**Figure 1. Overview of outcome pathways for young people, parents/guardians, schools and LNK<sup>41</sup>**

<sup>41</sup> The logic model is outcomes focused; as such, it only pertains to intended outcomes and impacts rather than the resources, activities and outputs that precede them.

## Outcome pathways for young people and parents and guardians

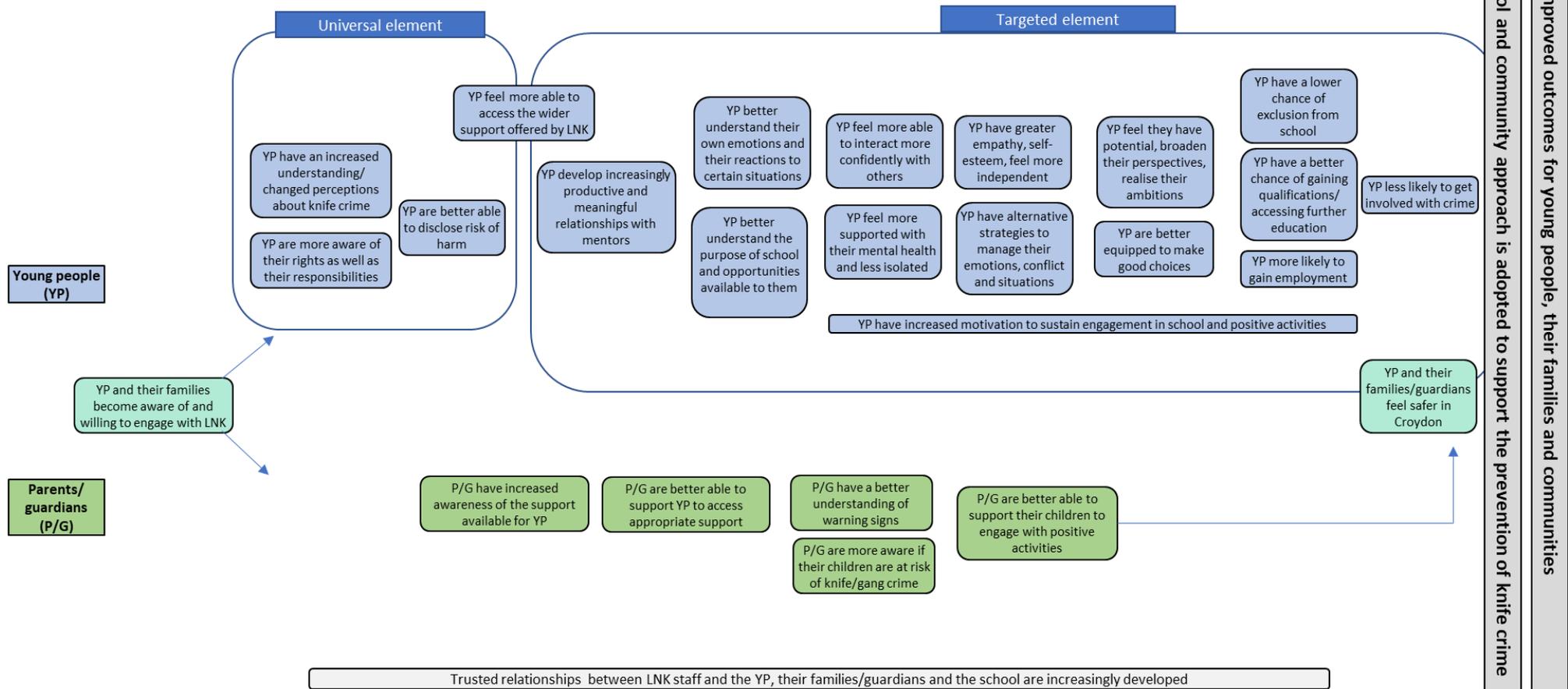


Figure 2. Outcome pathways for young people and parents and guardians

# Outcome pathways for schools and LNK

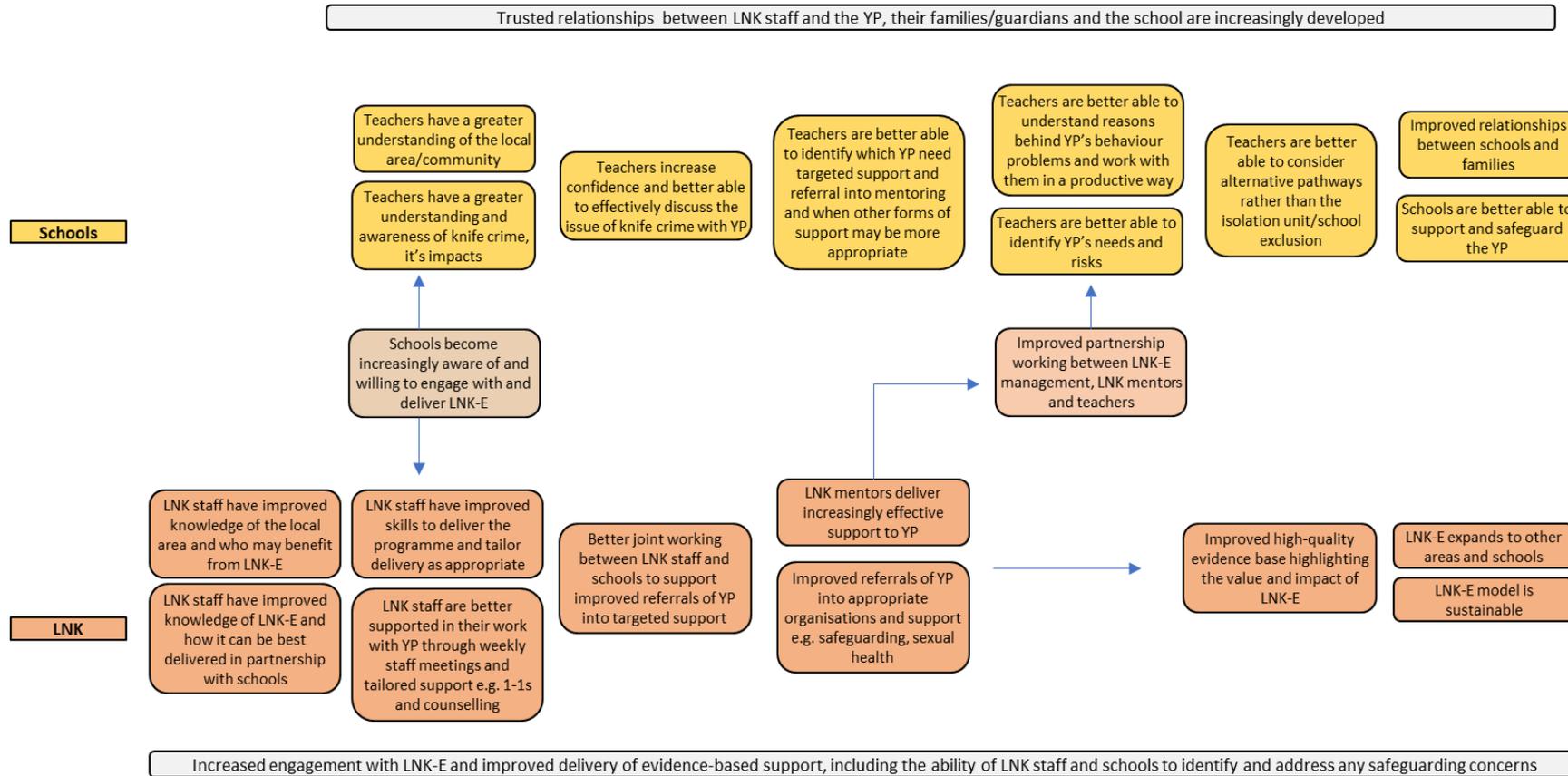


Figure 3. Outcome pathways for schools and LNK

Improved outcomes for young people, their families and communities  
 A whole-school and community approach is adopted to support the prevention of knife crime

- **Targeted element:** following the intended outcomes of the universal element, the pathway moves on to the intended outcomes for young people who receive the targeted element of LNK Educate. It is expected that attending the mentoring sessions will achieve the following outcomes:
  - As young people embark on, and progress through, the mentoring process, they develop increasingly productive and meaningful relationships with their LNK mentor.
  - It is hoped that the mentoring relationships provide an environment in which young people are able to better understand their emotions (e.g. sadness) and reactions to certain situations (e.g. conflict situations).
  - Simultaneously, the mentoring should result in young people gaining a better understanding of the purpose of school and the opportunities available to them (e.g. good school attainment and career prospects).
  - The combination of improved ability to understand their own emotions and reactions to certain situations and a better understanding of the purpose of school and available opportunities is expected to result in young people feeling more able to interact confidently with others as well as feeling more supported with their mental health and less isolated.
  - It follows that young people are expected to develop greater empathy and self-esteem and feel more independent. As part of this, they should be better able to consider alternative strategies to manage their emotions and conflict situations.
  - The positive impact of the outcomes achieved up to this point are hoped to translate into young people realising their ambitions, broadening their perspectives and feeling that they have potential to succeed (however they may define success). Alongside this, they should be better equipped to make 'good' choices. As a result, young people should be set up for success against the remaining intended outcomes of the programme.
  - All of the preceding outcomes are intended to result in young people having a lower chance of exclusion from school, which will contribute to them having a better chance of gaining qualifications and accessing further education. As a result, they will have a higher likelihood of gaining employment, which will further reduce their likelihood of becoming involved in crime.

Finally, an increased motivation among young people to sustain engagement in school and positive activities is viewed as an ongoing outcome of engagement with the targeted element of the LNK Educate programme.

#### *Pathway 2: Parents and guardians*

Figure 2 also presents the outcomes pathway for parents and guardians of young people engaged in the programme. During the logic model workshop, LNK staff discussed how this pathway was not part of the programme's original thinking around intended outcomes. However, during the delivery of LNK Educate, it was apparent that there are outcomes that are relevant to parents and guardians as a result of LNK's

engagement with them. This includes the information workshops that LNK staff have offered to some parents. The following are the intended outcomes for the parents and guardians of young people who participate in LNK Educate:

- In the first instance, following their children’s participation in the universal lessons, and as a result of receiving information on LNK Educate from LNK staff, parents/guardians should have an increased awareness of the support available for young people from LNK.
- Due to their increased awareness and knowledge of the support available for young people, parents/guardians should feel better able to support their children to access appropriate support.
- As a result of increased knowledge of support available and the ability to support their children to access this, parents/guardians should have a better understanding of warning signs and should be more aware if their children are at risk of knife or gang crime.
- The final intended outcome of the LNK programme for parents/guardians is a better ability to support their children to engage with positive activities.

It is hoped that trusted relationships between LNK staff and the young people, their parents/guardians and the school are increasingly developed throughout the course of the LNK Educate programme.

Finally, a longer-term outcome for both the young person and parent/guardian pathways is that they feel safer in Croydon as a result of the other intended outcomes.

### *Pathway 3: Schools*

Figure 3 presents the outcomes pathways for both schools and LNK. In this section, we set out the pathway for schools.

- It is expected that as a result of delivering the LNK Educate programme, teachers will have a better understanding of the local area and community<sup>42</sup> as well as a greater understanding and awareness of knife crime and its impacts. As a result, it is hoped that teachers have increased confidence and ability to effectively discuss knife crime and related issues with young people.
- Simultaneously, following their LNK training and through early delivery of the universal lessons, schools (teachers) become increasingly aware of and willing to engage with and deliver the programme.
- Building on these early outcomes, teachers are expected to be able to identify which young people need targeted support (i.e. mentoring) and which young people may be better suited to other forms of support (e.g. one-to-one academic support or counselling).
- As part of their involvement in delivering the universal lessons and making referrals to mentoring, teachers are expected to better understand reasons for young people’s behaviour problems and

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<sup>42</sup> LNK noted that teachers are not typically from the local area.

support them in a productive way. Similarly, teachers should be better able to identify young people's needs and risks.

- If this is achieved, it is expected that teachers will be more able to consider alternative pathways in response to poor pupil behaviour instead of using isolation or school exclusion.
- It is hoped that the school's engagement with the LNK Educate programme, and achieving the preceding outcomes, will cultivate improved relationships between schools and families as well as schools being better able to support and safeguard young people.

#### *Pathway 4: LNK Educate*

The final outcomes pathway of the logic model is the pathway for LNK Educate:

- In the early stages of the programme, LNK staff will have improved their knowledge of the local area and who may benefit from LNK Educate by employing youth workers from the local area. In line with this, as a result of their early training, staff will have improved knowledge of LNK Educate and how it can be best delivered in partnership with schools.
- As a result of this improved knowledge, LNK Educate staff have enhanced skills to deliver the programme and tailor delivery as appropriate. At this stage, LNK Educate staff are better supported through weekly one-to-one staff meetings and tailored support (for example, counselling sessions) to engage with young people.
- The enhanced skills that are developed and the tailored support that staff receive should contribute to better joint working between LNK Educate staff and schools to support improved (i.e. appropriate) referrals to targeted support (mentoring) for young people.
- As a result, LNK Educate mentors will deliver increasingly effective support to young people; at the same time, they will show improvement in making referrals in other areas (e.g. in relation to safeguarding or sexual health organisations).
- Mentors delivering effective support to young people will lead to improved partnership working between LNK Educate management, LNK mentors and teachers.
- It is expected that the improvement of both the support provided to young people and referrals of young people into appropriate support or services will provide a high-quality evidence base highlighting the value and impact of LNK Educate.
- Following this, the intention is that LNK Educate will be delivered in more schools and expand into other areas. It is hoped that LNK Educate will become a sustainable programme.

Across the outcomes pathway for LNK Educate, it is hoped that, over time, there will be increased engagement between schools and LNK Educate staff, along with continually improved delivery of evidence-based support (including the ability of LNK staff and schools to identify and address any safeguarding concerns).

In the long term, the four pathways of the logic model come together to deliver the ultimate goal of LNK Educate: improved outcomes for young people, their families and communities and a whole-school and community approach to support the prevention of knife crime.

## **Perceived outcomes of LNK Educate to date**

The focus of this study was the perceived outcomes of LNK Educate for young people and teachers/schools. As such, this section focuses on how the perceived outcomes of the programme for young people and teachers/schools align with the logic model.

### **Perceived outcomes of the universal element (lessons) on young people**

It was difficult for some teachers to specify any clear differences in young people following their participation in the LNK lessons. This was partly due to the large number of young people that receive the LNK Educate lessons in any one school but also due to the difficulty disaggregating targeted outcomes (i.e. via LNK mentoring) from universal outcomes (LNK Educate lessons). Despite this, a range of perceived outcomes of the universal element were identified by mentors, LNK management, teachers and young people.

#### *Improved awareness and knowledge of knife crime*

LNK staff, teachers and young people all reported that an improved awareness and knowledge of knife crime, including the consequences of engaging in knife crime, is a key outcome of the programme for young people. As part of this, teachers suggested that following participation in the LNK lessons, there was an increased understanding among young people that certain activities (e.g. carrying a knife, being involved in a gang) could increase the likelihood of being a victim of knife crime.

“I think the students was able to understand better that they're more at risk of being a victim of knife crime if they are carrying a knife, or they are gang affiliated.” **(Teacher)**

Consequences that young people referred to included criminal justice consequences, such as going to prison, as well as the secondary impact that knife crime can have on other people, including family members of victims. Similarly, teachers felt that the LNK lessons led to more awareness of personal safety among young people, which they considered to be well aligned with the content of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum.

“[The universal element] definitely makes them more aware of what's going on around them and what they possibly need to look out for, and it fits in really well with our PSHE curriculum as well [...] [the universal element] makes them more curious and asking those questions about how to keep safe and what to look out for, and just generally thinking about their safety. It's like a child might say, 'Oh, that's it, from now on, I'm not walking down the street with my mobile phone in my hand. I'm going to make sure it's in my pocket.' So even a tiny, tiny change like that can have enormous impacts for a child.” **(Teacher)**

LNK staff reported that young people are more aware of the law and their own rights (e.g. being able to ask for legal advice if they are arrested) following the LNK Educate lessons. They also noted that young people

feel more confident talking to peers about certain situations (e.g. if they knew that another young person was carrying a knife at school).

Despite the improved awareness and knowledge that some young people gained from attending the LNK lessons, others who had prior personal knowledge or experience of knife crime explained that they did not feel that they had a better understanding of knife crime and associated dangers following the lessons.

Finally, an unintended consequence of improved knowledge and awareness was that some young people reported feeling more scared and worried about the risks of knife crime after the lessons.

### *Seeking help and support*

Teachers and LNK staff suggested that young people knew where to go for support following the lessons. Similarly, some young people described feeling more comfortable seeking support from a trusted adult (e.g. LNK mentor, teacher, parents, the police) and suggested that they would have a better idea of how to respond to a situation in which a friend was carrying a knife as a result of the lessons. Another view among young people was that the lessons had had a strong deterrent effect on their peers' behaviour (i.e. they were discouraged from engaging in knife crime).

However, an unintended impact raised by LNK staff in relation to help seeking and support was the volume of disclosures they had received from young people, particularly primary school children, which was described as 'shocking'.

“[S]o many disclosures so soon in terms of abuse in the household and domestic violence and sexual abuse. I think, for me, that was quite shocking... because these were mainly coming from primary school children.” **(LNK staff)**

### *Emotional and psychological outcomes/responding to challenging situations*

LNK staff described positive emotional and psychological outcomes for young people following the lessons, including demonstrating more empathy towards others, improved mental wellbeing as well as emotional development and a greater ability to manage anger. Similarly, some young people also fed back that the lessons made them more 'street smart' and had given them the ability to respond more rationally and level-headedly to challenging situations (e.g. being mugged) to maintain personal safety and protection.

“[S]ay if I was on the streets, I was with my friends and some boy came up to us and he said, 'Oh, give us this, give us that' and then my friend was ready to fight him when he doesn't even know what he has on him, I'd just be like, 'No, bro, calm down because you don't know what he has on him' and stuff like that. So it makes me more street smart and stuff.” **(Young person)**

### *Behavioural outcomes*

LNK Educate lessons can have a positive impact on young people and their behaviour in school, including a more respectful attitude towards teachers.

“[Y]ou do see the change in the children. So from session to session, you might see them come back from the session and they're completely decompressed, and then over time, you see changes in

attitudes, and they're a lot more focused, a lot calmer, more willing to engage in school, where maybe that might have been an issue before.” **(Teacher)**

Additionally, improvement in attendance rates was noted by some teachers as an outcome for young people.

### **Perceived outcomes of the targeted element (mentoring) on young people**

This section outlines the perceived outcomes of the mentoring from the perspective of young people, teachers and LNK staff.

#### *Attitudes towards knife crime*

Some young people noted that their knowledge of and attitudes towards knife crime had changed as a result of the mentoring sessions. Some said the sessions had increased their general awareness of knife crime, while others reported an attitudinal shift towards being more cautious when out due to the realisation that being the victims of knife crime is a real possibility.

“Yes, [my attitude towards knife crime has] changed. Now I think anything is possible. Really and truly, you could be walking and someone could want to rob you and just take out a knife. Now I'm very, very cautious and stuff.” **(Young person)**

#### *Confidence and self-belief*

A visible improvement in self-confidence and self-belief for mentored young people was highlighted by LNK staff. Similarly, some teachers felt that young people had become more accountable for their actions while receiving mentoring, rather than providing external justifications for their behaviour (e.g. blaming others). Young people were also thought to have developed a better understanding of how to help themselves and use the skills learnt in mentoring sessions to ‘get out of the hole that they have dug themselves into’.

#### *Understanding trauma, improved emotional state and processing emotions*

Young people highlighted that the mentoring had contributed to an improved emotional state for them, for example, feeling calmer, less angry and less sad following the sessions. Young people felt this had contributed to them making more friends, helping friends out more frequently and being better equipped to deal with certain situations (e.g. responding to a friend feeling down). Some young people described being more comfortable expressing their feelings following the mentoring sessions and having a better awareness of how to interact with people more generally.

Mentors reported that those receiving the mentoring had ‘flourished’ and that the sessions had enabled young people to understand why they experience emotional difficulties.

“He may have just been told, oh, I have an ADHD disorder and this and that but doesn't quite understand it. So, I feel like through our sessions, just talking and just dissecting why he was angry or why he had that fight and just getting him to understand the reasons goes a long way.” **(LNK staff)**

Teachers also viewed LNK mentoring sessions as a forum for young people to release their trauma, discuss some of their issues and receive timely support as a preventative measure.

“[Mentoring is] almost like a pressure valve to [...] talk about something really honestly, talk about what they've seen maybe at the weekend that's been super traumatising, or what they might've experienced five or 10 years ago. Then actually release that pressure for them to then be able to do the rest of their life in a normal way. I think because it's one on one, it addresses really specific needs that they have and it's able to then address those, basically big life issues that actually they're not getting any help with anywhere else because eventually the education system is so en masse that they don't get that individualised support.” **(Teacher)**

### *Behaviour and attendance at school*

Teachers fed back that young people's attendance had improved on days mentors were scheduled to visit the schools. Moreover, teachers reported that there had been noticeable improvements in behaviour at school for young people who had regularly misbehaved previously, including a reduction in the number of recorded negative behaviour incidents.

The observations of teachers were reflected in young people's views on the impacts of mentoring on their behaviour. One view was that mentoring had contributed to improved performance at school, which some attributed to the target-setting aspect of the mentoring and mentor encouragement to achieve these targets.

“I was like a bad student – but not a bad student – but all my teachers knew that I was capable of doing the work and completing my work and stuff, but I wasn't giving it my all, if that makes sense. Then me and [the mentor] set a couple of targets for me to set and I never thought I could do it, but [the mentor] was so pushy and [she/he] was giving me the nudge and [she/he] helped me through a lot. Then now, I'm where I need to be and that's very good. I'm doing very well in school now.” **(Young person)**

### *Lack of consistency in pupil/young person outcomes*

Teachers and young people expressed views that even though the mentoring had some positive results, this was not the case for all young people. For example, some young people reported that the mentoring had not improved their experiences of school and regular lessons more generally, as they did not do 'fun' activities and only did work during these lessons. Similarly, one teacher reported that there had been differences in outcomes between different year groups, with some young people responding well to the mentoring and others 'deteriorating', although they acknowledged that this was likely a result of external influences. Likewise, LNK staff reflected that outcomes will be different for every young person.

“[E]very outcome is going to be different for every child. The same way every target is different for every child because they're all so different and as long as we see some improvement or development, that is an outcome to me.” **(LNK staff)**

Additionally, mentors felt unable to speak to any variation in outcomes between young people receiving both the universal and targeted elements and those solely receiving the universal element, as they do not

work closely with those who only receive the universal element. Similarly, teachers did not know whether they could directly attribute some of the positive improvements to the mentoring sessions and engagement with the LNK mentor.

“I don’t know if it’s us. I don’t know if it’s her. I do know that because he’s been part of this thing, he has still a lot more people involved in his life, a lot more positive things happening in his life.”  
**(Teacher)**

### **Perceived impacts/outcomes for teachers and schools**

The perceived outcomes identified for teachers and schools as part of engaging with the programme centred on improved knowledge and awareness of knife crime and associated issues.

#### *Improved knowledge and awareness of knife crime and associated issues among teachers*

LNK staff noted that teachers appeared to have an increased awareness of knife crime and a better understanding of how much young people know about it following their involvement with LNK Educate. Similarly, some teachers reported that they felt generally more aware of knife crime and violence in the local community because of the programme as well as the legalities of weapon carrying.

“I do now feel a bit more au fait with the legalities of carrying a weapon and getting involved in knife crime.” **(Teacher)**

Additionally, teachers described having a better understanding of the peer pressure experienced by young people, including concerns around knife crime and gangs. Some teachers also reported that the school’s engagement with the LNK programme had enabled teachers to better identify pupils who may be at risk of gang affiliation.

“Staff are more aware of some of the red flags, if you like, as to what to look out for. So, staff are more aware of children coming in with a bit of extra money or being a bit more secretive, or children being missing for nine days from school but coming back on the 10th because they might be doing county lines.” **(Teacher)**

Teachers also reported increased confidence in speaking to young people about knife crime (via lesson delivery) once they had familiarised themselves with the content of the lesson resources.

#### *Benefits to the school*

LNK staff felt that teachers and schools benefitted from the mentoring sessions due to the perceived positive outcomes for young people following engagement with the programme.

“You can see that the teachers really appreciate it because they’ve struggled for years trying to get through to these pupils and all of a sudden they’ve seen a change that they never thought they were going to see.” **(LNK staff)**

However, some teachers felt that the programme was not visible within schools, which limited awareness of the programme among young people, teachers and the wider school community and in turn reduced the programme’s potential for impact.

“[I]n terms of the Lives Not Knives programme [...] It would be nice to have perhaps a notice board, maybe an LNK notice board, and all the progress that people have made, the activities they do. I think only Year 5 and 6 know about it, a lot of the other staff don't, so in the wider school community, I don't think it's made a massive impact.” (Teacher)<sup>43</sup>

Finally, some teachers also reported that it was too soon following programme delivery to understand the full impact of LNK Educate on the school.

## **How perceived outcomes to date compare to the logic model**

In this section, we consider how the perceived outcomes to date align with the outcomes pathways for young people and schools in the logic model.

### **Young person pathway**

The perceived outcomes for young people following engagement in the LNK lessons largely align with the outcomes depicted in the logic model. The intended outcomes for the universal element are that young people acquire an increased understanding of knife crime and a greater awareness of their rights and responsibilities. In addition, they should feel better able to disclose risk of harm as well as access wider support offered by LNK. These intended outcomes were reflected in young people's, teachers' and LNK management's accounts of the perceived outcomes for young people.

Some of the intended outcomes of the targeted element were also identified as outcomes for young people who had attended the LNK lessons. Namely, mentors and teachers noted improvements in emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing among young people, along with improved anger management and better behaviour in school following the LNK lessons.

Regarding the targeted element of the programme, the perceived outcomes reported by all participant groups broadly align with the intended outcomes for young people depicted in the logic model. That is, young people appear to benefit from improvements in self-confidence and self-belief as well as an improved emotional state (i.e. feeling less angry) following mentoring sessions. As part of this, young people develop a better understanding and awareness of their emotions and how to manage them. These outcomes appear to translate into improvements in behaviour at school, which aligns closely with the intended outcome of young people having increased motivation to sustain engagement in school and positive activities.

In addition, some young people noted that their knowledge of and attitudes towards knife crime had changed as a result of the mentoring sessions. This indicates that the outcomes of the LNK lessons may continue to have an influence when combined with mentoring.

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<sup>43</sup> During the review process, LNK reported how intended delivery focused primarily on Years 5 and 6 in primary schools. As such, it may not be surprising that other year groups are less aware of the programme.

As the LNK Educate programme is still newly rolled out, there is no evidence of the later outcomes for the young people's pathway at present (i.e. around gaining qualifications, entering employment and not becoming involved in crime).

### **Schools pathway**

Most of the intended outcomes for schools and teachers were not discussed by participants. However, the key outcomes that were identified were a greater awareness of knife crime and violence in the local community as well as improved awareness and knowledge of knife crime and associated issues. As part of this, teachers feel better able to identify young people in need of targeted support (e.g. those who may be at risk of gang affiliation). Future evaluation work would benefit from a more detailed exploration of outcomes for schools and teachers.

### **Summary**

The evidence gathered for this study suggests that LNK Educate has promising outcomes. However, the data gathered centre on perceived outcomes described by a relatively small number of qualitative research participants. Future evaluation work should aim to gather more views around perceived outcomes across all pathways as well as look to refine the pathways – for example, consider whether some outcomes need to be removed or amended.

## 8. Feasibility study conclusion

The YEF commissioned NatCen to conduct a feasibility study of LNK Educate, a primary and secondary school programme primarily for pupils/young people aged between nine and 14 that aims to reduce school exclusions and the number of young people who become involved in knife crime and youth violence. The programme adopts a tiered delivery model whereby ‘universal’ lessons that educate and raise awareness are delivered to whole year groups, and ‘targeted’ one-to-one mentoring is provided to young people who are identified as being most at risk of school exclusion and being drawn into crime and violence. The universal lessons are delivered by teachers, and the targeted mentoring sessions are delivered by LNK youth workers.

The feasibility study aimed to assess early implementation of the programme to support decisions about programme refinement and inform whether the evaluation should also proceed to the pilot stage. To make an assessment of feasibility, the study sought to answer six research questions. These research questions and a summary of relevant findings are detailed in Table 6.

The feasibility study used a small sample (a total of 30 participants from four participant groups), and therefore findings must be considered in this context.

### **Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility**

To transition from feasibility stage to pilot stage, the following criteria needed to be met:

- LNK Educate is implemented as intended, with consistent delivery as intended across schools in terms of the number of lessons, topics covered and format used.
- Qualitative data suggest the intervention is acceptable and engaging across delivery staff and young people.

Findings indicate that LNK Educate is broadly delivered as intended and is perceived positively by young people, teachers and LNK staff. Delivery of the universal element (lessons) appears to be delivered more consistently than the mentoring sessions; however, this is by design, as the universal part of the programme is guided by structured lesson plans. Where flexibility in lesson delivery occurs, this seems to be around the activities that young people take part in to encourage reflection and recall, rather than substantive changes to the format or lesson material. Moreover, this flexibility is encouraged by LNK and is a part of the delivery approach, which promotes tailoring activities to the needs of young people.

Less consistency was found in the delivery of mentoring sessions. While sessions aim to follow a format of discussing events of the previous week and setting and reviewing targets, the structure of each session is highly dependent on mentee need and is tailored appropriately. While mentors have access to worksheets that they can use with mentees to facilitate discussion, these appear to be used early on in the mentoring relationship to support rapport building, rather than forming part of a structured mentoring programme. This appears to be the intended delivery model specified by LNK. However, without consistent delivery, we cannot be sure that young people are being exposed to the same key features of the mentoring element of LNK Educate in order to ascertain whether any change in outcomes can be attributed to the programme. This should be considered in the discussion of the pilot study findings.

Overall, both the universal lessons and targeted mentoring were described positively by young people and teachers. Improved awareness and knowledge of knife crime was reported for young people and teachers, and positive outcomes for young people who had participated in the mentoring were described by all participant groups.

In summary, both the universal and targeted elements of LNK Educate seem to be delivered as intended, and the early evidence suggests it contributes to positive outcomes for young people and teachers. However, the universal element is delivered more consistently and therefore is currently more suitable for an assessment and attribution of change in outcomes than the mentoring element.

### **Additional considerations identified as part of the feasibility study**

It is recommended that thought is given to how consistency can also be improved in the following areas:

- Young people's accounts indicated that there may have been instances where those who were receiving mentoring did not receive the universal element first. A consistent roll-out of lessons followed by mentoring should be adhered to.
- Findings indicate that the selection, consent and information-giving processes for mentoring lack consistency; moving forward, a more systematic approach is recommended.
- Finally, findings of the feasibility study indicate that young people may be unaware that mentors are bound by safeguarding and disclosure policies and that there are limits to the level of confidentiality they can offer. Young people must be clearly and consistently informed about the limits of confidentiality, including the safeguarding and disclosure policy that mentors must follow.

**Table 6. Summary of feasibility study findings**

Research question	Findings
How and why are schools recruited to the LNK Educate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When LNK Educate was first rolled out, the approach to recruiting schools initially focused on where knife crime and related issues were perceived by LNK to be most prominent in Croydon. LNK approached all the schools they had previously worked in via email. It was also reported that some schools had learnt about LNK Educate by reaching out to the LNK team to see what support could be provided.</li> </ul>
How is LNK Educate implemented in practice, and what adaptations are made to delivery?	<p><b>Preparing to deliver the programme: Teachers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers deliver the universal element. To prepare teachers for this, the LNK management team and more experienced mentors provide training to the teachers, tutors and pastoral teams at the schools.</li> <li>Teachers reported that the length of the training ranged from one to three hours. Content included background information on the programme (i.e. the purpose of LNK Educate), information about knife crime, the programme’s processes and taking the teachers through the lesson resources.</li> <li>Teachers found the training clear, easy to understand, useful and interesting. They also reported that the training had increased their confidence to deliver the universal element.</li> <li>Although the training was positively received, some gaps were noted, including insufficient information on the legal aspects of knife crime. Teachers also suggested that more frequent training would be beneficial.</li> </ul> <p><b>Preparing to deliver the programme: Mentors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentors described receiving in-house training as well as training from external providers. This included training on effective mentoring skills and how to build relationships and communicate with young people effectively.</li> <li>Mentors spoke about how the training they had received helped them to feel well prepared for working with the young people.</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation of the universal element (lessons)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some young people’s accounts implied that the universal element had not always been delivered before the targeted element.</li> <li>The extent of young people’s choice to withdraw from the LNK Educate lessons varied across the schools that participated in this study.</li> <li>Some schools had been given the option of having LNK mentors sitting at the back of the classroom to support teachers or young people. In these instances, teachers reported that they valued mentors’ presence during lesson delivery.</li> <li>LNK staff, teachers and young people described LNK lessons that followed a format in line with the intended model of delivery (watching an LNK video(s) about knife crime followed by a class discussion).</li> <li>However, some variation in delivery (i.e. developing new activities for the lessons) was encouraged by LNK to allow resources to meet the needs of the young people.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Implementation of the targeted element (mentoring)</b></p> <p><i>Selecting young people for mentoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers felt that the guidance from LNK on the mentoring selection criteria provided was clear.</li> <li>• However, who selected young people for mentoring also seemed to vary. For example, in some schools, mentors worked with teachers to select young people; in others, the mentors were not involved in the selection process.</li> <li>• There were differing views among LNK staff and teachers regarding the extent of young people’s choice to receive the mentoring sessions. Some teachers described how young people were able to opt out if they did not want to be involved in the mentoring programme. In other schools, if the young person’s parent consented to their involvement, they did not have the option to opt out from mentoring.</li> </ul> <p><i>Delivering the mentoring sessions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the beginning of the mentoring process, mentors described using worksheets with their mentees to prompt discussion and build rapport with them, which is in line with the intended approach to mentoring delivery.</li> <li>• Descriptions of the mentoring format provided by teachers and mentors were largely in line with the intended delivery format as outlined in the LNK resources. However, LNK mentors also explained that the structure of each session is highly dependent on young person need, with the session structure tailored appropriately.</li> </ul> <p><i>Monitoring progress</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentors described target setting within mentoring sessions as a way of monitoring mentee progress.</li> <li>• Psychological wellbeing scales are also administered to young people at the beginning and end of the mentoring programme, which allows mentors to assess whether mentees’ wellbeing scores improved over the course the mentoring programme.</li> <li>• Mentors also described keeping weekly records from notes taken during the sessions.</li> </ul> <p><i>Implementing the targeted element (mentoring) – young people’s perspectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From young people’s accounts, the information that was shared with them in advance of the mentoring varied. It appears that not all young people received information in advance.</li> <li>• Young people’s accounts indicate some variation in the degree of choice they felt they had over whether to take part in the mentoring or not. Some spoke about how they felt they had a choice, while others reported feeling as if it had not been their decision to be mentored.</li> <li>• Mentoring sessions were described by young people as typically having a one-to-one format, lasting between 15 and 30 minutes, occurring weekly in a private and quiet room at school.</li> <li>• Young people recognised that the mentoring sessions were individualised and that they had a choice over what was discussed.</li> <li>• Action planning and monitoring progress were described as features of the sessions. Young people explained how the mentoring sessions included setting goals and targets each week. This was seen as a valuable part of the mentoring and had helped to encourage positive changes in behaviour. It was also viewed as a good way of measuring the progress that they had made.</li> </ul>
<p>What are participants’ experiences of the programme, including key facilitators and barriers to implementation and delivery?</p>	<p><b>Delivery of universal lessons – teachers’ experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers generally reflected positively on the content of the lessons and the resources provided by LNK to support delivery. The resources were considered easy to use, ‘self-explanatory’, and useful for instigating difficult conversations with pupils around knife crime.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers considered the lesson resources to be pitched at the right level for delivery to pupils. However, one of the videos was described as ‘too much’ for young people in Years 5 and 6 and more appropriate for those in Years 7 and 8.</li> <li>• Teachers typically described young people as engaged during the lessons. However, the classroom environment was noted as a barrier to engagement for young people who felt uncomfortable participating in sensitive conversations in a large group setting.</li> </ul> <p><i>Barriers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent school closures were significant barriers to lesson delivery.</li> <li>• Some teachers felt that they had limited knowledge of, and confidence in, the topic area, despite receiving the training provided by LNK.</li> <li>• Teachers noted that some lessons did not have resources provided, which meant they had to create their own.</li> </ul> <p><i>Support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers reported that LNK provided support throughout delivery, ensuring teachers felt comfortable and confident to deliver the LNK Educate content.</li> </ul> <p><b>Delivery of universal lessons – young people’s experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people enjoyed the format of the sessions. They described watching the videos as interesting, sad and upsetting. They also reflected on how the incidents portrayed in the videos impacted both the victim and perpetrator.</li> <li>• Young people found the presence of the LNK mentors during the lessons to be helpful, as they were able to answer questions where the teacher could not.</li> </ul> <p><b>Views on delivery of targeted mentoring (teachers and mentors)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers felt that young people had a good relationship with their mentors, looked forward to them coming into school and enjoyed participating in the mentoring sessions.</li> </ul> <p><i>Facilitators to delivery and engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers thought that the length of the mentoring programme (i.e. 12 months) facilitated engagement from young people because an extended period of mentoring supports rapport building and relationship building.</li> <li>• The fact that LNK is an external organisation was also identified by teachers as a facilitator of engagement. They suggested that it might be easier for young people to confide in an independent, neutral and trusted adult who can advocate for them, rather than a parent or a teacher.</li> <li>• Mentors perceived the worksheets that they use with mentees to support mentoring delivery and young person engagement, as they can be used to prompt open and transparent conversations.</li> </ul> <p><i>Barriers to delivery and young person engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COVID-19 pandemic was a barrier to mentoring delivery. In particular, the school closures meant that mentoring was paused, which mentors felt disrupted the progress they had been making with mentees.</li> <li>• Another general barrier to mentoring delivery can be the time it takes for young people to trust mentors, which can mean that they do not disclose information about problems they might be experiencing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Delivery of targeted mentoring – young people’s experiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people found their mentors to be relatable and trustworthy; they also described their mentors as caring, honest and non-judgemental as well as having a sense of humour.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people reported feeling comfortable talking to their mentor about personal issues. As part of this, young people generally trusted that the mentor would keep discussions confidential.</li> <li>• However, young people’s accounts indicate that they may have been unaware that mentors are also bound by safeguarding and disclosure policies and that there may also be limits to the level of confidentiality they can offer.</li> <li>• A range of positive feelings were reported by young people after having a mentoring session. They welcomed how sessions offer a quiet space for discussion away from the noisy classroom environment, and young people described feeling calmer, refreshed and relieved following a mentoring session.</li> </ul>
<p>What are participants’ views on the perceived impacts of the programme?</p>	<p><b>Perceived outcomes of the universal lessons on young people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LNK staff, teachers and young people all reported that an improved awareness and knowledge of knife crime, including the consequences of engaging in knife crime, is a key outcome of the programme for young people.</li> <li>• Teachers and LNK staff suggested that young people knew where to go for support following lesson delivery. Similarly, some young people described feeling more comfortable seeking support from a trusted adult (e.g. LNK mentor, teacher, parents, the police).</li> <li>• A range of positive emotional and psychological outcomes for young people following the lessons were identified, including demonstrating more empathy towards others, improved mental wellbeing and a greater ability to manage anger. Similarly, some young people fed back that the lessons had helped them to respond more rationally and level-headedly to challenging situations to maintain personal safety.</li> <li>• Improved behaviour in school, including a more respectful attitude towards teachers, was also noted following the LNK lessons.</li> </ul> <p><b>Perceived outcomes of the targeted mentoring on young people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some young people noted that their awareness of knife crime and its consequences had improved as a result of the mentoring sessions.</li> <li>• A visible improvement in self-confidence and self-belief for young people who were receiving the mentoring was highlighted by LNK staff.</li> <li>• Some teachers felt that young people had become more accountable for their actions while receiving mentoring, rather than providing external justifications for their behaviour (e.g. blaming others).</li> <li>• Young people highlighted that the mentoring had contributed to an improved emotional state for them. Some described being more comfortable expressing their feelings following the mentoring sessions and having a better awareness of how to interact with people more generally.</li> <li>• Teachers reported improved attendance and noticeable improvements in behaviour at school.</li> <li>• However, teachers noted that the outcomes were not consistently positive across all the young people receiving the mentoring. Additionally, mentors felt unable to speak to any variation in outcomes between young people who had received both the universal and targeted elements and those who had only received the universal element.</li> </ul> <p><b>Perceived impacts/outcomes for teachers and school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers reported that they felt generally more aware of knife crime and violence in the local community as a result of the programme as well as the legalities of weapon carrying.</li> <li>• Teachers described having a better understanding of the peer pressure experienced by young people. Some teachers reported that the school’s engagement with the LNK programme has enabled them to better identify young people who may be at risk of gang affiliation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LNK staff felt that teachers and schools benefitted from the mentoring sessions due to the perceived positive outcomes for young people following engagement with the programme.</li> </ul>
<p>What are the possible next steps and recommendations for delivery?</p>	<p><b>The following recommendations were derived from participants' accounts of the programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure resources are provided for all LNK Educate lessons. This will reduce additional work for teachers who otherwise have to create resources to replace those that are missing from some lesson plans.</li> <li>• Ensure that the lesson materials are age appropriate and not too sensitive or disturbing for younger age groups. This could involve adapting existing materials or developing different materials for primary and secondary school children, for example.</li> <li>• Include the presence of LNK mentors across the entirety of LNK Educate lesson delivery.</li> <li>• Make the lesson resources more accessible for those young people who have difficulty reading the text (e.g. those pupils who have special education needs or who do not speak or read English fluently).</li> <li>• Deliver more substantial mandatory training to teachers responsible for LNK Educate lesson delivery to support confidence with the lesson content. Ensure that this is delivered as refresher training on an ongoing basis for teachers.</li> <li>• Add a lesson in which young people listen to ex-gang members and hear their real-life experiences to make the content of the lessons more relatable.</li> <li>• Increase the frequency of mentoring sessions, particularly for those young people who require extra support.</li> <li>• Recruit more youth workers/mentors to ensure that LNK mentoring can be rolled out across more schools and to enable mentors to dedicate more time to each young person.</li> <li>• Include more opportunities for activities during mentoring sessions, such as art or games.</li> </ul>

## Limitations of the feasibility study

As with any research, and particularly research involving gatekeepers and organisations that are facing existing pressures, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools, this study encountered some challenges. Acknowledging these and the methodological limitations is a hallmark of high-quality research.

The key limitation for this study is that a full range of views and experiences of the LNK Educate programme may not have been captured for the reasons below.

- The findings of the feasibility study are based on a small sample of both young people and teachers; as such, the findings and conclusions are limited and should be considered in this context.
- Recruitment of teachers to take part in the discussion groups about delivering the universal element of LNK Educate was challenging due to schools and teachers having limited capacity to take part in research activities. To reduce burden of participation, individual in-depth interviews were conducted instead. Therefore, the final sample did not include as many teachers as originally intended, which consequently limited the range of views and experiences of delivering the LNK lessons captured in the sample.
- The ways in which participants were recruited to take part in the research may have resulted in a selection bias (see Chapter 3). Specifically, teachers may have selected young people who they thought would be more willing to speak to researchers or who they believed had enjoyed the programme or had shown the most progress since participating in LNK Educate. Similarly, as LNK were involved in the selection of schools, they may have approached schools that they thought would be most willing to participate.
- There was a significant gap between the delivery of the lessons and the discussion groups with young people. This may have affected young people's level of recall when they were asked to reflect on their experiences of receiving the universal element of LNK Educate. In addition, it was also difficult at times to know whether young people were referring to elements of the LNK Educate programme or LNK's wider provision, such as the workshops that they also deliver to schools.

## Implications for pilot study

### Pilot study objectives

The main objectives of the pilot are to investigate the potential of LNK Educate to reduce the risk of youth offending and identify appropriate primary outcome measures for the intervention. This will help shed light on the readiness of LNK Educate for a future trial and provide insights into how such a trial could be designed. The specific research questions addressed by the pilot study are detailed in the following chapter (Chapter 9) in which an overview of the pilot study is provided.

## **Pilot study considerations**

The original intention was to conduct a pilot study following the completion of the feasibility study. However, as noted in Chapter 3, the time frame for completing the fieldwork for the feasibility study was extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had implications for whether the pilot study could go ahead within the YEF funding period. Following a review of the feasibility work completed by the spring of 2021, the YEF made the decision that work on the pilot study could begin in June 2021. Therefore, the feasibility study continued after the pilot study had begun, and as such, suggestions for pilot study methodology are somewhat redundant. Nonetheless, a key consideration set out by the feasibility study team, which informed the planning of the pilot study, was that to be able to collect baseline data, pilot study participants should not have had any prior engagement with LNK Educate. It was suggested that this could be achieved in the following ways:

- Conducting the pilot study with specific year groups who had not yet received LNK Educate within schools that were already receiving the programme
- Conducting the pilot in new schools that had not yet received LNK Educate

In either scenario, there would be the possibility that some young people had received the programme in their primary school. Therefore, it was recommended that the pilot study team take steps to mitigate this possibility and/or identify young people who had taken part in LNK Educate lessons or mentoring.

## 9. Pilot study overview

### Introduction

The rationale for the pilot study was to build on the feasibility work carried out as detailed in the first part of this report by providing quantitative data to identify pre-post change following both the universal and targeted interventions and to establish the feasibility of carrying out an impact evaluation of the LNK Educate programme.

The pilot would typically follow on from the feasibility study, building on the evidence around how the programme is being delivered and whether it is being delivered as intended. However, as noted earlier in the report, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fieldwork for the feasibility study was delayed, and a decision was made to begin the pilot study before the feasibility study had been completed. It follows that the LNK Educate programme was delivered in the same way for both the feasibility study and pilot study.

The remaining chapters of the report present the research questions for the pilot study, describe the approach and methodology, present the findings and provide conclusions from the pilot study.

### Research questions

The pilot study sought to answer the following research questions, as outlined in the study protocol (Roberts et al., 2021):

1. Are the validated primary outcome measures selected for the universal and targeted forms of LNK Educate acceptable and feasible to collect in a future efficacy trial?
2. What is the pre-post intervention change in these outcomes?
3. How can the pilot study inform decisions on sample sizes for a potential future efficacy trial of the LNK Educate?

In addition to the three research questions outlined in the study protocol, this pilot report also explored the following questions:

4. How are young people selected for the targeted intervention? Are there any differences between young people in the targeted group vs the universal group?
5. What is the feasibility of carrying out an impact evaluation on the LNK Educate programme?
6. Using data from this pilot, how feasible is it to conduct a quasi-experimental design (QED) analysis?

The first research question involved examining the likely feasibility of collecting the primary outcomes identified for LNK Educate in a future efficacy trial of the programme. Survey attrition between baseline and endpoint is reported, alongside patterns of item-level missingness. Low levels of attrition and missingness will indicate that the measures are found to be acceptable to schools and young people. The psychometric properties of the outcome measures were also assessed. The criteria these outcome measures were assessed against are described in the next section on success criteria. This evidence will help inform choices

around whether high-quality data on these measures can be collected again in an efficacy trial or QED of the programme.

The second research question involved measuring the primary outcomes through a young person survey administered before and after the intervention. The pre-post intervention change in these outcomes was calculated, helping to illustrate the 'distance travelled' after LNK Educate, that is, whether there is evidence that outcomes change in the expected direction after the intervention. It is important to emphasise that the pilot study was not designed to identify the causal impact of LNK Educate and does not include any comparison group. Any difference in outcomes in the pre-post analysis should not be interpreted as being directly attributable to LNK Educate but instead as showing indicative evidence of promise. Analysis was conducted with and without adjustment for regression to the mean. This allowed us to rule out this statistical phenomenon as explaining any observed pre-post differences. Analysis was also conducted to explore the feasibility of a QED to evaluate the efficacy of LNK Educate. Such a study would involve comparing young people who attended only the universal element with those who received both the universal and targeted elements. In a fully powered study, this type of analysis would estimate the additional causal effect of targeted mentoring over and above exposure to the universal sessions only. In this pilot, the feasibility of the approach was explored to inform the design of a future evaluation.

The third research question ensured that the pilot study provided an opportunity to inform the sampling design of a future efficacy trial of LNK Educate. Although there was no control group, we were able to infer the likely levels of attrition and pre-post correlations on measures, both of which are important parameters when calculating sample size.

The fourth research question investigated the differences between the young people selected for mentoring and the young people taking part in just the universal intervention to more fully understand the intervention and the impact this may have on a future evaluation.

The fifth research question explored two principal impact evaluation designs – a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design and QED. Power calculations were carried out to estimate the number of schools needed to participate in an impact evaluation.

The sixth research question involved comparing young people who attended only the universal element with those who received both the universal and targeted elements to explore the feasibility of a QED for a future evaluation.

## **Success criteria and/or targets**

The aims of the pilot evaluation can be summarised as examining evidence of feasibility, evidence of promise and readiness for trial. To achieve these aims, the pilot needed to meet the following success criteria:

Evidence of promise:

- Young person pre-post change shows mean improvement (e.g. improved wellbeing, reduced emotional and behavioural difficulties, increased resilience).

Readiness for trial:

- Outcome measures show low attrition (e.g. at least 80% complete data at endpoint).

- There are no systematic issues with missing-item data, e.g. large number of participants not answering particular items.
- Outcome measures are internally valid (as determined by Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  and McDonald’s  $\omega$ ; Flora, 2020).
- Outcome measures correlate with each other in the expected direction, e.g. resilience is negatively correlated with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- There is evidence that it will be logistically possible to successfully recruit and retain a sufficient number of schools and young people and that data collection processes proposed are acceptable and implementable within schools and to participants and their families.

## Ethical review

Ethical approval was obtained from the NatCen Research Ethics Committee ahead of recruitment and pilot data collection. Full details of the consent process can be found in the ‘Recruitment of pupils/young people’ section below.

## Data protection

NatCen stored and handled all data securely and confidentially in line with the EU GDPR. Only the research team had access to the data collected as part of the pilot study. Please see ‘Data protection’ section in Chapter 2.

## Project team

**Table 7. Evaluation team (pilot study)**

Evaluation team		
Name	Title and institution	Role
Daniel Phillips	Director of the Centre for Evaluation, NatCen	Quality assurance
Dr Andi Fugard	Deputy Director of the Centre for Evaluation, NatCen	Principal investigator on pilot study. Senior oversight. Data collection, analysis and reporting.
Molly Scott	Senior Researcher	Sampling, recruitment and baseline data collection
Hannah Morgan	Senior Researcher	Endpoint data collection, data management, analysis and reporting
Elena Cossu	Senior Researcher, NatCen	QED feasibility analysis
Alessandra Sciarra	Researcher, NatCen	Analysis and reporting

## 10. Pilot study methods

### Participant selection

#### Sampling schools

LNK shared a list of schools that they planned to work with during 2021–2022 with NatCen, which included details of the schools' characteristics, such as size, perceived level of need and the school's relationship with LNK. NatCen purposively drew a sample of six from the nine schools on this list, taking into consideration the schools' previous exposure to LNK Educate and ensuring a mix of primary and secondary schools (see below for further details). LNK recruited the sampled schools to the programme, using materials produced by NatCen. Two schools dropped out of the study before data collection and were replaced by one school, resulting in five schools participating in the pilot study. In all five participating schools, survey data were collected from young people taking part in the targeted element by inviting those selected for the one-to-one mentoring to complete questionnaires. In two out of the five schools, survey data were also collected from young people who only completed the universal element. Table 8 shows the number of young people sampled across each of the five schools that took part in the pilot.

**Table 8. Number of young people sampled in each school selected for the targeted and universal interventions**

School number	Universal	Targeted	Total
School 1	0	15	15
School 2	23	7	30
School 3	0	17	17
School 4	0	24	24
School 5	89	16	105
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>191</b>

LNK shared information about the characteristics of all the schools where they planned to work in 2021–2022, and this was used to inform a provisional selection of schools. To draw the sample, the following considerations were taken into account:

- **Previous exposure to LNK:** Ideally, the evaluation would only include schools that had not previously been exposed to LNK in order to obtain a measure of young person outcomes before any experiences with LNK Educate to compare with the change after the implementation of the programme. However, LNK has worked with many of the schools in the local area, making it difficult to rule out the possibility that young people had been exposed to LNK Educate resources or mentoring. Since there was some variation in how intensely and for how long LNK worked with each school, the two schools with the least previous exposure to LNK Educate were prioritised for the sub-sample of schools where the universal element was assessed.
- **A mix of primary and secondary schools:** This reflects the mix of schools where LNK works. The original chosen sample contained two primary and four secondary schools. Two secondary schools dropped out and were replaced by one other secondary school, meaning that the final sample contained two primary schools and three secondary schools.

- **A mix of other characteristics:** Finally, the sample included schools of different sizes and with varying levels of perceived need for the intervention. LNK provided information about perceived need and school sizes to help inform this choice.

## **Recruitment of schools**

NatCen worked with LNK to recruit the sampled schools into the study. NatCen produced an information sheet for schools containing key details about the study. A copy can be found in Technical Appendix N. The information sheet included details of the planned data collection, timescales, the information that participating schools will be asked to share with NatCen and other key details such as the data archiving and linkage plans. The recruitment materials also included NatCen contact details and a link to the study privacy notice on the NatCen website. The LNK Educate project manager was responsible for sending this sheet to sampled schools.

If schools were happy to participate, they were asked to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and return it to LNK (see Technical Appendix O). Schools had an opportunity to ask any questions before signing the MoU. LNK sent NatCen the list of schools who returned an MoU via NatCen's secure FTP. The signed MoU included the name, work email and phone number of the LNK school lead who would be a single point of contact at the school.

Two of the six original sampled schools declined to participate due to the data archiving requirement. They were not prepared for young people's/pupils' names and unique pupil numbers (UPNs) to be shared with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the longer-term archive. As this was a requirement of the evaluation, these schools were not able to participate in the LNK Educate programme at all. The two schools that dropped out were replaced by another school that was recruited to the trial. This led to a delay in being able to collect baseline data in the replacement school. Baseline data were collected in January 2022, and the programme started shortly afterwards, meaning that there was a delay to the roll-out of the programme of approximately two months within the replacement school. This meant young people receiving the targeted mentoring were supported for less time, and there was less time for the pilot to reveal evidence of promise in the replacement school.

## **Sampling pupils/young people**

The young people participating in the pilot study were in Year 6 to Year 11 since the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is not validated for younger children (i.e. those in Year 5). In each school, all young people selected for the targeted element were invited to complete the baseline and endpoint surveys. The number of young people taking part in the pilot study who were selected for mentoring varied between seven and 24 pupils per sampled school.<sup>44</sup>

For the two schools where the universal element was also assessed, one class per participating year group was invited to complete the baseline and endpoint surveys. This was to minimise burden on participating schools and remain within the evaluation budget. Note that some of the pupils within these two schools

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<sup>44</sup> The number of young people who can receive mentoring in each school aligns with the number of mentors working in the school. Each mentor works with a maximum of eight young people per school.

were also selected for the targeted mentoring and already provided data for that element of the programme. This report analyses young people who received the targeted intervention separately to those who **only** received the universal intervention.

### **Recruitment of pupils/young people**

Young person and parent information sheets were produced by NatCen and distributed by the LNK leads in each school. These included information about:

- Key research activities.
- The voluntary nature of taking part.
- What will be shared with NatCen.
- Reassurances around confidentiality and anonymity.
- NatCen contact details.
- A link to the study privacy notice.

The information sheet for parents and carers included, in addition to the above, an accessible description of what data linkage will entail so that parents understand what happens to the information collected from their children. A copy of the pupil/young person information sheet can be found in Technical Appendix P.

LNK school leads/key contacts were responsible for distributing information sheets to pupils and their parents/carers. After receiving information sheets, pupils and their parents/carers were given two weeks to withdraw from the evaluation by contacting the LNK Educate lead at the school. If pupils withdrew from the study, questionnaire data were not collected, and neither the school nor LNK shared any information with NatCen about these pupils.

### **Data collection**

#### **Outcome measures**

Table 9 shows an overview of the data collected and the outcomes and research questions that these mapped onto.

**Table 9. Methods overview**

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/data sources	Data analysis method	Research questions addressed
Descriptive statistics to analyse patterns of missingness	Baseline and endpoint surveys <sup>45</sup>	175 young people taking the baseline survey and 149 young people taking the endpoint survey	Frequencies to assess patterns of missingness	Are the validated primary outcome measures selected for the universal and targeted forms of LNK Educate acceptable and feasible to collect in a future efficacy trial?
Psychometric analysis of outcome measures	Baseline survey	175 young people taking part in baseline survey	Cronbach's $\alpha$ and McDonald's $\omega$	Are the validated primary outcome measures selected for the universal and targeted forms of LNK Educate acceptable and feasible to collect in a future efficacy trial?
Descriptive differences between the targeted and universal groups at baseline	Baseline survey	175 young people taking part in baseline survey	Descriptive statistics	How are young people selected for the targeted intervention?
Pre-post analysis	Baseline and endpoint surveys	149 young people participating in LNK Educate and completing both baseline and endpoint surveys	Pre-post analysis of the main outcome variables, with and without adjustment for regression to the mean	What is the pre-post intervention change in these outcomes?
Establish the feasibility of a full efficacy trial using a QED	Baseline and endpoint surveys	149 young people participating in LNK Educate and completing both baseline and endpoint surveys	Propensity score weighting using overlap weights	How feasible is a possible QED for a future efficacy study?
Power calculations to determine the sample size for a potential full evaluation	Baseline and endpoint surveys. Literature on effect sizes and intra-cluster correlation coefficients (ICCs) for similar programmes.	175 young people taking the baseline survey and 149 young people taking the endpoint survey	Power calculations	How can the pilot study inform decisions on sample sizes for a potential future efficacy trial of LNK Educate?

A desk review investigated a range of available scales that had been used in other literature. Outcome measures were appraised in relation to:

- Prior evidence on validity and reliability.

<sup>45</sup> Baseline and endpoint surveys contained SDQ and SRS measures.

- Questionnaire length.
- Their suitability for the target age group for LNK Educate.
- Their relevance to the outcomes in the LNK logic model.

Outcome measures were decided in consultation with YEF. An important factor that guided the choice was a YEF requirement for all evaluations (where possible) to capture data on a consistent set of core measures. This helps fulfil wider YEF objectives around building a repository of data on a consistent set of measures, which can be linked to other criminal justice and education datasets to help understand the longer-term impact of interventions.

Evidence collected from the desk review and consultation with YEF led to the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) and selected subscales of the Student Resilience Survey (SRS; Lereya, Humphrey & Patalay, 2016; Sun & Stewart, 2007) being chosen as the primary outcome measures for the pilot study. The need to collect data on a measure more directly relevant to knife crime was also identified; however, no suitable existing validated measure was found during the desk review.

The SDQ is an emotional and behavioural screening measure for young people covering five subscales, each resulting in a total score of 0–10: (1) emotional symptoms, (2) conduct problems, (3) hyperactivity/inattention, (4) peer relationships, (5) prosocial behaviour. Both self-report and parent- and teacher-reported versions of the SDQ are available; the self-report version consisting of 25 items was used for this pilot. The SDQ is one of the YEF’s core measures and has shown good psychometric properties, and the psychometrics of the SDQ are rated as 4/5 stars on the Education Endowment Foundation’s Spectrum database (EEF, 2022). SDQ measures have good internal consistency shown through Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ , although the peer problems subscale has  $\alpha < .60$ , indicating that the items are not sufficiently correlated with one another. The SDQ shows good test-retest reliability and long-term stability (YEF, 2022).<sup>46</sup> In the interests of keeping the pupil/young person survey to a manageable length, the SDQ impact supplement was not administered.

The SRS is a multidimensional measure of resilience, which has also been previously validated (Lereya et al., 2016). It contains 12 subscales relating to different aspects of resilience.<sup>47</sup> For the pilot study, an adapted version for use in English schools proposed by Lereya et al. (2016) was used, and a subset of these subscales was selected in order to minimise the burden of questionnaire data collection. The subscales that are most

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46 Note that the SDQ self-report version has been validated for 11–17-year-olds. The minimum age of children in our study is 10 years old. The YEF Guidance on administering the SDQ (YEF, 2021a) notes that the SDQ developers have advised that the suitability of the SDQ is more closely related to the developmental life stage of children than their chronological age, and as such, ‘it may be suitable to use the 11–17-year-old version with 10-year-olds’ (YEF, 2021a, pg. 7). We have discussed this issue with the YEF in the preparation of this protocol and agreed that it is suitable to administer the self-report version of the SDQ for our cohort in this study, including 10-year-olds.

47 The adapted version for use in English schools involved minor adjustments to the wording of four items and the omission of one item. The subscales of the SRS not included in the pilot were: family connection, community connection, peer relationship, participation in community life, communication.

closely linked to the outcomes articulated in the LNK logic model (see Chapter 7) for the targeted component were chosen. The subscales selected and the range of possible scores for each are shown below:

- Self-esteem: 3–15
- Empathy: 2–10
- Problem-solving: 3–15
- Goals and aspirations: 2–10
- Peer support: 12–60
- School connection: 4–20
- Participation in home and school life: 4–20

The combination of SDQ and these subscales of the SRS complement each other. The SDQ focuses on mental health difficulties, and the subscales of SRS focus on changes in more specific aspects of individual resilience and wellbeing that the targeted element of LNK seeks to promote. The SRS measures of participation in school and community life and goals and aspirations correlate weakly with many of the SDQ scores, so these will add new information to the study. Full SDQ and SRS measures can be found in Technical Appendix Q.

The LNK Educate logic model anticipates different outcomes for young people taking part in the universal and targeted elements (see Chapter 7). The SDQ and SRS measures are more relevant for evaluating the targeted element, which focuses on improving individuals' ability to understand and manage their emotions. They are less relevant measures for the universal element, which seeks to influence young people's understanding and perceptions of knife crime and awareness of their rights and responsibilities. However, the desk review found no alternative validated measures that would have been a closer fit for the universal element.

After discussion with YEF, it was decided to use SDQ and SRS to assess both elements of the programme. This has the advantage of allowing for the investigation of the feasibility of a quasi-experimental methodology for a future efficacy trial, based on comparing findings across the two groups. This would not have been possible if different outcome measures had been used to assess each element.

Qualitative evidence on the experience of the universal element was gathered as part of the feasibility study fieldwork. The feasibility work explored whether participants experienced any changes in their knowledge or attitudes around knife crime after attending these sessions and can be drawn upon to better understand the universal element of the programme.

#### **Data collection: Pre- and post-intervention pupil/young person survey**

After recruitment was completed, participating young people were invited to take part in a survey by completing a questionnaire at two time points: first before the LNK Educate intervention began (baseline) and again at the end of the first year of intervention delivery (endpoint). In addition to the primary outcomes outlined above, questionnaires also included demographic information (ethnicity, year group and date of birth) and information about participation in the intervention. Gender of pupil and UPN were provided in the completed pupil information forms by the school.

The questionnaires were completed by young people using pen and paper. Teachers and LNK mentors were responsible for overseeing the data collection. Their role involved distributing the paper questionnaires, giving young people a brief introduction before they started to fill in the questionnaires, overseeing the completion of the questionnaires and collecting them up again at the end.

The introduction given to pupils by teachers and LNK mentors explained the purpose of the exercise to young people and emphasised that completion of the questionnaire is voluntary and that their responses will be kept confidential. The teacher or LNK mentor also asked young people to work quietly and not discuss their answers with others. They offered to answer questions if something on the questionnaire was not clear. Teachers and LNK mentors were responsible for noting any young people who had previously opted out of participating in the study and making sure that they were not invited to fill out the questionnaire.

NatCen generated a list of unique identifiers for teachers to assign to each young person, which were used to link pre- and post-intervention questionnaire responses. The teachers and LNK mentors were also responsible for asking young people to enter their assigned ID at the top of the questionnaire form each time the questionnaire was completed. Teachers and LNK mentors received a short briefing by NatCen before the start of data collection to discuss the whole data collection process and answer any questions.

The baseline survey data were collected in November 2021 in four of the five schools before the LNK Educate programme was implemented. Baseline data for young people in the universal element sub-sample were collected before the start of the first LNK workshop at the school, while the data for the targeted element were collected at the start of the first mentoring session. In the one replacement school, baseline data were collected in January 2022. Endpoint data collection with the same young people in all five participating schools took place in June 2022.

### **Data collection for archive and long-term data linkage**

It is a requirement of YEF projects that data collected are securely archived for future research purposes, where it will be linked with education and criminal justice data. NatCen asked schools to provide the UPN of each pupil taking part in the study to allow data to be linked.

This was done by sharing a template containing a list of unique project identifiers (LNK numbers) with schools. Schools populated this template with the details of pupils who were taking part in the programme, collecting name, gender, UPN and whether the pupil was part of the targeted intervention. The LNK number was also used to link the pre-post intervention outcomes together.

LNK acted as the gatekeeper for sending this template to schools and collecting it again before securely transferring the completed templates back to NatCen.

### **Collecting data on participation in LNK activities**

The baseline questionnaire asked two questions to collect data on whether young people had previously engaged in LNK activities:

- **Last school year** (when you were in the year below), did you go to a special lesson at school where your teacher, or someone else, talked about **issues to do with knife crime**? This lesson might have included watching videos about knife crime.

- If you answered 'Yes' to the last question:

Did the lesson mention an organisation called 'Lives Not Knives' (LNK)? For example, you might have seen a video created by them.

## **Analysis**

### **Cleaning and data preparation**

Data from the paper questionnaires were entered by coders in NatCen's data team. The data were entered into a bespoke data entry program and exported into SPSS. Coders added remarks detailing where answers were unclear or missing, for example, where multiple options were chosen for a single-code question.

Before starting the analysis, sample information was matched from the pupil information forms provided by schools. This included the variables of pupil gender and whether they were in the targeted or universal intervention group. Data were inspected by running descriptive statistics, investigating any logical inconsistencies or missing fields and ensuring the data were in the right structure and properly labelled ready for analysis. Simple descriptive statistics were produced to describe the key features of the sample, focusing on demographic characteristics and information about how many young people participated in the intervention elements.

### **Assessing the suitability of outcome measures**

One of the key research questions for the pilot study is to determine whether the selected primary outcome measures are suitable for use in a full efficacy trial. To do so, data quality was investigated by looking at the level of missingness of key variables such as demographic variables, SDQ and SRS scales, and experience of LNK. In the case of missing values in the young person questionnaire data, prorating was conducted. If a young person missed up to 20% of the items in a subscale, the mean of the observed item scores was calculated and prorated for the missing items. If a young person missed more than 20% of the items in a given subscale, the mean prorating was not followed, and the subscale score was not calculated.

Data quality was also assessed by checking that the scores of the subscales correlated with each other in the expected direction; e.g. resilience is negatively correlated with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Moreover, the internal validity and reliability of subscores were measured by calculating both Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and McDonald's  $\omega$ .

### **Estimating pre-post change in outcomes**

Pre-post differences were calculated for each SRS/SDQ subscore by subtracting the baseline score from the endpoint score. Mean pre-post differences were calculated for all young people who completed both a baseline and endpoint questionnaire ( $n = 149$ ) and a paired samples t-test used to show whether any of the differences were statistically significant.

This analysis was conducted both with and without adjustments for regression to the mean. Regression to the mean is a common statistical artefact. In pre-post studies, it occurs when the test-retest reliability of a measure is less than one (i.e. usually), the pre-score mean is far from the population mean (e.g. because participants were selected for a targeted intervention because they have high scores), but there is no true

change. Since the measure is not perfectly reliable, some variation is due to chance, and some scores that are particularly far from the mean are likely there due to chance. This means that the post-score is more likely to be closer to the mean since scores closer to the mean are generally more likely. Failure to adjust for regression to the mean can lead to this statistical artefact being mistakenly attributed to intervention impact. The adjustments proposed by Mee and Chua (1991) were used to account for this. Note that this adjustment will not account for other non-intervention and non-regression sources of change.

Finally, the analysis explored whether student demographic characteristics and prior exposure to LNK activities help to explain any of the variance in outcomes by including these as covariates in our analysis.

### **Comparing young people who were selected for targeted mentoring with those who were not**

Additional analysis was conducted to explore the feasibility of a possible quasi-experimental approach that could be implemented in a future evaluation of LNK. This involved comparing young people who attended only the universal element with those who received both the universal and targeted elements. In fully powered studies, this type of analysis would help us to understand the additional effect of targeted mentoring over and above exposure to the universal sessions only.

This analysis involved first dividing our sample into young people who only attended the universal element and those who were also exposed to the targeted element. As shown in the sampling section above (Table 8), we have data on universal-only young people in two out of five schools and data on the targeted-element young people in all five schools.

Propensity score weighting was then used to construct a comparison group of young people in the universal-only sample who had similar pre-intervention SDQ and SRS scores and demographic characteristics to those in the targeted sub-sample and who were in the same school year. This was done using overlap weights, which allow an estimation of impact for pupils for whom we estimate that there was decisional equipoise concerning whether they should receive mentoring; that is, young people's characteristics meant that they had a roughly 50-50 chance of being invited to take part in mentoring versus only the universal intervention (Li & Greene, 2019).

Note that the pilot study is not fully powered to enable this quasi-experimental assessment to estimate a causal impact of mentoring. However, we used this opportunity to explore the possibility of conducting such analysis in the future by assessing the degree to which there is likely to be sufficient overlap between mentored and universal-only groups in the variables that would be used for weighting. The average difference in outcomes between these two groups of similar young people was also compared to supplement pre-post evidence of promise. More details on the weighting method can be found in Technical Appendix R.

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and pre-post analysis were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, and McDonald's  $\omega$  and propensity weighting were conducted in R version 4.1.0.

### **Timeline**

Table 10 shows the timeline of the pilot study. Baseline data were collected from the four original schools in November 2021. The replacement school was recruited in January 2022, and baseline data were also

collected at this time. All schools completed the endpoint data collection in June 2022. This means the data analysed covers two different time periods for the four original schools and the one replacement school.

**Table 10. Timeline**

Date	Activity
September–October 2021	Schools recruited to pilot study
November 2021	Baseline data collection carried out
January 2022	Replacement school recruited to the pilot study
January 2022	Baseline data collection carried out in replacement school
March–May 2022	Baseline data analysed
June 2022	Endpoint data collection carried out
July–September 2022	Endpoint data analysed
October 2022	Produce combined feasibility and pilot study report
November 2022–June 2023	Review process

## 11. Pilot study findings

### Participants

This section will address the following research questions:

**Research question 1:** Are the validated primary outcome measures selected for the universal and targeted forms of LNK Educate acceptable and feasible to collect in a future efficacy trial?

**Research question 4:** How are young people selected for the targeted intervention? Are there any differences between young people in the targeted group vs the universal group?

A total of 175 out of the 191 young people sampled completed the baseline survey, representing a baseline response rate of 91.6%. Table 11 shows the response to the baseline and endpoint surveys across each school and split by number of young people in the targeted and universal elements. Of the 175 young people, 77 (44.0%) were part of the targeted element of the programme and 98 (56.0%) received only the universal element. At endpoint, a total of 158 young people completed the survey; however, nine of these young people had not completed the survey at baseline so will not be included in any of the analysis in this report.

Overall, a total of 149 young people completed the survey at both time points. Of the 149 young people, 60 (40.3%) were part of the targeted element and 89 (59.7%) received the universal element only. This represents a response to the endpoint survey of 85.1%, which is above the measure of success criteria of 80%.

**Table 11. Sample achieved at baseline and endpoint, by school and selection to targeted intervention**

School	Baseline					Baseline and endpoint				
	Universal		Targeted		Total	Universal		Targeted		Total
	n	%	n	%		n	%	n	%	
School 1	0	0.0%	15	100.0%	15	0	0.0%	14	100.0%	14
School 2	23	76.7%	7	23.3%	30	23	79.3%	6	20.7%	29
School 3	0	0.0%	15	100.0%	15	0	0.0%	10	100.0%	10
School 4	0	0.0%	24	100.0%	24	0	0.0%	18	100.0%	18
School 5	75	82.4%	16	17.6%	91	66	84.6%	12	15.4%	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>56.0%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>44.0%</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>149</b>

### Demographic variables: Year group and ethnicity and date of birth

The demographic variables collected from the questionnaire were date of birth, year group and ethnicity. Table 12 summarises the patterns of missingness across these variables at baseline and endpoint.

Participants were asked to select only one ethnicity (which included mixed ethnicities); however, at baseline, 28 participants selected more than one option, and at endpoint, 11 selected more than one option. These cases are included in Table 12 as 'unable to code'. This may have been due to young people who identified with more than one ethnicity, choosing all that applied to them. If this measure were to be used again, it would be worth revising to make it clear that respondents should only choose one option.

Two young people did not answer the question on ethnicity at baseline, while 12 did not answer it at endpoint. There were also some discrepancies between the ethnicities collected at endpoint and those recorded at baseline. For the analysis, we decided to use those collected at endpoint.

At baseline, 18 young people out of 175 did not provide their date of birth, and two provided an answer that was unable to be coded. At endpoint, only one young person did not provide their date of birth.

**Table 12. Missing and valid demographics at baseline and endpoint**

	Baseline (n = 175)			Endpoint (n = 149)		
	Valid n(%)	Missing n(%)	Unable to code n(%)	Valid n(%)	Missing n(%)	Unable to code n(%)
Date of birth	155 (88.6)	18 (10.3)	2 (1.1)	148 (99.3)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)
Year group	174 (99.4)	1 (0.6)	0 (0)	149 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Ethnicity	144 (82.3)	3 (1.7)	28 (16.0)	137 (91.9)	1 (0.7)	11 (7.4)
Gender	175 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	149 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Selected for targeted mentoring	175 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	149 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Table 13 shows the differences in gender and ethnicity of young people completing the survey at endpoint across the universal and targeted groups. Boys were over-represented in the targeted element, making up over three quarters of this group (76.7%) compared to 59.7% of the total sample. White British pupils were under-represented in the targeted group, making up 10% of this group compared to 30.9% of the total sample. Black African pupils and Black Caribbean pupils were over-represented in the targeted mentoring group, making up 11.7% and 20.0% of this group, respectively, compared to 6.0% and 12.1% of the total sample.

The target age for both the universal and targeted elements of LNK Educate is primarily age 9–14 (Year 5 to Year 9); however, most of the young people taking part in the pilot study were in Year 6 to Year 9. Year 5 pupils were not included in the pilot study due to the SDQ not being validated with this age group. A small number of young people (12) taking part in the pilot were in Year 10 or Year 11 (aged 14–16).

**Table 13. Gender, ethnicity and year group of pupils/young people taking part in baseline and endpoint**

	Universal		Targeted		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Gender</i>						
Boys	43	48.3%	46	76.7%	89	59.7%
Girls	46	51.7%	14	23.3%	60	40.3%
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
White British (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish)	40	44.9%	6	10.0%	46	30.9%
White Gypsy or Irish traveller	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	1	0.7%
Any other White background	5	5.6%	8	13.3%	13	8.7%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean	8	9.0%	7	11.7%	15	10.1%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Black African	1	1.1%	3	5.0%	4	2.7%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Asian	1	1.1%	2	3.3%	3	2.0%
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	5	5.6%	4	6.7%	9	6.0%
Asian Indian	2	2.2%	0	0.0%	2	1.3%
Asian Pakistani	4	4.5%	0	0.0%	4	2.7%
Chinese	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.7%
Any other Asian background	4	4.5%	1	1.7%	5	3.4%
Black African	2	2.2%	7	11.7%	9	6.0%
Black Caribbean	6	6.7%	12	20.0%	18	12.1%
Any other Black background	0	0.0%	3	5.0%	3	2.0%
Other ethnic group	2	2.2%	2	3.3%	4	2.7%
Unable to code	7	7.9%	4	6.7%	11	7.4%
Refused	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.7%
<i>Year group</i>						
6	23	25.8%	21	35.0%	44	29.5%
7	26	29.2%	5	8.3%	31	20.8%
8	20	22.5%	8	13.3%	28	18.8%
9	20	22.5%	11	18.3%	31	20.8%
10	0	0.0%	12	20.0%	12	8.1%
11	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	2	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>		<b>60</b>		<b>149</b>	

### Differences in SDQ and SRS scores

Table 14 shows a comparison of the mean SDQ scores between young people selected for targeted mentoring and those who were not. Those selected for targeted mentoring had significantly higher scores on the conduct problems and hyperactivity/inattention subscales and significantly lower scores on prosocial behaviour subscales. This is in line with what we might expect given that young people are selected for the targeted mentoring due to their higher risk of school exclusion. Young people who were selected for targeted mentoring had significantly lower scores on the emotional symptoms subscale than those who were not. This can in part be explained by the over-representation of boys in the targeted mentoring group (see Table 13), as boys tend to score lower on this subscale than girls. Gender differences across the SDQ measures are presented in Tables 1 and 2 in Technical Appendix S and show that girls tend to score much higher on the emotional symptoms score than boys. These tables also show that when looking at the scores of boys only, there is no significant difference in emotional symptoms scores between the targeted and

universal groups. However, girls in the universal group tended to score significantly higher on the emotional symptoms score than girls in the targeted group. We do not have an explanation for this difference, so this could be due to type I error.

**Table 14. SDQ subscale mean scores – baseline data**

Was pupil/young person selected for targeted mentoring?	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	P value	Cohen's d	
Emotional symptoms*	No	95	4.23	2.77	-3.891	<.001	-0.559
	Yes	74	2.80	2.02			
	All	169	3.60	2.56			
Conduct problems*	No	97	2.41	1.91	4.696	<.001	0.699
	Yes	75	4.00	2.40			
	All	172	3.10	2.27			
Hyperactivity/inattention*	No	97	4.71	2.44	3.244	.002	0.483
	Yes	75	5.89	2.32			
	All	172	5.23	2.45			
Peer problems	No	95	2.20	1.71	1.897	.056	0.294
	Yes	76	2.74	1.93			
	All	171	2.44	1.83			
Prosocial behaviour*	No	97	7.42	1.77	-2.537	.010	-0.392
	Yes	76	6.64	2.16			
	All	173	7.08	1.99			
Total difficulties score	No	93	13.55	6.39	1.929	.058	0.296
	Yes	73	15.38	5.83			
	All	166	14.36	6.20			

*\*Statistically significant difference at  $p < .05$  using a t-test, uncorrected for multiple comparisons*

The baseline mean SDQ scores for both the targeted and universal groups were all fairly low, falling either within the ‘close to average’ or the ‘slightly raised/slightly lowered’ category.<sup>48</sup> This suggests that in general, the mean scores were generally fairly close to average, even among the targeted group that may have thought to have been more likely to score higher across these measures. Table 15 shows the distribution of total difficulties score across the various bands, comparing targeted and universal groups. Almost three in 10 (28.8%) pupils in the targeted group scored in the ‘very high’ group compared to 17% of the pupils in the universal sample.

<sup>48</sup> See SDQ website for information on the scoring bands: <https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/c0.py>

**Table 15. Distribution of pupils across SDQ bands for total difficulties score at baseline**

SDQ band	All pupils (%)	Targeted (%)	Universal (%)
Close to average – 0 to 13	45.2	39.7	49.5
Slightly raised – 14 to 16	20.5	17.8	22.6
High – 17 to 19	12.0	13.7	10.8
Very high – 20 to 40	22.3	28.8	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>93</b>

However, the mean scores across both the targeted and universal groups did tend to be higher (or lower in the case of the prosocial score) than the population norms. Table 16 shows the mean SDQ scores for the targeted and universal groups compared to the population means from the Mental Health of Children and Young People follow-up survey (2020–2021) (NHS Digital, 2020).

**Table 16. SDQ subscales for targeted, universal and general population**

		N	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	Cohen's d**
Emotional symptoms	Universal	95	4.23	0.28	2.77	0.61
	Targeted	74	2.80	0.23	2.02	0.12
	Population mean*	1,308	2.47	0.08	2.87	
Conduct problems	Universal	97	2.41	0.19	1.91	0.54
	Targeted	75	4.00	0.28	2.40	1.35
	Population mean*	1,308	1.35	0.05	1.96	
Hyperactivity/inattention	Universal	97	4.71	0.25	2.44	0.42
	Targeted	75	5.89	0.27	2.32	0.83
	Population mean*	1,308	3.50	0.08	2.88	
Peer problems	Universal	95	2.20	0.18	1.71	0.06
	Targeted	76	2.74	0.22	1.93	0.29
	Population mean*	1,308	2.05	0.07	2.38	
Prosocial behaviour	Universal	97	7.42	0.18	1.77	-0.27
	Targeted	76	6.64	0.25	2.16	-0.62
	Population mean*	1,308	8.03	0.06	2.23	
Total difficulties score	Universal	93	13.55	0.66	6.39	0.52
	Targeted	73	15.38	0.68	5.83	0.75

	Population mean*	1,308	9.36	0.22	8.03	
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\*Population mean taken from Mental Health Survey of Children and Young People in England 2021 follow-up survey

\*\*Cohen's d shows the standardised mean difference between the universal/targeted samples and the population mean.

Table 17 shows the mean SRS scores of young people selected for targeted mentoring and those in the universal-only group. Young people who were selected for mentoring had a statistically significantly higher mean score on the self-esteem subscale; however, once gender is taken into account, there are no significant differences between the mean scores of each group (see Technical Appendix S for full tables).

Young people who were selected for mentoring had a statistically significantly lower mean score on the empathy subscale than pupils who were not. When looking at the scores between the groups for boys only, this difference remained with a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.56). When comparing the scores of girls who had been selected for mentoring with girls who had not been selected, there were no statistically significant differences across any of the SRS variables. Technical Appendix S contains tables showing baseline differences between the targeted and universal groups among boys and girls.

**Table 17. SRS subscale mean scores – baseline data**

Was pupil/young person selected for targeted mentoring?		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	P value	Cohen's d
School connection	No	93	14.65	4.00	-0.534	0.594	-0.08
	Yes	75	14.97	3.92			
	All	168	14.79	3.95			
Participation in home and school life	No	93	11.57	3.45	-1.663	0.098	-0.26
	Yes	71	12.52	3.86			
	All	164	11.98	3.65			
Peer support	No	95	45.93	9.92	-0.909	0.365	-0.14
	Yes	75	47.31	9.72			
	All	170	46.54	9.82			
Self-esteem*	No	92	10.95	2.16	-2.115	0.036	-0.33
	Yes	70	11.63	1.86			
	All	162	11.24	2.06			
Empathy*	No	92	8.07	1.62	3.663	<0.001	0.59
	Yes	68	6.94	2.12			
	All	160	7.59	1.92			
Problem-solving	No	85	9.61	3.09	0.114	0.909	0.02

	Yes	72	9.56	3.06			
	All	157	9.59	3.07			
Goals and aspirations	No	92	7.83	2.06	-1.055	0.293	-0.17
	Yes	73	8.15	1.84			
	All	165	7.97	1.96			

*\*Statistically significant difference at  $p < .05$  using a  $t$ -test, uncorrected for multiple comparisons*

Table 18 shows the mean SRS scores for the targeted and universal groups compared to population means taken from data collected in 2015 from children who were part of the HeadStart project (Lereya et al., 2016).<sup>49</sup> Scores from the pupils in both the targeted and universal groups tended to be lower than the mean scores from the population.

**Table 18. SRS subscales for targeted and universal groups at baseline and general population**

		N	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	Cohen's $d^{**}$
School connection	Universal	93	14.65	0.41	4.00	-0.21
	Targeted	75	14.97	0.45	3.92	-0.13
	Population mean*	7,332	15.51	0.05	4.07	
Participation in home and school life	Universal	93	11.57	0.36	3.45	-0.60
	Targeted	71	12.52	0.46	3.86	-0.35
	Population mean*	7,288	13.80	0.04	3.70	
Peer support	Universal	95	45.93	1.02	9.92	-0.36
	Targeted	75	47.31	1.12	9.72	-0.22
	Population mean*	7,052	49.57	0.12	10.24	
Self-esteem	Universal	92	10.95	0.23	2.16	-0.43
	Targeted	70	11.63	0.22	1.86	-0.16
	Population mean*	7,358	12.05	0.03	2.57	

<sup>49</sup> HeadStart is a National Lottery-funded programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It aims to explore and test new ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10–16 and prevent serious mental health issues from developing. The HeadStart data used for this study is taken from phase two of the programme, in which 12 partnerships from across England were funded to develop local strategies to 'test and learn' a whole-system approach looking at how a young person's interaction with school, family, community and culture can influence their mental wellbeing. The final evaluation of HeadStart will be completed in mid-2023.

Empathy	Universal	92	8.07	0.17	1.62	-0.10
	Targeted	68	6.94	0.26	2.12	-0.71
	Population mean*	7,391	8.26	0.02	1.86	
Problem-solving	Universal	85	9.61	0.34	3.09	-0.47
	Targeted	72	9.56	0.36	3.06	-0.48
	Population mean*	7,314	11.16	0.04	3.31	
Goals and aspirations	Universal	92	7.83	0.21	2.06	-0.29
	Targeted	73	8.15	0.22	1.84	-0.12
	Population mean*	7,324	8.37	0.02	1.89	

\*Population mean taken from data collected in 2015 from children who were part of the HeadStart project (Lereya et al., 2016)

\*\*Cohen's *d* shows the standardised mean difference between the universal/targeted samples and the population mean.

## Evaluation feasibility

### Psychometric properties

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and McDonald's  $\omega$  were used to assess the reliability of the subscales for SDQ and SRS. These coefficients aim to estimate how well an observed test score measures a construct, given that measurement error produces biased estimates of the associations among constructs that observed variables represent (Bland & Altman, 1997; Flora, 2020).

Table 19 presents Cronbach's  $\alpha$  based on standardised items and McDonald's  $\omega$ .

**Table 19. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and McDonald's  $\omega$**

SDQ	$\alpha$	$\omega$
Emotional symptoms	0.74	0.71
Conduct problem	0.70	0.71
Hyperactivity/inattention	0.74	0.75
Peer relationship problems	0.53	0.53
Prosocial behaviour	0.70	0.71
SRS	$\alpha$	$\omega$
School connection	0.83	0.83
Participation in home and school life	0.80	0.81
Peer support	0.92	0.92
Self-esteem	0.64	0.65
Empathy	0.72	0.73
Problem-solving	0.73	0.74

Goals and aspirations	0.68	0.68
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Alpha ranges between 0.68 and 0.92, indicating that the SDQ and SRS subscales are reliable in measuring the constructs of reference. However, the  $\alpha$  for the SDQ peer relationship problems is 0.53, which suggests low reliability for the measure of that construct. This low reliability aligns with previous studies (e.g. He et al., 2013).

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  has been criticised since it assumes that all items have the same correlation with the underlying latent construct being measured, so we also calculated McDonald's  $\omega$ , which allows the item–construct correlations to vary (Flora, 2020). There are several ways to calculate McDonald's  $\omega$ , depending on the latent structure (e.g. unidimensional, multidimensional) and the results of the factor analysis for each subscale. In this case, the calculation was conducted by assuming that each subscale of SDQ and SRS is unidimensional, with one factor for each subscale. The factor analysis and the  $\omega$  for each subscale were calculated using the *omega* function of the Psych package in R Studio (R Core Team, 2022).

The values for  $\omega$  echo those for  $\alpha$ . Again, all are reliable except for SDQ peer relationship problems, which is 0.53.

### Correlations between outcome variables

Table 20 presents a correlation matrix among the main outcome variables of SDQ and SRS at baseline. The SDQ subscales emotional symptoms, conduct problem, hyperactivity/inattention and peer relationship problems correlate positively with each other but negatively with the subscale prosocial behaviour. Where correlations are statistically significant, SRS subscales correlate negatively with SDQ subscales, except for prosocial behaviour, while they correlate positively among each other. This pattern of correlations suggests that the measures were completed accurately in this sample.

**Table 20. Correlation matrix for SDQ and SRS measures at baseline**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>1. Emotional symptoms</b>	1												
<b>2. Conduct problem</b>	.13	1											
<b>3. Hyperactivity/inattention</b>	.18 <sup>*</sup>	.53 <sup>**</sup>	1										
<b>4. Peer relationship problems</b>	.34 <sup>**</sup>	.24 <sup>**</sup>	.19 <sup>*</sup>	1									
<b>5. Prosocial behaviour</b>	.04	-.49 <sup>**</sup>	-.34 <sup>**</sup>	.04	1								
<b>6. Total difficulties score</b>	.64 <sup>**</sup>	.72 <sup>**</sup>	.72 <sup>**</sup>	.62 <sup>**</sup>	-.30 <sup>**</sup>	1							
<b>7. School connection</b>	-.07	-.24 <sup>**</sup>	-.19 <sup>*</sup>	.05	.46 <sup>**</sup>	-.20 <sup>*</sup>	1						
<b>8. Participation in home and school life</b>	-.13	-.11	-.28 <sup>**</sup>	.07	.35 <sup>**</sup>	-.21 <sup>*</sup>	.45 <sup>**</sup>	1					
<b>9. Peer support</b>	-.20 <sup>*</sup>	-.15	-.01	-.40 <sup>**</sup>	.10	-.26 <sup>**</sup>	.18 <sup>*</sup>	.23 <sup>**</sup>	1				
<b>10. Self-esteem</b>	-.38 <sup>**</sup>	-.07	-.35 <sup>**</sup>	-.14	.21 <sup>*</sup>	-.36 <sup>**</sup>	.43 <sup>**</sup>	.47 <sup>**</sup>	.20 <sup>*</sup>	1			
<b>11. Empathy</b>	.21 <sup>*</sup>	-.43 <sup>**</sup>	-.20 <sup>*</sup>	-.04	.58 <sup>**</sup>	-.17	.23 <sup>**</sup>	.26 <sup>**</sup>	0.16	.04	1		
<b>12. Problem-solving</b>	-.10	-.22 <sup>**</sup>	-.37 <sup>**</sup>	-.06	.34 <sup>**</sup>	-.31 <sup>**</sup>	.42 <sup>**</sup>	.41 <sup>**</sup>	.27 <sup>**</sup>	.35 <sup>**</sup>	.25 <sup>**</sup>	1	
<b>13. Goals and aspirations</b>	-.11	.04	-.33 <sup>**</sup>	-.01	.04	-.17 <sup>*</sup>	.23 <sup>**</sup>	.35 <sup>**</sup>	.07	.44 <sup>**</sup>	.03	.24 <sup>**</sup>	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 21 shows the paired correlations for each SDQ and SRS subscale at baseline and endpoint. These correlations are helpful for the power analysis carried out for further impact evaluation discussed below.

**Table 21. Paired correlations: Baseline and endpoint**

	n	Correlation	P value
SDQ Emotional symptoms	143	0.74	< .001
SDQ Conduct problems	147	0.56	< .001
SDQ Hyperactivity/inattention	144	0.65	< .001
SDQ Peer problems	145	0.63	< .001
SDQ Prosocial behaviour	148	0.63	< .001
SDQ Total difficulties score	137	0.70	< .001
SRS School connection	134	0.64	< .001
SRS Participation in home and school life	130	0.56	< .001
SRS Peer support	140	0.56	< .001
SRS Self-esteem	132	0.45	< .001
SRS Empathy	128	0.52	< .001
SRS Problem-solving	126	0.57	< .001
SRS Goals and aspirations	131	0.62	< .001

### Missing data

Table 22 shows the item-level non-response for each of the variables included in the SDQ and SRS scales at baseline and endpoint. Note that the SDQ variables are grouped by subscale rather than the order they appear in the questionnaire.

Table **23** shows the non-response for the SDQ and SRS subscales. At both baseline and endpoint, the rate of missingness appears to increase slightly towards the end of the questionnaire – the latter SRS measures having between 5–7% missing. This suggests that the length of the questionnaire could be an issue and that it would be important when scaling up the evaluation to keep the questionnaire short. Overall, the item-level missingness is not a concern, as in most cases, it was less than 5%.

Table 23 shows the missing values for the SDQ and SRS subscales. The SDQ subscales had 5% or less missing values at both baseline and endpoint. The rate of missingness for the SRS scales was slightly higher – for example, the problem-solving scale had 10% missing at baseline, and the school connection and participation in home and school life scales had 8% missing at endpoint. Again, while higher missing values at the subscales are not ideal, this does not present any evidence that there is a systematic problem

collecting any of the measures. If this was to happen when the evaluation was scaled up, other methods of imputation could also be considered to mitigate this risk.<sup>50</sup>

**Table 22. Item-level missing data at baseline and endpoint**

Subscale	Variable	Baseline		Endpoint	
		n	%	n	%
SDQ Emotional symptoms	I get a lot of headaches, stomach aches or sickness.	4	2%	1	1%
	I worry a lot.	4	2%	3	2%
	I am often unhappy, downhearted or tearful.	7	4%	3	2%
	I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence.	7	4%	0	0%
	I have many fears. I am easily scared.	7	4%	6	4%
SDQ Conduct problems	I get very angry and often lose my temper.	5	3%	2	1%
	I usually do as I am told.	4	2%	2	1%
	I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want.	3	2%	1	1%
	I am often accused of lying or cheating.	2	1%	2	1%
	I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere.	4	2%	1	1%
SDQ Hyper-activity/inattention	I am restless. I cannot stay still for long.	7	4%	3	2%
	I am constantly fidgeting or squirming.	3	2%	2	1%
	I am easily distracted. I find it difficult to concentrate.	2	1%	0	0%
	I think before I do things.	4	2%	3	2%
	I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good.	4	2%	3	2%
SDQ Peer problems	I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself.	4	2%	2	1%
	I have one good friend or more.	3	2%	4	3%
	Other people my age generally like me.	5	3%	4	3%
	Other children or young people pick on me or bully me.	5	3%	1	1%
	I get on better with adults than with people my own age.	5	3%	2	1%
SDQ Prosocial behaviour	I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings.	3	2%	2	1%
	I usually share with others (food, games, pens, etc.).	3	2%	4	3%
	I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill.	3	2%	1	1%
	I am kind to younger children.	2	1%	0	0%
	I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children).	2	1%	3	2%
SRS School connection	(At school, there is an adult who...) Really cares about me.	3	2%	2	1%
	(At school, there is an adult who...) Tells me when I do a good job.	3	2%	3	2%
	(At school, there is an adult who...) Listens to me when I have something to say.	3	2%	3	2%
	(At school, there is an adult who...) Believes that I will be a success.	6	3%	8	5%
SRS Participation	(Home and school) I do things at home that make a difference (i.e. make things better).	4	2%	1	1%
	(Home and school) I help my family make decisions.	5	3%	5	3%

<sup>50</sup> During the review process, LNK reported that some of the survey questions were unsuitable for younger pupils completing the survey, particularly pupils with English as an additional language or pupils with acute special educational needs.

in home and school life	(Home and school) At school, I help decide things like class activities or rules.	5	3%	5	3%
	(Home and school) I do things at my school that make a difference (i.e. make things better).	8	5%	4	3%
SRS Peer support	(Are there students at your school who would...) Choose you on their team at school?	3	2%	3	2%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Explain the rules of a game if you didn't understand them?	3	2%	4	3%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Invite you to their home?	7	4%	2	1%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Share things with you?	7	4%	4	3%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Help you if you hurt yourself?	5	3%	4	3%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Miss you if you weren't at school?	8	5%	9	6%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Make you feel better if something is bothering you?	5	3%	6	4%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Pick you for a partner?	2	1%	4	3%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Help you if other students are being mean to you?	7	4%	5	3%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Tell you you're their friend?	5	3%	5	3%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Ask you to join in when you are all alone?	7	4%	7	5%
	(Are there students at your school who would...) Tell you secrets?	8	5%	3	2%
SRS Self-esteem	(About me) I can work out my problems.	7	4%	1	1%
	(About me) I can do most things if I try.	6	3%	4	3%
	(About me) There are many things that I do well.	11	6%	6	4%
SRS Empathy	(About me) I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt.	7	4%	6	4%
	(About me) I try to understand what other people feel.	13	7%	7	5%
SRS Problem-solving	(About me) When I need help, I find someone to talk to.	10	6%	5	3%
	(About me) I know where to go for help when I have a problem.	11	6%	8	5%
	(About me) I try to work out problems by talking about them.	12	7%	7	5%
SRS Goals and aspirations	(About me) I have goals and plans for the future.	8	5%	9	6%
	(About me) I think I will be successful when I grow up.	9	5%	7	5%

**Table 23. Missing data for SRS and SDQ subscales**

	Baseline			Endpoint		
	Valid	Missing	% missing	Valid	Missing	% missing
<b>SDQ subscales</b>						
Emotional symptoms	169	6	3%	147	2	1%
Conduct problems	172	3	2%	148	1	1%
Hyperactivity/inattention	172	3	2%	146	3	2%
Peer problems	171	4	2%	147	2	1%
Prosocial behaviour	173	2	1%	148	1	1%
Total difficulties score	166	9	5%	144	5	3%
<b>SRS subscales</b>						
School connection	168	7	4%	137	12	8%
Participation in home and school life	164	11	6%	137	12	8%
Peer support	170	5	3%	143	6	4%
Self-esteem	162	13	7%	141	8	5%
Empathy	160	15	9%	138	11	7%
Problem-solving	157	18	10%	138	11	7%
Goals and aspirations	165	10	6%	138	11	7%

## Evidence of promise

This section will address **research question 2**: What is the pre-post intervention change in these outcomes?

Pre-post analyses were carried out to explore whether the intervention showed evidence of promise on both the SDQ and SRS measures. Table 25 shows the mean pre and post differences for the group of young people who received the targeted mentoring, and Table 26 shows the mean pre and post differences for the universal group. The targeted sample received a programme of one-to-one mentoring sessions on top of the six lessons consisting of six videos offered by LNK. The universal sample did not receive the targeted mentoring intervention but did attend the six lessons delivered by LNK. As these two groups effectively received different interventions, it makes sense to analyse them separately. It would not be expected that the universal group (who did not receive the targeted mentoring) would show many changes on the selected outcome measures (SDQ and SRS scales). However, it was hypothesised that some differences might be seen for the targeted group across these measures. Table 24 shows the outcomes for young people identified in the LNK logic model (see Chapter 7) mapped onto the SDQ and SRS scores collected at baseline and endpoint. The outcomes shown in this table apply to the group of young people who received the targeted mentoring. The LNK logic model included other outcomes for both the universal and targeted groups; however, the SRS and SDQ measures did not capture these outcomes. The findings presented below are discussed in relation to the outcomes shown in Table 24.

**Table 24. SRS and SDQ measures mapped to logic model outcomes**

Outcome for young people from LNK logic model	Data source
Young people (YP) better understand their own emotions and their reactions to certain situations (targeted)	SDQ Emotion SRS Problem-solving
YP better understand the purpose of school and opportunities available to them (targeted)	SRS School connection
YP feel more able to interact more confidently with others (targeted)	SDQ Peer problems SRS Peer support
YP feel more supported with their mental health and less isolated (targeted)	SDQ Total difficulties SRS Peer support SRS Problem-solving
YP have greater empathy, self-esteem, feel more independent (targeted)	SDQ Prosocial SRS Self-esteem; Empathy
YP have increased motivation to sustain engagement in school and positive activities (targeted)	SRS School connection; Participation in home and school life
YP have alternative strategies to manage their emotions, conflict and situations (targeted)	SRS Problem-solving
YP feel they have potential, broaden their perspectives, realise their ambitions (targeted)	SRS Goals and aspirations
YP are better equipped to make good choices (targeted)	SRS Problem-solving

Table 25 shows the mean pre and post scores for the group of young people who received the targeted mentoring. For the unadjusted analyses, there was only a statistically significant change (using a paired samples t-test) for the SRS empathy score. All other tests were not statistically significant. Young people in the targeted intervention group scored higher on the SRS empathy measure at endpoint, with a pre-post standardised mean difference of 0.36. This could give some indication that there was evidence of promise regarding the outcome that young people have greater empathy, self-esteem and feel more independent

after taking part in the targeted mentoring intervention. Young people in the targeted mentoring group had lower pre-test scores on the empathy SRS measure than found within the general population. If a pre-intervention score mean is found to be different from the population, it means that when post scores are collected, scores are more likely to fall alongside the population mean. This is known as 'regression to the mean' and should be controlled for in the analysis to ensure that the observed pre-post change is not mistakenly attributed to the intervention. When adjusting the change in SRS empathy scores for regression to the mean, this difference was no longer significant, suggesting that the change can be explained by regression to the mean rather than the intervention or other non-intervention sources of change.

The findings from the baseline and endpoint questionnaires did not appear to produce any further evidence of promise on the other outcomes in the logic model for the targeted intervention group.

Table 26 shows the mean pre and post scores for the group of young people who did not receive the targeted mentoring – only the universal lessons. The only statistically significant difference was the empathy score, for the universal group was lower at endpoint than at baseline, with a standardised mean difference of -0.27. The difference was still statistically significant after adjustment for regression to the mean. It seems unlikely that the universal lessons caused this reduction in empathy, and the difference could be due to type I error.<sup>51</sup> The two measures that made up the empathy score were 'I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt' and 'I try to understand how others feel.' However, any full efficacy trial should ensure that potential harms are evaluated. It is also worth noting that the qualitative work in the feasibility report indicated that some young people found the content of some of the videos shown in the assemblies upsetting. Teachers were also reported as describing one of the videos as 'too much' for young people in Years 5 and 6 and more appropriate for young people in Year 11 (see Chapter 5). This is another potential harm a full trial should investigate.

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<sup>51</sup> Type I error refers to a mistaken rejection of an actually true null hypothesis.

**Table 25. Pre and post differences in SRS and SDQ scores – targeted group**

Measure	Pre score mean	Post score mean	Mean difference (unadjusted)	Pre score standard deviation	Post score standard deviation	Sig. (two-tailed)	SMD	Mean differences (adjusted for RTM)	SMD (adjusted for RTM)	Sig. (two-tailed)
SDQ Emotional symptoms	2.81	2.75	-0.05	2.03	1.96	0.815	-0.03	0.06	0.03	0.756
SDQ Conduct problems	4.10	3.71	-0.39	2.40	1.82	0.178	-0.16	1.37	0.57	0.000
SDQ Hyperactivity/inattention	5.78	5.72	-0.05	2.35	2.09	0.863	-0.02	1.24	0.53	0.001
SDQ Peer relationship problems	2.59	2.32	-0.27	1.97	1.61	0.209	-0.14	0.03	0.02	0.861
SDQ Prosocial behaviour	6.72	6.95	0.23	2.23	1.97	0.278	0.10	-0.26	-0.12	0.226
SDQ Total difficulties score	15.20	14.63	-0.57	5.85	5.11	0.448	-0.10	2.66	0.45	0.004
SRS School connection	14.95	14.96	0.02	3.86	3.72	0.972	0.00	-0.28	-0.07	0.533
SRS Participation in home and school life	13.42	12.98	-0.44	3.80	3.13	0.419	-0.12	-0.68	-0.18	0.101
SRS Peer support	47.81	49.39	1.58	9.23	9.09	0.151	0.17	0.87	0.09	0.384
SRS Self-esteem	11.90	12.04	0.14	1.88	2.07	0.684	0.07	0.03	0.01	0.921
SRS Empathy	6.94	7.66	0.72	2.03	1.99	0.015	0.36	0.05	0.02	0.878
SRS Problem-solving	9.81	9.81	0.00*	3.07	3.15	1.000	0.00	-0.64	-0.21	0.139
SRS Goals and aspirations	8.51	8.66	0.15	1.76	1.89	0.424	0.09	0.19	0.11	0.302

*\*The mean change on this measure was zero; however, individual pre-post differences did vary across pupils.*

**Table 26. Pre and post differences in SRS and SDQ scores – universal group**

Measure	Pre score mean	Post score mean	Mean difference (unadjusted)	Pre score standard deviation	Post score standard deviation	Sig. (two-tailed)	SMD	Mean differences (adjusted for RTM)	SMD (adjusted for RTM)	Sig. (two-tailed)
SDQ Emotional symptoms	4.21	4.08	-0.13	2.68	2.64	0.529	-0.05	0.32	0.12	0.160
SDQ Conduct problems	2.35	2.25	-0.10	1.93	1.72	0.604	-0.05	0.49	0.25	0.009
SDQ Hyperactivity/inattention	4.45	4.66	0.21	2.25	2.41	0.278	0.09	0.43	0.19	0.033
SDQ Peer relationship problems	2.21	1.92	-0.29	1.75	1.62	0.047	-0.17	-0.21	-0.12	0.097
SDQ Prosocial behaviour	7.50	7.19	-0.31	1.74	1.68	0.079	-0.18	-0.54	-0.31	0.001
SDQ Total difficulties score	13.24	12.95	-0.29	6.16	5.93	0.496	-0.05	0.57	0.09	0.227
SRS School connection	15.06	14.67	-0.40	3.87	4.01	0.232	-0.10	-0.51	-0.13	0.114
SRS Participation in home and school life	11.76	12.00	0.24	3.49	3.11	0.458	0.07	-0.69	-0.20	0.036
SRS Peer support	46.24	47.57	1.33	10.04	9.01	0.197	0.13	-0.50	-0.05	0.567
SRS Self-esteem	11.10	11.29	0.20	2.20	2.19	0.402	0.09	-0.26	-0.12	0.254
SRS Empathy	8.19	7.77	-0.42	1.54	1.80	0.019	-0.27	-0.45	-0.29	0.008
SRS Problem-solving	10.01	9.80	-0.22	3.05	2.98	0.467	-0.07	-0.64	-0.21	0.029
SRS Goals and aspirations	7.99	7.67	-0.32	2.02	2.08	0.147	-0.16	-0.48	-0.24	0.020

## Gender

The tables in Technical Appendix S show further breakdowns of the key outcomes by gender. When analysing the mean scores for boys and girls in the targeted and universal groups separately, there were differences across a small number of the subscales. Boys in the targeted mentoring group showed a significant increase in the SRS peer support subscore (standardised mean difference of 0.33). This difference was still statistically significant once adjusted for regression to the mean (adjusted standardised mean difference of 0.33). This suggests that the targeted mentoring may have had a positive effect on the outcomes of *Young people feel able to interact more confidently with others* and *Young people feel more supported with their mental health and less isolated* for boys in the targeted group.

Girls in the universal group showed a significant decrease in the SDQ prosocial score (standardised mean difference of -0.26), which was still significant once adjusted for regression to the mean (adjusted standardised mean difference of -0.32). This could potentially indicate a negative effect of the universal element on girls who did not receive the targeted mentoring on the outcome of *Young people have greater empathy, self-esteem, feel more independent*. However, the logic model highlighted this as an outcome for the targeted group only due to the universal element being relatively light touch in terms of affecting young people's wellbeing. It is unlikely that the reduction in prosocial scores for girls in the universal group is a direct effect of the program.

There were no statistically significant pre-post mean differences for girls in the targeted group or boys in the universal group. This could also be due to the small sample sizes when splitting the analysis across these groups.

## Previous exposure to LNK Educate activities

At the baseline survey, young people were asked two questions to measure whether they had experience of LNK before:

*Last school year (when you were in the year below), did you go to a special lesson at school where your teacher, or someone else, talked about issues to do with knife crime? This lesson might have included watching videos about knife crime.*

*If you answered 'Yes' to the last question:*

*Did the lesson mention an organisation called 'Lives Not Knives' (LNK)? For example, you might have seen a video created by them.*

Previous exposure to LNK could have made a difference to the outcomes of those in the universal group, as the programme may have been more effective with young people who had no previous exposure to the content of the workshops. Of the 89 young people who took part in the universal element, six mentioned

that they had previously gone to a lesson mentioning Lives Not Knives. Mean pre-post differences were calculated, adjusted for whether participants reported remembering LNK.

Table 27 shows the coefficients for prior exposure to LNK among the universal group on endpoint scores, adjusted for baseline. For the universal group, prior exposure to LNK had no impact on endpoint scores when baseline scores were controlled for.

**Table 27. Prior exposure as a predictor for endpoint score. All models adjusted for baseline score.**

	B	Standard error	Significance
SDQ Emotional symptoms	0.494	0.745	0.510
SDQ Conduct problems	0.557	0.635	0.384
SDQ Hyperactivity/inattention	0.607	0.799	0.450
SDQ Peer problems	0.296	0.502	0.557
SDQ Prosocial behaviour	1.059	0.589	0.076
SDQ Total difficulties score	1.674	1.680	0.322
SRS School connection	2.204	1.417	0.124
SRS Participation in home and school life	0.969	1.068	0.367
SRS Peer support	-1.343	3.197	0.676
SRS Self-esteem	-0.785	0.852	0.360
SRS Empathy	1.081	0.627	0.089
SRS Problem-solving	-1.469	1.063	0.171
SRS Goals and aspirations	-0.786	0.904	0.387

## Readiness for trial

This section seeks to address the following research questions:

**Research question 3:** How can the pilot study inform decisions on sample sizes for a potential future efficacy trial of the LNK Educate?

**Research question 5:** What is the feasibility of carrying out an impact evaluation on the LNK Educate programme?

**Research question 6:** Using data from this pilot, how feasible is it to conduct a QED analysis?

To answer these research questions, two principal impact evaluations were explored – an RCT design and a QED. Whichever of the two methodologies is more feasible depends on whether it would be acceptable for LNK Educate to include more consistent screening criteria for the targeted mentoring group and whether a compliance measure can be put together for the targeted mentoring group. If this is not possible to implement, then a QED may be more feasible, as the intervention would be able to run in a very similar way

to how it does now. The feasibility of both these designs depends on LNK's ability to scale up their programme to the number of schools as outlined in the 'Power calculations' section.

### **Proposed RCT design**

The findings shown in the previous sections demonstrate that it is possible to collect meaningful data on a range of validated measures that are particularly relevant to the targeted mentoring element of LNK Educate. The pilot study had an acceptable level of attrition between baseline and endpoint. If an efficacy study were to go ahead, we would propose a two-armed cluster RCT focused on assessing the impact of the targeted element of the programme. We also discuss the possibility of conducting a QED, building upon the approach we piloted in the present study.

Randomised assignment can be conducted at different levels, for instance, pupil, classroom, year group, school or higher levels of randomisation, such as local authority. How a programme is implemented is an important deciding factor for the randomisation level. The universal element of LNK Educate is delivered at the year group level, and the mentoring element is delivered to a group of students who are identified as in need of targeted support. Because of this, it would be difficult to randomise at the individual level. Randomising at the classroom or year group level may be more practical and affordable; however, this may also lead to spill-over effects where pupils/young people or teachers in the control group directly or indirectly access LNK materials during the evaluation period. Randomising at year group level might be less prone to spill-over effects, as teacher and pupil interactions may be more limited between year groups.

For this reason, school-level randomisation seems to be most appropriate. Schools would be equally allocated to either LNK or control. The treatment schools would receive both the LNK Educate universal element and select a number of pupils/young people to take part in the targeted element. The control schools would not take part in LNK Educate, and young people would instead receive teaching and pastoral care as usual (henceforth, usual practice). Some incentive may be required for schools to take part if they are allocated to the control group.

When scaling up the pilot to a potential RCT, it will also be important to consider the types of schools selected. Schools should be located in areas where there is a perceived need for a programme such as LNK and where it is expected that young people in the schools will qualify and benefit from LNK mentoring. Schools should also be large enough in size to contain enough eligible young people to take part in the LNK mentoring. Schools that have a need for a programme such as LNK will likely already have practice in place to support young people. An implementation and process evaluation will be important to undertake alongside an RCT in order to understand what practice as usual looks like for schools that need support.

A key consideration for an RCT of the targeted mentoring element of the programme is that this aspect of the programme is not delivered to all pupils within a school. Pupils/young people are selected to take part in the mentoring if they are at 'high risk' of school exclusion or getting drawn into youth violence or those who have background information that suggests that they could require additional support from LNK. As outlined earlier in this report (see Chapter 5), the way young people are selected into the targeted element

varies across schools and does not adhere to fixed criteria. The intention is that teachers and LNK mentors will usually work together to make the selection. This leads to an issue in the RCT design of how to select a comparable group of young people within schools allocated to the control group. The comparison group would need to be made up of young people who would have been selected for targeted mentoring had their school been assigned to the treatment group. More fixed criteria could be required to select young people into the targeted element for an RCT to be feasible.

If implementing more fixed criteria for selection to the targeted element proved unfeasible, a different RCT design could be considered, one which allowed for all young people selected for mentoring as per LNK's usual practices to receive the treatment. However, only those who met the fixed criteria would be included in the data collection and evaluation study. This may still allow for a robust RCT design while not requiring LNK to adjust their current working practices. A design such as this will have implications for sample size due to more young people receiving the treatment than being included in the treatment arm of the evaluation.

If an RCT of LNK Educate were to be carried out, a compliance measure would need to be developed. Findings from the feasibility report showed that the targeted mentoring sessions were delivered in a relatively structured way but that there was room to change that structure based on the young person's needs in each session. For an RCT design, it would be important to define the scope of the mentoring sessions as well as the amount of time young people would be supported for and the number of sessions provided per week.

A further consideration for the design of an RCT of the universal element is the outcome measures chosen. The pilot study did not show any evidence of promise regarding the LNK Educate programme having a positive effect on the SRS or SDQ scores of pupils in the universal element. The LNK Educate logic model describes the outcomes for the universal element as:

- Young people have an increased understanding/changed perceptions about knife crime.
- Young people are more aware of their rights as well as their responsibilities.
- Young people are better able to disclose risk of harm.
- Young people feel more able to access the wider support offered by LNK.

The SDQ and SRS scores are measures that are more relevant to outcomes for the targeted element. For an RCT of the universal element of LNK Educate, it would be more appropriate to select outcome measures that were directly related to the above outcomes. For example, a test of knowledge on knife crime, confidence in disclosing the risk of harm and trust in teachers or the police. The desk review of existing measures carried out for the pilot found no suitable validated measure regarding knowledge of knife crime, so it may be worth considering a bespoke measure. There may be existing measures on trust and self-efficacy that could be relevant to indicate potential changes in behaviour; however, a full investigation of these was out of scope for this report.

## Power calculations

Table 28 presents the power calculations determining the minimum sample size required for robust results. The study is planned for a minimum detectable effect size (MDES) of 0.3 standard deviations difference between LNK and usual practice in the primary outcome variable. This is based on findings from a recent fully powered RCT of school-based counselling, which found effect sizes on the SDQ internalising measure and a measure of self-esteem of approximately 0.3 at 24 weeks (Cooper et al., 2021). We assume the mechanisms of change are comparable to those involved in mentoring. Power calculations were estimated using the following assumptions:

- The MDES is analysed for a two-level cluster RCT with intervention assignment at the school level for one primary outcome measure. Please note that having more than one primary outcome measure would increase the minimum sample size required for measuring the impact of the programme, as we would need to correct for multiple statistical tests.
- Based on the pilot data, we are assuming that there will be 15 pupils/young people in each class who are eligible for the targeted mentoring intervention.
- Following norms in the literature, we assumed 80% power and a 5% significance level.
- School-level ICC calculations for outcome measures from the pilot sample would be imprecise due to the small number of schools. Similar studies focusing on mental health outcomes in secondary schools (Cooper et al., 2021; Hayes et al., 2019) found ICCs ranging between 0 and 0.10. Table 28 shows sample sizes for two different assumptions: ICC = 0.05 and a more conservative estimate of ICC = 0.10.
- It is assumed that 25% of variance can be explained using the baseline as a covariate.
- Based on recent EEF trials, a 10% school-level attrition is assumed.
- Based on the experience of the LNK Educate pilot, a 15% pupil-level attrition is assumed.

**Table 28. Sample size calculations for a two-level cluster RCT**

	ICC = 0.05	ICC = 0.10
MDES	0.30	0.30
Probability of type I error	0.05	0.05
Two-tailed or one-tailed test?	2	2
Power	0.80	0.80
ICC	0.05	0.10
Average number of pupils per school	15	15
Sample retention rate: School level	90%	90%
Sample retention rate: Pupil level	85%	85%
Proportion of sample randomised to LNK	0.50	0.50
Pre-intervention/post-intervention correlations (pupil level)	0.25	0.25
Pre-intervention/post-intervention correlations (school level)	0	0
Number of pupil-level covariates	0	0
<b>Total number of schools</b>	<b>44 (22 per condition)</b>	<b>62 (31 per condition)</b>
<b>Total number of pupils</b>	<b>660 pupils (330 per condition)</b>	<b>930 pupils (465 per condition)</b>

Based on the sample size calculation outlined in Table 28, the recommendation is a total of 44 secondary schools to be recruited in the RCT evaluation (this includes the assumption that there will be a 90% school retention rate). This is assuming that there would be 15 pupils/young people eligible for targeted mentoring in each school. It was previously anticipated that 20 pupils per school would be part of the targeted mentoring group, but learning from the pilot showed that there was a mean of 15 pupils per school, so this is the number used in the power calculations. In total, 660 pupils from 44 secondary schools would be asked to participate in the impact evaluation. The 44 schools would be randomised with 22 schools (330 pupils) allocated to the LNK Educate targeted mentoring group and 22 schools (330 pupils) allocated to the control group. Recruiting 44 schools to an RCT would mean that LNK would need to work with 22 schools.

### Potential QED

An RCT design would likely require eligibility for mentoring to be determined based on a fixed threshold so that we can select pupils with comparable baseline scores in practice as usual schools. If this type of fixed screening for the targeted intervention proved to be challenging to implement in practice, a QED could be considered instead.

A QED would allow the programme to be run within selected schools in a similar way to the pilot. Baseline and endpoint data would be collected from all young people participating in the targeted mentoring and young people participating in only the universal programme. The propensity score weighting analysis in Technical Appendix R shows how a QED was piloted and showed promising signs that this would be a feasible approach, using the universal intervention as a control group against which to compare the targeted

element. The results from the propensity score weighting show that we can predict who does and who does not receive mentoring and that there are several statistically significant predictors within the propensity score model. We would expect the sample size needed for the QED to be similar to the number of schools outlined in the power calculations for the RCT design.

It is important to consider that a QED approach would be investigating a different contrast to an RCT design. In the QED, the comparison group would also receive the universal LNK intervention, whereas in an RCT, the control group would receive practice as usual (no LNK Educate intervention). An RCT would therefore be able to assess the impact of both the targeted intervention and the universal intervention against a comparison group that did not receive either element of the LNK Educate programme.

A QED would mean that the programme could run in schools as per the pilot, with the comparison group being made up of young people selected from the universal-only group. The pilot has shown that it is feasible to collect outcome data from the young people who took part only in the universal intervention. The pilot did not test whether schools would see randomisation as acceptable, and there could be issues with control schools collecting data when they are not receiving the programme. This would not be an issue in a QED design.

## 12. Pilot study conclusion

The pilot study aimed to assess the feasibility of a future efficacy trial of the LNK Educate programme. The pilot study has built on findings from the feasibility study, which detailed how the LNK Educate programme was working in practice. Findings from the feasibility study provided information on how the selection to the targeted mentoring element of the programme was carried out in practice, and this was used to inform the pilot study’s assessment of the feasibility of a future efficacy trial. The development of the LNK logic model was also used to inform the pilot study’s assessment of the suitability of the chosen outcome measures for the targeted vs the universal group.

To make an assessment of whether to proceed to a future efficacy trial, the study sought to answer five research questions. These research questions and a summary of relevant findings are detailed in Table 29.

The pilot study used a small sample (a total of 149 young people across five schools at baseline and endpoint), and therefore findings must be considered in this context.

**Table 29. Summary of pilot study findings**

Research question	Finding
Are the validated primary outcome measures selected for the universal and targeted forms of LNK Educate acceptable and feasible to collect in a future efficacy trial?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome measures were shown to be feasible to collect with young people participating in both the universal and targeted interventions.</li> <li>• SDQ and SRS scales were found to be reliable according to Cronbach’s <math>\alpha</math> and McDonald’s <math>\omega</math>, with the exception of the SDQ peer relationship problems scale.</li> <li>• The selected outcome measures align with the intervention outcomes in the logic model for the targeted group; however, they do not align well with the outcomes for the universal group. A future efficacy trial should consider collecting different measures for this group to show the impact of the universal intervention.</li> </ul>
What is the pre-post intervention change in these outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people in the targeted intervention group scored higher on the SRS empathy measure at endpoint; however, these differences can be accounted for by regression to the mean.</li> <li>• Young people in the universal intervention group scored lower on the SRS empathy scale at endpoint. This cannot be attributed to the effect</li> </ul>

	<p>of the programme due to no control group. This result could also be due to type I error.</p>
<p>How can the pilot study inform decisions on sample sizes for a potential future efficacy trial of the LNK Educate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power calculations were carried out based on effect sizes and ICCs from studies of similar interventions. The pilot informed the likely attrition rate and the proportion of variance that can be explained using the baseline as a covariate. This led to an estimate of between 44 to 62 schools to detect an effect size of 0.3.</li> </ul>
<p>How are young people selected for the targeted intervention? Are there any differences between young people in the targeted group vs the universal group?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys and young people from Black ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be selected for targeted mentoring in our sample.</li> <li>• Young people in the targeted mentoring group scored higher on the SDQ conduct problems and hyperactivity/inattention subscales and had significantly lower scores on the prosocial behaviour scale. Those in the targeted mentoring group scored lower on the emotional problems scale and higher on the self-esteem scale.</li> </ul>
<p>What is the feasibility of carrying out an impact evaluation on the LNK Educate programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An RCT of LNK Educate would potentially be feasible dependent on two changes to the way the programme is administered: LNK Educate to include more consistent screening criteria for the targeted mentoring group and whether a compliance measure can be put together for the targeted mentoring group.</li> <li>• If these changes to the programme are not possible to implement, then a QED may be more feasible. This would allow the LNK Educate programme to run in a very similar way to how it does now.</li> <li>• The feasibility of both the RCT and QED depends on LNK's ability to scale up their programme to the number of schools as outlined in the 'Power calculations' section.</li> </ul>
<p>Using data from this pilot, how feasible is it to conduct a QED analysis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have demonstrated that a propensity score weighted method, using overlap weights, is a feasible approach. This could be a viable alternative to an RCT.</li> </ul>

## Evaluator judgement of evaluation feasibility

The pilot study built on evidence provided in the feasibility study indicating that LNK Educate was broadly delivered as intended and is perceived positively by young people, teachers and LNK staff. Despite the positive findings of programme perception from the feasibility study, there was no particularly strong evidence showing improvement across the outcome measures for either the targeted or universal group. Young people who received the targeted mentoring scored higher on the SRS empathy scale at endpoint; however, this can be explained by regression to the mean. Young people in the universal sample scored lower on the SRS empathy score at endpoint. This finding should be interpreted with caution and cannot be attributed to LNK due to the lack of a comparison group providing a counterfactual. This result is also likely due to type I error.

A future efficacy trial should consider the outcome measures selected. While the SDQ and SRS scales are appropriate to the outcomes of the targeted intervention, differences across these measures for the young people that only took part in the universal intervention are not expected.

There was an acceptable level of survey attrition with 85.1% of young people who completed the baseline survey going on to complete the endpoint survey.

At endpoint, each of the measures generally had a greater than 92% response rate. The measures that came towards the end of the questionnaire tended to have a slightly higher response rate than some of the measures at the beginning. While this was not a particular issue for the pilot, it suggests that a future fully powered evaluation should exercise caution in adding further length to the questionnaires.

Outcome measures showed good levels of internal validity as determined by Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and McDonald's  $\omega$ , with the exception of the SDQ peer relations scale, which showed weak reliability. These findings are in line with other studies on validating the SDQ measures so do not show an issue with using these measures with LNK participants.

Where outcome measures did correlate, it was in the expected direction, suggesting that the measures were generally completed correctly.

There were some issues recruiting two of the originally sampled schools to the study. These schools were initially willing to take part in the study, but they were not prepared for pupils' names and UPNs to be shared with ONS for the longer-term archive. As this was a key requirement for the evaluation, these schools were not able to take part. To facilitate recruitment for a future study, the archive requirements could be revised in order to be more flexible, allowing schools to take part even if they do not wish to submit personal data for the archive.

The five schools that were recruited to the baseline survey all took part in the endpoint survey, suggesting this is a reasonable level of data collection for schools. While the pilot managed to retain all five of the

recruited schools, some attrition may be expected from a larger sample. Incentives for participation should be considered for future designs to reduce the risk of school-level attrition.

## **Interpretation**

Findings from the pilot suggest that a fully powered evaluation of LNK Educate is feasible. An RCT design would be feasible to measure the impact of the LNK Educate programme, although there are some considerations that could make this design unfeasible. First, recruitment criteria for the targeted element should be made consistent. A suggestion would be to use a screener questionnaire based on the SDQ and SRS measures and base selection for mentoring on those scores, allowing for a comparable group to be selected in the control schools. This may be an issue given that the feasibility study found that the process of selecting young people into the targeted element currently varies across schools and does not adhere to fixed criteria (see Chapter 5).

The second consideration for an RCT would be the need for a compliance measure to be developed. Findings from the feasibility report showed that the targeted mentoring sessions were delivered in a relatively structured way but that there was room to change that structure based on the young people's needs in each session. For an RCT design, it would be important to define the scope of the mentoring sessions as well as the amount of time young people would be supported for and the number of sessions provided per week. It would also be important to clarify the number of pupils per school taking part in the targeted component so that sufficient numbers were recruited to the trial to power the study.

Evidence from the pilot showed that a QED of LNK Educate would also be feasible. This would mean that the programme could run in schools as per the pilot, with the comparison group being made up of young people selected from the universal-only group. The pilot has shown that it is feasible to collect outcome data from the young people who took part only in the universal intervention.

A further consideration for both an RCT and QED is the possibility of scaling up the intervention. Power calculations provided in the pilot report suggested a cluster RCT design would require between 44 and 62 schools to detect a 0.3 effect size, and we assume a QED would also require a similar number. This would mean LNK Educate would need to be rolled out in between 22 and 31 schools for an RCT. If it was not possible for LNK to run the programme at this scale independently, additional organisations that currently deliver similar programmes could potentially be invited to assist with programme delivery, with LNK offering training and quality control.

The pilot is based on findings from a limited number of schools, so it is difficult to say how far the findings can be generalised to a scaled-up evaluation. One question in particular is whether it is possible for LNK to scale up delivery to a larger number of schools.

## **Limitations of the pilot study**

The pilot study had several limitations that impact the conclusions that can be drawn within this report. First, the lack of a control group limits the extent to which any pre-post differences found in the pilot can be

attributed to the LNK Educate programme. Second, the small number of schools and pupils taking part limits the conclusions that can be drawn. There was a difficulty in recruiting two of the original six schools to the pilot study. This difficulty came from schools wanting to take part in the study but being unwilling to share data on pupils/young people for the YEF archive. This led to two schools dropping out of the pilot and being replaced with an additional school a couple of months after the pilot started. For this additional school, baseline data were collected in January rather than November, and it is unclear what effect this might have had. A shorter time between pre-post measures tends to be associated with a larger effect size, though too short a time might mean that an intervention had less time to lead to change.

The outcome measures chosen for the pilot were relevant to the targeted intervention; however, another limitation of the pilot study is the extent to which the selected outcome measures are appropriate for the universal intervention. While the measures are relevant to several of the outcomes defined in the logic model (developed as part of the feasibility study) for the targeted group, it would be recommended to add some further measures to cover the outcomes expected for the universal group. One suggestion would be to include a measure on knowledge about the consequences of knife crime to assess young people's understanding of the issue and their awareness of their rights and responsibilities and perhaps a measure of trust or ability to effect change. This may help to measure the extent to which LNK Educate helps young people to feel better able to disclose risk of harm to a trusted adult.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Additional activities carried out by LNK

#### *Roadshows*

The LNK team have been running educational Roadshows at schools across South London since 2007. The Roadshows typically involve two members of LNK staff raising awareness about the short- and long-term dangers of knife and gang culture to young people (from ages 11 to 18). The aim of the roadshows is that increased awareness of the consequences of knife crime and gang culture will deter young people from becoming involved in these behaviours.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Youth Hub*

LNK run an initiative called Youth Hub at their office twice a week. Young people from the local community can spend time with each other after school and engage in a range of activities, such as table tennis and board games. The LNK team see this as a useful way for young people to meet up with each other in a safe space; in particular, the hub is a place where those most disadvantaged in the local community can spend their time in a positive way.<sup>53</sup>

#### *Summer Programme*

LNK host a six-week school summer holiday programme providing events, activities, and lunch for young people from Croydon. The aim is for LNK staff to mentor and support young people during this period, as well as encourage them to take part in activities that help them to stay fit and make friends in a safe environment.<sup>54</sup> As noted on LNK's website, generally, the young people who attend are aged between 14 and 17 and come from a range of different schools and Pupil Referral Units across Croydon.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/what-we-do/roadshows>

<sup>53</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/what-we-do/youth-hub>

<sup>54</sup> The mentoring provided as part of the summer programme adopts a different format and less structured approach compared with the mentoring provided through LNK Educate.

<sup>55</sup> See further: <https://www.livesnotknives.org/what-we-do/summer-programme>

## Appendix B – Information sheet for LNK Educate mentors

### About the research

The [National Centre for Social Research](#) has been appointed by the Youth Endowment Foundation to carry out an independent evaluation of the LNK Educate programme. This research aims to understand how LNK Educate is working so far and will support its future development.

As part of this work, we would like to speak to a range of people at schools delivering LNK Educate, including teachers, mentors, and children.

What does taking part in this research involve for mentors?

We'd like to invite you to take part in a paired research interview with another mentor who has also been involved in delivering LNK at the same school. This can take place by telephone or online during [month] and will last up to 60 minutes.

The purpose of the discussion is to gather views and experiences of the programme to date, including things that have worked well and less well. The kinds of things we'd like to ask you about are:

- how you came to be involved in LNK, and the training and support received;
- your understanding of the LNK Educate programme, including mentoring;
- your experiences of how LNK Educate and mentoring has been delivered in schools;
- the perceived impacts for pupils, schools, and LNK Educate staff; and
- recommendations and key learning points you may identify.

Participation in the paired research interview is voluntary and confidential. Whether or not you take part, will not affect your relationship with LNK, the Youth Endowment Fund, or any other organisation. If you agree to participate, you are free to not answer any questions, change your mind or terminate the interview at any point. You will be able to withdraw your contribution at any point after your interview until [date].

Everything said in the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence. We will ask your permission to audio record the interview so that we have a detailed and accurate record of what you said. The information you provide will be systematically analysed to feed into a thematic report for the Youth Endowment Fund, which may be publicly available.

We may also use quotes of what you've said, but your views will not be attributed to you by name and identifiable data about individuals or schools taking part in the programme will not be included in the report. While NatCen will take steps to maintain anonymity, it is possible that some views may be identifiable in outputs to those who know you well due to the small number of staff taking

part. The research team will discuss this with you before the interview and ensure you are able to review your contribution at the end of the discussion if necessary.

For more information about how we will handle and use the data we collect, please see our privacy notice at [webpage].

### **What happens next?**

If you are happy to be involved, please let [name] at LNK Educate know. You can also contact [name] in the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email]

Please note that it may not be possible for us to speak to everyone who would like to take part.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

For more information, visit [webpage]. You can also contact [name] in the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email]

## Appendix C – Information sheet for LNK Educate management

### About the research

The [National Centre for Social Research](#) (NatCen) has been appointed by the Youth Endowment Foundation to carry out an independent evaluation of the LNK Educate programme. This research aims to understand how LNK Educate is working so far and will support its future development.

As part of this work, we would like to speak to individuals involved in the design and implementation of the LNK Educate programme.

### What does taking part in this research involve for me?

We'd like to invite the [job roles within LNK Educate] to take part in a paired research interview during [month]. This can take place online or by telephone and will last up to 90 minutes.

The purpose of the discussion is to gather views and experiences of the programme to date, including things that have worked well and less well. The range of topics that will be covered include:

- views and experiences relating to the design and implementation of the LNK Educate programme;
- any facilitators, barriers and perceived impacts;
- your thoughts on management and partnership working; and
- recommendations and key learning points you may identify.

Participation in the paired interview is completely voluntary. Whether or not you take part, this will not affect your relationship with the Youth Endowment Fund, or any other organisation. If you agree to participate, you are free to not answer any questions, change your mind or terminate the interview at any point. You will be able to withdraw your contribution at any point after your interview until [date].

Everything said in the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence. We will ask your permission to audio record the interview so that we have a detailed and accurate record of what you said.

The information you provide will be systematically analysed to feed into a thematic report for the Youth Endowment Fund, which may be publicly available. We may also use quotes of what you've said, but your views will not be attributed to you by name and identifiable data about individuals or schools taking part in the programme will not be included in the report. While NatCen will take steps to maintain anonymity, it is possible that some views may be identifiable in outputs to those who know you well due to the nature of your role.

The research team will discuss this with you before the interview and ensure you are able to review your contribution at the end of the discussion if necessary.

For more information about how we will handle and use the data we collect, please see our privacy notice at [webpage].

### **What happens next?**

If you are happy to be involved, please let us know.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

For more information, visit [webpage]. You can also contact [name] in the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

## Appendix D – Information sheet for schools<sup>56</sup>

### About the research

The [National Centre for Social Research](#) has been appointed by the Youth Endowment Foundation to carry out an independent evaluation of the LNK Educate programme. This research aims to understand how LNK Educate is working so far and will support its future development.

As part of this work, we would like to speak to a range of people at schools delivering LNK Educate, including teachers and children. We will also be speaking with the LNK project leads and mentors.

### What does taking part in this research involve for your school?

We'd like to invite your school (along with other schools), to take part in this evaluation. Across the schools that agree to participate the research activities will include:

- A 60-minute interview with the SEND [or LNK lead] to ask about their overall views on the project
- A 90-minute discussion with 6 to 8 teachers delivering the LNK lessons to classes
- A group discussion with up to 5 children about the LNK lessons
- Individual interviews with up to 5 children about the mentoring sessions.

We anticipate that research in schools would take place from [date] (to capture learning soon after the lessons have been delivered), and we would be happy to discuss how we can best conduct the interviews / discussions online. If helpful, we could also discuss whether your school would prefer to take part in all or only some of the interviews / discussions listed above.

The interviews / group discussions will be arranged at a time and date that is convenient for your school. Participation in the research is voluntary and confidential. Whether or not you / your school takes part, will not affect your relationship with LNK, the Youth Endowment Fund, or any other organisation. The data we collect will be systematically analysed to feed into a thematic report for the Youth Endowment Fund. Identifiable data about individuals or schools will not be included in this report.

### What happens next?

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<sup>56</sup> This is the original information sheet for schools, which shows the intended research encounters before the approach had to be adapted (as discussed in Chapter 3 of the main report).

If you are happy for your school to be involved or would like to find out more about the evaluation, please let the LNK project lead who gave you this information leaflet know (if possible in the next week or so).

Please also provide the name and contact details of a member of staff that has agreed to be contacted by the NatCen research team to discuss the evaluation further. If you could also indicate whether you would be happy for your school to take part in all or some of the interviews and discussions that would be helpful.

You can also contact the research lead in the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

Please note that it may not be possible to include all schools that express an interest in taking part in the evaluation.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

Please contact [name], the research lead in the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

## Appendix E – School briefing document

### About the research

The [National Centre for Social Research](#) has been appointed by the Youth Endowment Fund to carry out an independent evaluation of the LNK Educate programme. This research aims to understand how LNK Educate is working so far and will support its future development.

As part of this work, we would like to speak to a range of people at schools delivering LNK Educate, including teachers and pupils. The research also includes speaking with the LNK project leads and mentors.

### What does taking part in this research involve for your school?

At your school, the research activities will include discussions with:

[List of encounters to be completed]

These discussions will be arranged at times and dates that are convenient for your school in [date]. We can work flexibility with you and the school on the day of the research team's visit. The LNK mentor will be present at the school on the day the research is taking place to also help to support the process.

Each session will be led by an experienced NatCen researcher.

Before pupils are approached about the research, their parents / guardians will need to be given information about the evaluation and the opportunity to opt out. We will ask you to pass on an information sheet and opt-out form to share with parents / guardians at least 10 days before the pupils are approached about taking part in the research.

Participation in the research is voluntary and confidential. Your school's relationship with LNK, the Youth Endowment Fund, or any other organisation will not be affected. The data we collect will be systematically analysed to feed into a thematic report for the Youth Endowment Fund. Identifiable data about individuals or schools will not be included in this report.

Please note that it may not be possible for us to speak to everyone who would like to take part.

### Recruitment and interview process

Interviews will be conducted by a small team of NatCen researchers experienced at carrying out research with professionals and young people on a range of sensitive topics. We have suggested the following process for recruiting individuals to take part in the evaluation.

Stage	Description
<p><b>Stage 1a:</b> Parent/guardian opt-out window</p>	<p>If you are happy to support this study and identify people who might be eligible and willing to participate you / LNK team will pass on the parents / guardians' information sheet to the families of pupils identified as having participated in the LNK mentoring. This explains to parents / guardians the purpose of the study and what taking part will involve, and gives them the opportunity to opt out on behalf of their child.</p> <p>You / the LNK team have already sent out the opt out forms to parents / carers so that they have had a 10-day period to opt their child out before their child is approached about taking part in the research. This means that if we will be conducting the interviews [date], the information sheets were shared with parents by [date]. No identifiable information about the pupils should be shared with the research team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents / guardians can opt their children out of the evaluation by returning the form directly to you by the agreed date.</li> <li>• They can also contact the NatCen research team directly for further information before making their decision.</li> </ul> <p>Once the opt-out window has ended, pupils can be approached and invited to take part in the research (detailed in point 2b below)</p>
<p><b>Stage 1b:</b> Briefing</p>	<p>A researcher from NatCen will organise a suitable time to speak with you on the phone to discuss the research, including the people we are hoping to speak to, and practical considerations relevant to your school.</p> <p>It would be helpful if this could take place [date] and before pupils are approached about taking part in the research and before we visit the school.</p> <p>After the telephone briefing, we will email you the information leaflets for the different groups who we would like to invite to take part in the evaluation.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2a:</b> Arranging the teacher interview</p>	<p>You will pass on the teacher information leaflets to the relevant member of staff, explaining the purpose of the study and emphasising the voluntary nature of the research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a staff member is happy in principle to take part, or would like to speak to the research team to find out more, they should let you know. Please note that the individual will not be obliged to participate in the research: they will be able to ask questions before agreeing to participate or deciding to opt out.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 2b:</b> Arranging the pupils' interviews</p>	<p>Following the parent / guardian opt-out period, we'd like you to share information sheets with pupils who may be interested in taking part, explaining the purpose of the study and emphasising the voluntary nature of the research. This should be done about a week in advance of the NatCen's team visit to give pupils time to decide whether they would like to express an interest in taking part, ask any questions, and contact the NatCen team if they should wish. This will help to ensure that pupils are giving informed consent to take part.</p>

	<p>Please select and share the relevant information sheets with pupils who would be eligible to take part in an interview about LNK mentoring. It may be helpful to share the information with more pupils than who will be able to take part on the day, in case some pupils are unable to take part / change their mind. The information sheet for pupils states that not everyone who is interested in taking part in the research may be able to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selected pupils can let you know if they would be happy to take part. If not please approach another eligible pupil who may be able to participate.</li> <li>• The information sheet also provides them with the research team’s contact information if they would like to find out more from us directly</li> <li>• Please ensure the pupils who are selected to take part have a range of characteristics where possible, in terms of gender, ethnicity and perceived experiences and views about LNK Educate. Including a range of views and experiences in the research will help to ensure that the evaluation findings are more robust.</li> <li>• Participation in this research is confidential and anonymous. The only exception would be if a participant makes a disclosure that gives us reason to believe they or someone else may be at risk of serious harm. If this happens, we may need to pass information on to an authority, which could include the police or social services.</li> <li>• The LNK mentor at your school has agreed to be our main contact on the day to help with the logistics of the visit, and if the research team had any safeguarding concerns about the pupils taking part in the research.</li> <li>• With their permission we would also like to have the contact details of the school safeguarding lead – please only share these in a secure way (e.g. by telephone and not email).</li> <li>• <b>Please note that no identifiable details about pupils should be shared with the NatCen research team in advance.</b></li> <li>• On the day of NatCen’s visit you will need to ensure that there is an appropriate room for us to speak with the pupils and staff, and conduct the interviews.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Confirmation process / on the day of NatCen’s visit</b></p>	<p>Immediately prior to the interviews, the NatCen researcher will recap the study aims and what taking part will involve, issues around confidentiality / anonymity and any caveats, and obtain verbal consent from each participant. NatCen will also ask the participants for consent to audio record the discussion.</p> <p>We envisage that there will not be an adult present in the room during the interviews with the pupils so that the discussion is confidential. We will ask the LNK mentor to be close by in case any assistance is needed.</p>

## Frequently Asked Questions

The FAQs and answers below might help you when discussing the research with potential participants.

### **1. What are the aims of the research?**

We are carrying out this research to understand how LNK Educate is working so far. LNK Educate is a series of lessons, delivered in schools, which are designed to help prevent young people from being drawn into knife crime and violence. This independent evaluation will support the future development of the LNK Educate programme.

### **2. Who is doing the research?**

NatCen Social Research, an independent research organisation, which has been running for more than 50 years, and does research for government, statutory agencies and voluntary sector organisations.

The research will be conducted by a team of researchers in NatCen's Policy Research Centre. The researchers all have experience of carrying out interviews with children, young people, and a wide range of professionals. More information is available on our website: [www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk).

NatCen is carrying out the research on behalf of the Youth Endowment Fund, who fund the LNK Educate programme run by the charity Lives Not Knives (LNK).

### **3. What is involved in taking part?**

The researcher will introduce themselves and briefly explain that the interview is anonymous and that what the participant tells the researcher will be confidential. In addition, participants:

- Do not have to answer all the questions and can stop the interview whenever they want without providing a reason
- Can ask questions at any point
- Will be asked to confirm that they are happy to take part before the discussion begins

The researcher will also cover limits to confidentiality, explaining that the only exception is if we are told something that makes us think that the participant or someone else they identify is at risk of serious harm or if we are told about criminal activities. We will explain that, if this happens, we may need to tell somebody at the school or another organisation in order to keep the participant or someone else safe.

Participants are free to change their mind about taking part before or during the discussion. Declining participation or withdrawing from the evaluation at any point will not negatively affect the participant in any way.

Interviews will be audio recorded with the participants' permission.

The study is focused on several key areas:

- How LNK Educate has been delivered in schools so far
- Training and support provided for school staff, including any strengths and areas for improvement
- Benefits or challenges for pupils taking part
- Participants' recommendations and/or improvements for the programme.

**4. How will the information be used?**

NatCen will write a report on the findings of this research for the Youth Endowment Fund. The report will tell the Youth Endowment Fund how the lessons are working. The report will not include participants' or schools' names or other identifiable details.

**5. Key contact information:**

You can contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email]

## Appendix F – Parent / guardian information sheet and opt-out form

Dear Parent/Carer,

The **National Centre for Social Research** (NatCen) are evaluating the Lives not Knives (LNK): Educate programme. The programme is running at your child's school. It aims to build children's awareness and understanding of knife crime and its consequences to reduce the number of young people getting involved in youth crime.

This project is funded by the **Youth Endowment Fund** (YEF) and managed by **Lives not Knives (LNK)**. The research findings will help YEF and LNK to understand what worked well and less well about the project and help decide how it is run in the future.

### What research will happen at the school?

A NatCen researcher will organise a day / time to speak to children at the school about their views and experiences of the programme either in a group or individual setting. Topics of discussion will include:

- Reflections on the content and delivery of the LNK: Educate programme;
- The impact that it may have had on their awareness and attitudes to knife crime;
- Any recommendations or improvements that they might have for the programme.

All our researchers have enhanced DBS clearance.

### What will happen to the information collected?

If your child agrees, the interview or group discussion will be audio-recorded so that we have a record of what is said. No identifying information will be shared with anyone outside of the research team. The only exception to this is if we hear about something that makes us think that someone is at risk of harm or if we are told about criminal activities. If this happens, we may need to tell somebody at the school or another organisation in order to keep the child or someone else safe.

At the end of the project, we will use the information to write a report for the YEF, which may include quotes of what your child has said and may be publicly available. We will not use your child's name, the school's name or any other details that could identify them.

### Does my child have to take part?

No, it's up to you and your child. If you do not want your child to take part in this research, please complete the slip attached and give back to the school by [date].

### What if my child does not want to take part?

All the research activities are voluntary. A teacher will share an information leaflet with all students before the research happens. They will check with all children that they are happy to take part. During the discussion, children do not have to talk about anything that they don't want to. They can decide to stop at any time.

### Where to find out more about the project?

For more information, visit [webpage].

Or contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or [email]

### Your privacy:

We will treat the information we collect in the strictest confidence under GDPR. The information will be used for research purposes only. We will not collect any personal data about children for the study before

they agree to take part in the research, apart from their names. To find out about how NatCen will use the information and data you can visit [webpage].

**Who are NatCen?**

NatCen is an independent research organisation working to improve people’s lives through research. You can find out more about us by visiting [www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk)

**Opt-out form for parents and carers**

The LNK: Educate programme evaluation.

I do **not** want my child to take part in research activities about the LNK: Educate programme:

Your child’s name.....

Your full name.....

Your signature.....

Date.....

Please return this slip to your school by [date].

## Appendix G – Information sheet for pupils taking part in a discussion group

### What is LNK: Educate?

LNK: Educate is a series of lessons delivered in schools, which are designed to help prevent young people from being drawn into knife crime and violence. The programme is run by the charity Lives not Knives (LNK) and it is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund.

### Who are NatCen?

NatCen is an independent social research charity with 50 years of experience working to improve people's lives through research.

### What is the research about?

We (NatCen) are carrying out an independent evaluation of LNK: Educate to understand what you think about it and to help improve delivery of the programme and lessons in the future. We have been asked to carry out the research by the Youth Endowment Fund.

As part of the evaluation, we are talking to and hearing the views of teachers and support workers delivering the lessons, as well as young people taking part in the lessons and mentoring sessions.

### Why are you contacting me?

Your school is running LNK: Educate and you attended some or all of the lessons, which is why we are getting in touch with you. We want to hear what you think about LNK: Educate and what worked well or less well.

### What will taking part in the research involve?

You will take part in a group discussion with up to 5 other pupils who have also attended the LNK: Educate lessons. The discussion will be carried out with a researcher from NatCen at your school and will last for around **60 minutes**.

Everything you say will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone else outside of the research team. We will ask everyone who takes part in the group discussion to keep what is said confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us something that makes us think that you or someone else is at risk of harm or you tell us about criminal activities. If this happens, we may need to tell somebody at your school or another organisation in order to keep you or someone else safe.

So that we can spend our time talking to you rather than taking notes, we normally record the conversation. We keep the recording safe and only the research team will hear it.

The written version of your interview, and all other documents including information that could identify you (such as your name) will be deleted after the research project ends.

### What will you ask me about?

The kinds of things we'd like to discuss with you are your views and experiences of:

- The content and delivery of the LNK: Educate programme;
- The impact that it may have had on your awareness and attitudes to knife crime;
- Any recommendations or improvements that you might have for the programme.

You can talk as much or as little as you like. There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear what you think.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it's up to you whether you want to take part in the group discussion. It is also up to you what and how much you say. You don't have to answer all questions: you can choose not to talk about something, even if we ask about it.

During the discussion, you can take a break at any time or leave the conversation at any point, and don't need to give an explanation. This won't have any negative impact.

### **What will happen to the information I provide?**

NatCen will gather all the answers and comments from everyone. We will write a report of what we find out and give it to YEF. The report will tell YEF how the lessons are working and may be publicly available. We may also use words of what you've said (quotes), but **the report will not use your name or personal details about you**. We will not use the name of your school, teachers or local area.

### **Do my parents or carers know?**

Yes, we also wrote to your parents/carers. We told them about the evaluation and that you might be taking part in the research.

### **What happens next?**

If you are happy to be involved, please let the person who gave you this leaflet know as soon as possible. You can also contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email]

Not everyone who is interested in taking part in a group discussion may be able to.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

For more information including about how the data we collect will be used, stored and deleted visit [webpage]. You can also contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

## Appendix H – Information sheet for pupils taking part in an interview

### What is LNK: Educate?

LNK: Educate is a series of lessons delivered in schools, which are designed to help prevent young people from being drawn into knife crime and violence. The programme is run by the charity Lives not Knives (LNK) and it is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund.

### Who are NatCen?

NatCen is an independent social research charity with 50 years of experience working to improve people's lives through research.

### What is the research about?

We (NatCen) are carrying out an independent evaluation of LNK: Educate to understand what is successful and less successful about it, to try to improve delivery of the programme/lessons in the future. We have been asked to carry out the research by the Youth Endowment Fund.

As part of the evaluation, we are talking to and hearing the views of teachers and support workers delivering the lessons, as well as young people taking part in the lessons and mentoring sessions.

### Why are you contacting me?

Your school is running LNK: Educate and you attended some or all of the lessons, which is why we are getting in touch with you. We want to hear what you think about LNK: Educate and what worked well and less well.

### What will taking part in the research involve?

You will take part in an interview with a member of our research team. The discussion will be carried out with a researcher from NatCen at your school and will last for up to **45 minutes**.

Everything you say will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone else outside of the research team. The only exception to this is if you tell us something that makes us think that you or someone else is at risk of harm or you tell us about criminal activities. If this happens, we may need to tell somebody at your school or another organisation in order to keep you or someone else safe.

So that we can spend our time talking to you rather than taking notes, we normally record the conversation. We keep the recording safe and only the research team will hear it.

The written version of your interview, and all other documents including information that could identify you (such as your name) will be deleted after the research project ends.

### What will you ask me about?

The kinds of things we'd like to discuss with you are your views and experiences of:

- The content and delivery of the LNK: Educate programme;

- The impact that it may have had on your awareness and attitudes to knife crime;
- Any recommendations or improvements that you might have for the programme.

You can talk as much or as little as you like. There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear what you think.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it's up to you whether you want to take part in an interview. It is also up to you what and how much you say. You don't have to answer all questions: you can choose not to talk about something, even if we ask about it.

During the discussion, you can take a break at any time or leave the conversation at any point, and don't need to give an explanation. This won't have any negative impact.

### **What will happen to the information I provide?**

NatCen will gather all the answers and comments from everyone. We will write a report of what we find out and give it to YEF. The report will tell YEF how the lessons are working and may be publicly available. We may also use words of what you've said (quotes) but **the report will not use your name or personal details about you**. We will not use the name of your school, teachers or local area.

### **Do my parents or carers know?**

Yes, we also wrote to your parents/carers. We told them about the evaluation and that you might be taking part in the research.

### **What happens next?**

If you are happy to be involved, please let the person who gave you this leaflet know as soon as possible. You can also contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

Not everyone who is interested in taking part in an interview may be able to.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

For more information including about how the data we collect will be used, stored and deleted visit [webpage]. You can also contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

## Appendix I – Information sheet for school leads

### About the research

The [National Centre for Social Research](#) has been appointed by the Youth Endowment Fund to carry out an independent evaluation of the LNK Educate programme. This research aims to understand how LNK Educate is working so far and will support its future development.

As part of this work, we would like to speak to a range of people at schools delivering LNK Educate, including teachers, mentors, and children.

### What does taking part in this research involve for teachers?

We'd like to ask if you would be willing to take part in a 30-60 minute research interview. This will take place during [months] at your school at a time that is convenient for you.

The purpose of the discussion is to gather views and experiences of the programme to date, including things that have worked well and less well. The kinds of things we'd like to ask you about are your views on:

- how LNK educate has been delivered in your school so far
- training and support provided for school staff, including any strengths and areas for improvement
- any benefits or challenges you may have identified for children taking part.

Participation in the research is voluntary. Whether or not you take part, will not affect your relationship with LNK, the Youth Endowment Fund, or any other organisation. If you agree to participate, you are free to not answer any questions, change your mind or terminate the interview at any point. You will be able to withdraw your contribution at any point after your interview until the point that the data has been used by NatCen and/or the data is no longer identifiable.

Everything said in the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence. The only reason we may discuss what you have said with others is if you tell us something which suggests that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

We will ask your permission to audio record the interview so that we have a detailed and accurate record of what you said.

The information you provide will be systematically analysed to feed into a thematic report for the Youth Endowment Fund, which may be publicly available. We may also use quotes of what you've said, but your views will not be attributed to you by name and identifiable data about individuals or schools taking part in the programme will not be included in the report. While NatCen will take steps to maintain anonymity, it is possible that some views may be identifiable in outputs to those who know you well due to the small number of staff / schools taking part.

The research team will discuss this with you before the interview and ensure you are able to review your contribution at the end of the discussion if necessary.

For more information about how we will handle and use the data we collect, please see our privacy notice at [webpage].

### **What happens next?**

If you are happy to be involved, please let the staff member who gave you this information know. The NatCen research team will arrange a day to visit your school. Not everyone who expresses an interest in taking part in the research may be invited to take part in an interview on the day.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

For more information, visit [webpage]. You can also contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

## Appendix J – Topic guide for LNK mentors<sup>57</sup>

### Research objectives

LNK Educate, delivered by Lives Not Knives (LNK), is one of a number of interventions funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and is designed to prevent young people being drawn into crime and violence. Delivery is focused on 9-14 year olds in the Croydon area.

The underlying premise is that developing pro-social skills will reduce the likelihood of exclusion and involvement in offending. The intervention has a tiered design, combining a 'whole school' approach to crime and violence reduction with intensive mentoring for at-risk young people:

- 'universal' element: LNK provide resources to schools, which teachers use to deliver one day workshops and regular lessons.
- 'targeted' element: intensive mentoring sessions are provided for young people considered most at risk. These comprise 1:1 sessions plus additional drop-ins if needed, conducted at schools and LNK premises.

The overall aims of this research are to:

- assess the feasibility of delivering the universal and targeted elements as intended;
- identify and test appropriate measures and mechanisms for assessing the intended outcomes of the intervention; and measure early 'distance travelled' as a result of receiving LNK.

### Topic guide notes

This topic guide is for use in the interview with LNK mentors.

Topic guides help ensure consistency in data collection by setting out the key issues that should be explored with each participant. While the topic guide shapes the content of the interview, it should be used flexibly. This means that the order in which issues are covered and the time spent on different topics will vary from interview to interview. The responsive nature of qualitative research also enables interviewers to explore any unanticipated but relevant themes that arise during the discussion.

We believe topic guides work best when items are worded as short phrases rather than questions. This encourages the interviewer to formulate questions that are responsive to the situation and to use terms that are tailored to the participant. Decisions about what and how to follow up will be made by the researcher based on their knowledge of the research objectives.

## 1. Introduction

*Aim: to remind participants about the aims of the evaluation, to explain how the interview will be conducted and how the data will be used.*

- Introduce self and NatCen (including NatCen's independence)

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<sup>57</sup> Note that the topic guides included in the technical appendices are slightly abridged versions of the topic guides used in the qualitative research.

- Introduce research, aims of study and interview
- Length (about 60 minutes)
- Voluntary participation
- Brief overview of topics to be covered in interview
- Confidentiality, anonymity and potential caveats
- Data use and security (including audio recording and data storage)
- Questions
- Verbal consent

## 2. Background and context

*Aim: To gather background information on the participant, reasons for being a mentor, check their understanding of LNK Educate and mentoring.*

- How they got involved in being a mentor for LNK Educate
  - When they started working as a mentor for this programme
  - Reasons for involvement
  - Prior experience of working with primary/ secondary school age young people
- Briefly - what are their main roles and responsibilities as a mentor
  - What their 'workload' looks like
  - Number of schools/ children they work with
  - Overview of schools they work with including specific pupils' needs (probe for an overview of any differences between schools)
- How they would describe the LNK Educate programme as a whole / what are it's aims
  - How does the mentoring fit in to the project

## 3. Mentor training and ongoing support

*Aim: To explore mentor training, ongoing support and views of it*

- What training have they received to deliver LNK Educate
  - Initial training
  - Resources – guidance materials
- Ongoing training and support
  - What is it on, who provides it etc. (e.g. mental health training)
  - Opportunities for peer/ group learning between mentors
- Views on training and support

- What they learnt
- How useful/ not they found it and ways in which it prepared them for delivering the mentoring programme
- How they would improve training/ support
- Views on management of the programme by the LNK leads
  - How LNK Educate is managed internally within LNK
  - What works well/ less well
- Views on funding and resources available
  - Any gaps/challenges

#### 4. Communication and training for schools

*Aim: to explore the mentors' role in communicating with the school and training school staff, and the level of training and support that school staff receive in preparation for and during delivery of LNK Educate*

*Note for researcher: Please explain that we would now like to focus the interview on this academic year, however the participant can also reflect back on the previous year where helpful / time allows to do so. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID 19.*

Mentors role in information and communication with school staff about LNK Educate. Probe who receives information, timing, frequency, mode etc.

- What information and communication about the programme is offered (Inc. mode, how and when – including at start and during delivery)
- How LNK work with schools throughout implementation and delivery (e.g. regular updates and feedback, ad hoc communications etc.)
- What has worked well/is planned; anything they would do differently
- Overview of guidance and training provided to school staff
  - Role of mentors in delivery of guidance and training
  - At set-up/ ongoing (probe what is delivered and to whom)
  - Nature of the training provided (content and mode, any variation in guidance/ training between schools)
- Views on the efficacy of guidance/training provision
  - What has worked well/ less well
  - Gaps in training/ anything they would do differently

#### 5. Delivery of universal programme

*Aim: to explore what is delivered in the universal element, how LNK work with schools to deliver the scheme and views on efficacy.*

*Note for researcher: may need to remind participants that we'd like to discuss delivery to date, with a particular focus on this academic year. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID 19.*

***This element of LNK may be less relevant to their role, cover briefly.***

- Nature of universal element delivery
  - Which children are involved (probe age band, needs)
  - What is delivered to children (probe any variation between schools/classes)
    - Number of sessions, frequency, length
    - Content and format
  - What a typical session is expected to look like (probe any variation between schools/classes)
  - Overview of resources provided to teachers delivering universal element
- Support for teachers
  - Type of support offered
  - Facilitators/barriers to support provision
- Communication and feedback with staff delivering the universal element – overview of how LNK are updated on progress [if not covered above]
- Facilitators and barriers to delivery; and early lessons/ areas for improvement

## **6. Delivery of the targeted programme – key section**

*Aim: to understand 1:1 mentoring delivered to children, including scope and progress of delivery and views on efficacy. Again, focus on work this academic year but also briefly cover delivery prior to this if relevant / helpful to do so. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID 19.*

- How many schools they have delivered mentoring in as part of the LNK Educate project this academic year
  - Check if these are new schools or not
  - Explore key differences between the schools they work in
- How children are selected
  - Who is/is not eligible and why
  - Who is involved in selection; extent of pupil choice; parent/guardian communication and consent
  - What works well and less well about selection process
  - Views on whether the 'right' pupils are selected
  - Differences across schools (if work across multiple schools)
  - Facilitators and barriers
- How mentors are selected to work with each pupil
  - Who is involved in selection; extent of pupil choice; parent/guardian communication and consent
  - What works well and less well about selection process
  - Facilitators and barriers

- The practicalities of setting up / arranging the roadshows/workshops for the mentees and mentoring at schools [Researcher note: discuss each in turn]
  - Frequency, format, average length
  - How pupils are invited to the roadshow
  - How mentoring sessions are scheduled in with pupils
  - Where they take place – suitability of space school provides
  - Do they have a key school contact – what is their role
  - Differences by school (if work across multiple schools)
  - Probe for what is working well/ less well and any early lessons.
- What a typical roadshow looks like for pupils referred onto the mentoring sessions
  - Content, main topics covered
  - Whether a plan is followed for every roadshow
  - Any adaptations made and reasons for these
  - How well pupils engaged with content
  - Barriers and facilitators to delivery of roadshows
- What a typical mentoring session looks like
  - Whether a plan is followed every session
  - Views on content (e.g. creating PDP, evaluating goals, reviewing challenges)
  - Signposting to external support
  - Views on maintaining weekly record (including targets, discussion points, actions for pupil, actions or mentor, input from teacher)
  - Any adaptations made and reasons for these
  - Relationship/ rapport building between mentor and mentee
  - How well pupils engaged with content
  - What works well / less well
- Level / type of interaction between the two mentors working at a school
  - What works well / less well
- Barriers and facilitators to delivery of mentoring
  - Suggestions for improvement for delivery
- Other LNK activities pupils may have engaged in e.g. Youth Hub
- Pupil withdrawal / drop out from the programme
  - Frequency
  - Reasons for this
  - Attempts to re-engage
- Communication and feedback

- How LNK / mentors monitor progress
- Feedback / working with teachers, schools and other stakeholders – what and to whom
- What is working well and less well; areas for improvement

## 7. Outcomes and impacts

*Aim: to explore perceived and expected outcomes and opportunities*

- Key outcomes the scheme aims to achieve. What constitutes a successful / unsuccessful outcome for:
  - **Young people receiving universal element;** (probe differences between any particular groups)
    - can spot warning signs of anger/ distress,
    - increased knowledge/ understanding of violence and crime and its negative impact
  - **Young people receiving targeted element;** (probe differences between any particular groups)
    - better understanding/ awareness of their 'purpose', the opportunities that exist and how to achieve their goals
    - increased confidence and greater sense of control
    - change in behaviour, approach for dealing with conflict/distress,
    - remain in mainstream school,
  - Teachers and schools (probe relationships with students, discussion of difficult topics, managing behaviour, school adopts a whole school approach to reducing school exclusions, other)
  - LNK staff, including mentors (explore general outcomes for participant / mentors and probe for listening skills, coaching skills and managing difficult behaviour)
  - Any others stakeholders/wider society
- Perceived impact/s of scheme so far and longer term/ anticipated impacts – probe how LNK find out about/measure progress
  - Young people receiving universal element; receiving targeted element (probe differences between any particular groups)
  - Teachers and schools (probe relationships with students, discussion of difficult topics, managing behaviour, other)
  - LNK staff and mentors
  - Any others stakeholders/wider society
- Any unexpected/unintended impact(s) – probe positive and negative for the groups as above
- Which element(s) of the programme were perceived to lead to these impacts (e.g. relationship between mentor and mentee)
- External influences on impacts (e.g. COVID-19, whether accessing wider LNK support such as Youth Hub, individual motivation, other individual circumstances)

## 8. Reflections and next steps

*Aim: to discuss key learning from the set-up and early delivery of LNK Educate*

- Reflections on progress / success of scheme so far
  - What has worked well
  - Particular challenges/ barriers
- Impact of COVID-19 (*Researcher note: may have been covered above*)
  - How COVID-19 has affected delivery (e.g. referrals, staffing, delivery model, partnership working, interest/ enthusiasm etc.)
  - Facilitators and barriers (e.g. things that have made it easier/ harder to deliver since COVID-19)
  - Anticipated ongoing impact
- Any other changes expected that may influence delivery and impact of programme
- Hopes for scheme going forward
  - Reflections on whether/ how the scheme is currently meeting expectations
  - Thoughts on reality of achieving aims (viability etc.)
  - Views on sustainability
- Lessons learned and recommendations
  - Key challenges and facilitators

## 9. Close

- Final closing comments
  - Anything to add
  - Any questions
- Thank participants
- Check they're comfortable with the content of the interview in light of the limits to anonymity – agree any redactions/amendments.
- Process for withdrawing data

**End recording, thanks and close**

## Appendix K – Topic guide for use with LNK management

- Research objectives (see Appendix J)
- Topic guide notes (see Appendix J)

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### 1. Introduction

See Appendix J.

### 2. Background and context

*Aim: to understand the organisation and participants' background and involvement*

- Organisational background and context
  - Overview: when and how LNK was established; priority areas of focus (including rationale and funding streams)
  - [If not covered] When and how partnership with YEF came about
- Overview of participants' involvement
  - Current position / job titles
  - Length of time in roles
  - Key responsibilities (overall; specifically, in relation to the LNK Educate programme, including stages of their involvement)

### 3. Aims of LNK Educate

*Aim: to explore participants' views on why the intervention is needed*

- Aims of the programme: how it is intended to work and with whom; views on need/ rationale for scheme
- Designing and developing LNK educate
  - When and how programme was established (including how it was commissioned)
  - Participants' roles in design and development stage; who else was involved and how
  - Any particular opportunities offered by the YEF partnership/commissioning for LNK Educate

### 4. Implementation and governance

- *Aim: to understand how the programme was set up and is managed*
- Initial set up and implementation of the LNK Educate scheme (Year 1)
  - Overview of what happened (probe e.g. recruitment and/or allocation of programme staff, recruiting schools, establishing intervention plans/schedules locally)

- Whether set-up was in line with expectations
- Key facilitators/ barriers to set-up (e.g. school buy-in/ understanding, resources etc.)
- Key facilitators/ barriers to initial Year 1 implementation/ delivery
  - Impact of COVID-19
- Experience of delivery/ activities during the first lockdown (briefly)
- Selection and recruitment of schools in Year 2
  - Process to select areas and schools to work with
  - Which areas and schools were chosen (including rationale)
  - Overview of recruitment process – when, who involved, how process is managed
  - Responses from schools that were approached (positive and negative)
  - Any facilitators and/or barriers to school selection and recruitment
- Funding and resources available for intervention set-up and implementation (Years 1 & 2)
  - Views on level of funding and resources available
  - Any gaps/challenges
- Governance and management
  - Internal management: how LNK Educate is managed internally within LNK
  - External governance: how they work with YEF and any other partners. (Probe responsibilities and effectiveness, experiences during COVID-19, the review period and during Year 2)
  - Involvement in any local networks or partnerships: role and purpose of any steering groups/ projects boards etc
  - Views on what works well/ less well.

## 5. Communication and training for schools

*Aim: to explore the level of training and support that school staff receive in preparation for and during delivery of LNK Educate*

*Note for researcher: Please explain that we would now like to focus the interview on this academic year, however the participant can also reflect back on the previous year where helpful to do so. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID 19.*

- Information and communication with school staff about LNK Educate. Probe who receives information, timing, frequency, mode etc.
  - What information and communication about the scheme is offered (Inc. mode, how and when – including at start of scheme and during delivery)
  - How LNK work with schools throughout implementation and delivery (e.g. regular updates and feedback, ad hoc communications etc.)
  - What has worked well/is planned; anything they would do differently
- Overview of guidance and training provided to staff
  - At set-up/ ongoing (probe what is delivered and to whom)

- Nature of the training provided (content and mode, any variation in guidance/ training for different staff roles)
- Views on why training was considered important (or not)
- Views on the efficacy of guidance/training provision
  - What has worked well/ less well (probe how this is known: their own assessment / from feedback received)
  - Gaps in training/ anything they would do differently
  - Challenges during the scheme's early delivery that could be addressed by improved training

## 6. Delivery of universal programme

*Aim: to explore what is delivered in the universal element, how LNK work with schools to deliver the scheme and views on efficacy.*

*Note for researcher: may need to remind participants that we'd like to focus on this academic year. You can ask the participant to reflect back on the previous year where helpful to do so. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID-19.*

- Overview of delivery to date across schools
  - Stage of delivery: whether and when started in schools (probe how many / which and rationale for selection); anticipated completion timeframe (if known)
  - Facilitators and barriers to delivery
- Nature of universal element delivery
  - Which children are involved (probe age band, needs; whether parental consent is required; extent of choice for children)
  - What is delivered to children (probe any variation between schools/classes)
  - Number of sessions, frequency, length
  - Format, length and duration of delivery
  - Content, coverage, flexibility, how sessions differ from regular lessons
  - What a typical session is expected to look like
  - Overview of resources provided to teachers delivering universal element
- Support for teachers
  - Type of support offered
  - Facilitators/barriers to support provision

Communication and feedback with staff delivering the universal element – overview of how LNK are updated on progress [if not covered above]

What is working well and less well; and early lessons/ areas for improvement (Probe – differences between yrs. 1 and 2 and different schools)

## 7. Delivery of the targeted programme

*Aim: to understand 1:1 mentoring delivered to children, including scope and progress of delivery and views on efficacy.*

*Note for researcher: may need to remind participants that we'd like to again focus on this academic year. You can ask the participant to reflect back on the previous year where helpful to do so. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID-19.*

- Overview of work to date
  - Whether programme has started in schools (how many; whether delivered in all schools; rationale for any selection))
  - Facilitators and barriers to delivery
- How children are selected
  - Who is/is not eligible and why
  - Who is involved in selection; extent of pupil choice; parent/guardian communication and consent
  - What works well and less well about selection process
  - Facilitators and barriers
- How mentors are selected
  - Who is involved in selection; extent of pupil choice; parent/guardian communication and consent
  - What works well and less well about selection process
  - Facilitators and barriers

What is delivered to children (including roadshows/workshops and mentoring sessions), including any variation between individuals and schools

- Format, length and duration of delivery, how people are engaged etc.
- Probe for what is working well/ less well and any early lessons.
- Other LNK activities pupils may have engaged in e.g. Youth Hub
- Communication and feedback
  - How LNK monitor progress
  - Feedback to schools and other stakeholders – what and to whom
- What is working well and less well; areas for improvement

## 8. Outcomes and impacts

*Aim: to explore perceived and expected outcomes and opportunities*

- Key outcomes the scheme aims to achieve. What constitutes a successful / unsuccessful outcome for:
  - **Young people receiving universal element;** (probe differences between any particular groups)  
E.g.
    - can spot warning signs of anger / distress

- increased knowledge/ understanding of violence and crime and its negative impact
- **Young people receiving targeted element;** (probe differences between any particular groups)  
E.g.
  - better understanding/ awareness of their 'purpose', the opportunities that exist and how to achieve their goals
  - increased confidence and greater sense of control
  - change in behaviour, approach for dealing with conflict/distress
  - remain in mainstream school,
- Teachers and schools (probe relationships with students, discussion of difficult topics, managing behaviour, school adopts a whole school approach to reducing school exclusions, other)
- LNK staff/ programme
- Any others stakeholders/wider society

Perceived impact/s of scheme so far and longer term/ anticipated impacts – probe how LNK find out about/measure progress

- Young people receiving universal element; receiving targeted element (probe differences between any particular groups)
- Teachers and schools (probe relationships with students, discussion of difficult topics, managing behaviour, other)
- LNK
- Any others stakeholders/wider society
- Any unexpected/unintended impact(s) – probe positive and negative for the groups as above
- Which element(s) of the programme were perceived to lead to these impacts (e.g. relationship between mentor and mentee)
- External influences on impacts (e.g. COVID-19, whether accessing wider LNK support such as Youth Hub, individual motivation, other individual circumstances)

## 9. Reflections and next steps

*Aim: to discuss key learning from the set-up and delivery of LNK Educate*

- Reflections on progress / success of scheme so far
  - What has worked well
  - Particular challenges/ barriers
- Impact of COVID-19 (*Researcher note: may have been covered above*)
  - How COVID-19 has affected delivery (e.g. referrals, staffing, delivery model, partnership working, interest/ enthusiasm etc.)

- Facilitators and barriers (e.g. things that have made it easier/ harder to deliver since COVID-19)
- Anticipated ongoing impact
- Any other changes expected that may influence delivery and impact of programme
- Hopes for scheme going forward
  - Reflections on whether/ how the scheme is currently meeting expectations
  - Thoughts on reality of achieving aims (viability etc.)
  - Views on sustainability
- Lessons learned and recommendations
  - Key challenges and facilitators
  - If you were to do this again, what changes would you make?

## 10. Close

- Final closing comments
  - Anything to add
  - Any questions
- Thank participants

Check they're comfortable with the content of the interview in light of the limits to anonymity – agree any redactions/amendments.

**End recording, thanks and close**

## Appendix L – Topic guide for use with young people

- **Research objectives (see Appendix J)**
- **Topic guide notes (see Appendix J)**

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### 1. Introduction

See Appendix J.

### 2. Background and context

*Aim: to 'warm up' participants and provide some context for the discussion.*

- A little bit about them
  - Age/school year (**focus groups:** name)
  - Area they live in
  - Favourite thing to do when they're not in school (briefly)
- Their local area
  - What is it like
  - Sense of safety
- Their school
  - What it is like going to school there – what words would they use to describe it
  - What do they like most about school, and anything they don't like (e.g. activities/clubs, friendship groups, school meals)
  - What types of actions do teachers take when pupils break the rules

### 3. Initial awareness and understanding of LNK: Educate

*Aim: to explore participants' initial awareness, understanding and views of the intervention*

- **When did they first hear about the LNK: Educate programme**
  - Who told them about it (e.g. a teacher, an LNK worker)
  - What information were they given about the programme (probe for: what were they told about the lessons in school / the mentoring sessions)
- **What were their initial thoughts about it and why**
  - Level of interest in the topic / relevance of topic
  - Expectations – what would it help with and how

- **Purpose and aims of LNK: Educate (briefly)**

- What is the aim/purpose of LNK: Educate
- Views on need to learn about knife crime in their school

- **Interviewer note, to use if awareness is low or varies across the group:** LNK: Educate is designed to help stop young people being drawn into crime and violence. The aim is to raise awareness among young people and teachers about the consequences of knife crime and youth crime more generally, to reduce the chances of being involved in offending and excluded from school. LNK: Educate combines the whole school working together to help achieve this, with extra mentoring for some young people who may benefit from this.

#### 4. Views and experiences of participating in lessons (Universal element)

*Aim: To understand the pupils' views on the content and delivery of LNK: Educate.*

*Interviewer note: We will have checked with each school prior to the interview/discussion group which lessons were/were not delivered and adjust discussion accordingly.*

- Recap of lesson content. Ask pupils to recap which lessons they have attended / what they have learnt about in their LNK: Educate lessons.

*Support recall by prompting about videos shown in each of the lessons (share relevant PowerPoint slides to assist):*

- **Video 1 – Sister of a fatal stabbing victim:** Sophie Sterling speaks about the events and aftermath of her brother Wesley Sterling being stabbed and passing away as a result of his injuries. Discusses the emotional impact on Wesley's family and friends.
- **Video 2 – Junior Barrister:** A junior barrister talks through the consequences of becoming involved in knife crime / possessing a knife can have on someone's future. Talks through the law about knife possession, the legal concept of joint enterprise and the police process that takes place if someone is caught with a knife.
- **Video 3 – Trauma surgeon:** A trauma surgeon explains the long-lasting physical and mental impacts that knife crime can have on a victim. Dispels common myths about knife crime and talks about there is no 'safe' space on the body to stab someone.
- **Video 4 – Policeman:** A police officer talks through what happens when someone is arrested for possessing a knife or for using one. Explains the consequences of having a criminal record on a person's future prospects, including future jobs or travel. Explains police powers to stop and search and the grounds that it must be based on.
- **Video 5 – Mother of an assailant:** Dunia Shafik speaks about her son, Ali, who was sentenced to 22 years in prison for murder. Talks about the emotional and psychological impact of knife crime on the family of the person who carried out the physical attack.
- **Video 6 – Stabbing victim:** Dan Whitlam discusses the impact that being stabbed when he was younger had on him (e.g. stopped socialising, stopped playing sports, was unable to leave the house alone). Talks about his mental and physical recovery, and his experience of going to a support group for trauma.

- Views on the lesson content

*For focus groups, ask participants to 'pick' 2-3 lessons mentioned above to talk about in more detail. For interviews, explore views more generally and, if possible, whether any views are lesson-specific.*

- Views on the videos and the class tasks

- How did they make them feel (e.g. shocked, worried, sad, confused, stressed etc.) – really want to explore these feelings and understand why they felt what they did.
- Interest in the topics (probe: was there one lesson that they found most interesting)
- Were there things that they knew already – what were they
- Was anything information new, surprising or unexpected
- Anything that made them think differently about:
  - knife crime generally
  - Impacts on families and friends of those involved
  - Impacts on young people who might get involved in/ commit these sorts of crimes

- How did they feel after the lessons

- Awareness of who they could go to for support
- Did they discuss with peers/ teachers/ parents further – how did this make them feel

- Any suggestions for improvement/ changes to the lesson content (*probe*: what could have made it more engaging, relevant)

- Views and experiences of lesson delivery

- Length of lessons, frequency of lessons
- Class size and composition (e.g. peers)
- Views on teaching style
  - Who delivered the lesson(s) (*probe for*: appropriateness of person delivering the lesson[s])
  - Presentation of material
  - Communication style
  - Amount of group discussion/ sitting and listening
  - Did they feel able/ comfortable to speak up/ discuss issues

- Any experience of learning about knife crime before

- Where (in school/ other places)
- What was it like
- How did it compare (good/ less good)

- Any suggestions for improvement/ changes to the lesson format

## 5. Views and experiences of participating in mentoring (Targeted element, if applicable)

- **Experience of being selected for 1:1 mentoring**
  - When were they told/ who told them about it (e.g. a teacher, LNK worker)
  - What information were they given about it
  - Any insight into why they were selected to take part/ what the aim of the mentoring is
  - Choice about whether to take part or not
  - Initial thoughts about it and why (e.g. did it sound interesting/ or not, any concerns, worries)
  - Did they attend an LNK Roadshow (If so, ask about this experience)
- Experience of working with their mentor
  - Who is their mentor (e.g. a LNK worker)
  - Views on their relationship, probe for:
    - How relatable is their mentor (e.g. similar background/ experiences)
    - Ease talking openly with their mentor (why/ why not, what helps/ doesn't help being able to talk openly)
  - Views on mentoring style (e.g. communication style, presentation of material)
  - What works well/ less well about working with their mentor
  - Views on 1:1 mentoring format vs group discussion
- Views and experiences of the mentoring delivery
  - What does a typical mentoring session look like
    - Views on frequency and length of mentoring sessions
    - Where are they held (e.g. at school, home, LNK unit)
  - How many sessions have they taken part in (probe: have they missed any sessions and why)
    - What happens if they don't attend a session
- Explore impact of COVID-19 on the sessions (e.g. face-to-face format, number of sessions)
- Any suggestions for improvement/ changes to the mentoring format
- Views and experiences of the mentoring session content (Interviewer note: some of these questions may have been covered when discussing format/ delivery in section above, use flexibly)
  - Content of discussion
    - Topics discussed (e.g. individual ambitions, personal strengths, possible career paths)
    - Extent to which discussions are led by YP/ mentor and views on this
    - Action planning (probe for: process involved, details of individual action plan and views on this)
    - Anything discussed or learnt that made them think differently about:
      - Their future

- Their ambitions
- Their individual strengths
- How did they feel after the sessions (probe: who could they go to for support – mentor, teachers, parents, peers etc.)
- What did they like/ dislike about the mentoring sessions
- Comparison to other forms of support they may have received in the past
- Any suggestions for improvements/ changes to the session content (probe: what would have made it more engaging, relevant?)

## 6. Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours

*Aim: To briefly explore if LNK: Educate has raised awareness of issues surrounding knife crime.*

*Interviewer note: Refer to the supplementary interview notes to aid probing / possible response options.*

- **What do they think that the consequences of knife crime are:**
- **Scenario 1** [*show statement on screen to pupils and read aloud for them*]
- *Adam is in Year 10. Earlier, he was caught threatening another pupil with a knife on school premises by a teacher.*
  - What do you think the consequences are for Adam? (probe for: the impact on their future, the legal consequences)
  - What do you think the consequences are for his family and friends? (probe for: the victim's family and friends, the victim, the community).
  - How would your answers differ (if at all) if Adam was present while his friend threatened another pupil with a knife?
  - Does it have to be a knife (e.g. other items could be classed as an 'offensive weapon')
- **Changes in attitudes/ views about knife crime because of taking part in LNK: Educate**
  - How have their views, attitudes changed because of taking part in LNK: Educate lessons (and mentoring sessions, if applicable)
  - Ask them to imagine they hadn't taken part in the lessons/ mentoring sessions... Would they have responded differently to Scenario 1
- **Awareness of available support relating to knife crime**
- **Scenario 2** [*Optional scenario: if there is time / depending on response to previous scenario - show statement on screen to pupils and read aloud for them*]
- *Your friend, Lauren, has started carrying a knife to school. Who could you talk to about this?*
- [*If Scenario 2 is not used to frame discussion, continue to ask these questions*]:

- Who could they talk to about any concerns/ for support about knife crime and related issues (e.g. LNK unit, LNK worker, teachers, parents, friends, other support) and why
- What alternative strategies could someone take, rather than carrying a knife
- **Changes in awareness because of taking part in LNK: Educate**
  - How has their awareness of available support for knife crime changed because of taking part in LNK: Educate lessons (and mentoring sessions, if applicable)
  - Would they have known where to go for advice / support before attending lessons/ mentoring sessions (if applicable)

## 7. Outcomes and impact of LNK: Educate

*Aim: To gather pupil's direct reflections on whether the LNK: Educate programme has impacted their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.*

- **What impact has taking part in LNK: Educate had on them. Probe for:**
  - How they feel about knife crime
  - Their awareness of the issues surrounding knife crime (probe for: psychological impact on family and friends, legal consequences, medical facts about stabbing, police powers)
  - On their own behaviour
  - On how they would deal with a situation where a friend was carrying a knife
  - Awareness of who they can talk to for support around knife crime (e.g. concerns, to ask for advice if they feel pressured to carry a knife)
  - Whether they would talk to a trusted adult for support

### Mentee specific (targeted element):

- **What impact has taking part in 1:1 mentoring had on them. Probe for:**
  - Understanding of and ability to spot the warning signs of escalating distress and anger (e.g. do they have alternative strategies to deal with conflict, anger or sadness)
  - Ability to avoid situations which will result in themselves getting excluded
  - Understanding of their 'purpose' and personal ambitions
  - Awareness of career opportunities that exist and how they can achieve their goals.
  - Sense of confidence/ control/ ability to express how they feel
  - On their friends/ family
- **Looking to the future**
  - Plans for future engagement with their mentor
  - Feelings about their individual action plan (e.g. optimistic / sceptical)
  - Any other hopes and aspirations from their involvement with the LNK programme

## 8. Summary

*Aim: Understand pupils' overall reflections on the LNK: Educate programme*

- Key things that pupils took away from the programme
- 'Best' parts of the lessons/ mentoring (e.g. what did they find most interesting, helpful)
- Parts that could be improved
- Anything that was missing
- If pupils would recommend the programme to others – at all, of their age, other ages

## 9. Close

- Final closing comments: any additions/questions
- Thank participants
- Check that participants are comfortable with the content of the interview in light of the limits to anonymity
- Ensure participant has / will be given a copy of the support information sheet

**End recording, thanks and close**

## Appendix M – Topic guide for use with teachers

- Research objectives (see Appendix J)
- Topic guide notes (see Appendix J)

- 

### 1. Introduction

See Appendix J.

### 2. Background and context

*Aim: to understand the participant's background and involvement*

*Note for researcher: Cover briefly focusing on responsibilities in relation to LNK*

- Overview of roles and responsibilities
  - School they work for (and a bit about the school – e.g. type of school, location, size, demographics, key issues/ needs)
  - Current role; including length of time in post
  - Children they work with (age groups, SEND etc.)
- Responsibilities in relation to LNK project (probe stages of their involvement)

### 3. Aims of programme and school involvement

*Aim: to explore participants' views on why the intervention is needed*

*Note for researcher: Cover briefly focusing on why school took part*

- Aims and aspirations of the programme:
  - How they would describe the programme and its goals
  - Views on need/ rationale for programme
- Overview of school's involvement
  - Recruitment process
  - When school was approached, who involved, how process was managed
- Reasons for school taking part in the project
- Facilitators and/or barriers to school involvement (prior to COVID-19 if relevant and now)

### 4. Communication and training

*Aim: to explore views on information, support and training that school staff receive in preparation for and during delivery of LNK Educate*

*Interviewer note: Ask key section about efficacy of guidance/training provision first, then probe for more detail across other sections if time allows.*

- Views on the efficacy of guidance/training provision (Key section)
  - What worked well/ less well
  - Gaps in training/ anything they would do differently
  - Any challenges during the scheme's early delivery that could be addressed by improved training
- Overview of how LNK has worked with school throughout implementation and delivery including during Covid-19 (e.g. regular updates and feedback, ad hoc communications etc)
  - Views on information provision – what works well, any gaps/areas for improvement
  - What information and communication about the scheme they've received (Inc. mode, how and when – including at start of scheme and during delivery)
- Overview of guidance and training provided (including when school was closed because of COVID -19)
  - At set-up/ ongoing (probe what is delivered and to whom)
  - Nature of the training provided (content and mode, any variation in guidance/ training for different staff roles)
  - Who attended
  - Whether accessed LNK website (probe for reasons for use and facilitators / barriers to using this resource)

## **5. Delivery of universal programme – key section**

*Aim: To explore delivery to date, participant's views on delivery and available support.*

*Note for researcher: Please explain that we would now like to focus the interview on this academic year, however the participant can also reflect back on the previous year where relevant / time allows and helpful to do so. Probe for any key changes in delivery because of COVID-19.*

- Overview of delivery to date
  - Stage of delivery: when started (pre / post COVID-19); number of sessions; anticipated completion timeframe
  - Facilitators and barriers to delivery
- Scope of delivery
  - Which children are involved (probe age band, needs; whether parental consent is required; extent of choice for children)
  - Number of sessions, frequency, average length
- What is delivered to children

- Content, coverage, flexibility, how sessions differ from regular lessons
- What a typical session looks like
- Views on LNK content and resources
  - Reflections on lesson plans and resources (for teachers, for children)
  - Any adaptations made (including need and rationale for changes)
  - Whether used these resources (including disclaimer, videos, questions, factsheets and class task); how well teachers engaged with resources
  - How well pupils engaged with resources, content and sessions (including post video questions and class task)
  - Pupils' and teachers' experiences of the sessions, including whether anyone felt uncomfortable or preferred not to watch the video / be part of the session
- Barriers and facilitators to delivery of sessions
  - What works well about sessions
  - What doesn't work well about sessions
- Views on support for teachers
  - Type(s) of support offered, including source (e.g. LNK mentor present in school, LNK website, LNK leads)
  - Efficacy of support – what worked well/less well; any gaps
  - Suggestions for improvement to sessions

## 6. Delivery of the targeted programme

*Aim: to understand the roadshow/workshop, 1:1 mentoring and any other LNK activities delivered to children, including scope and progress of delivery*

*Note for researcher: Please explain that we would now like to focus the interview on this academic year, however the participant can also reflect back on the previous year where relevant and helpful to do so. Probe for any changes in delivery because of COVID-19.*

*For the shorter interviews we will not be able to cover this section, ask for any key reflections on the delivery of the mentoring.*

- Overview of work to date
  - Whether programme has started/ when due to start
  - What is delivered to children (including roadshows/workshops and mentoring), including any variation between individuals (e.g. format, length and duration of delivery)
  - Facilitators and barriers to delivery (where relevant / time allows probe for differences between Yr. 1 and 2)
- Selection of children for individual mentoring
  - Who is/is not eligible and why

- Who is involved in selection; extent of pupil choice; parent/guardian communication and consent
- What works well and less well about selection process (probe whether right children are selected)
- Facilitators and barriers
- Views on mentors, the roadshows/workshops and mentoring sessions
  - Views on content / what is covered at the roadshow and mentoring sessions
  - Experiences of providing input to the weekly record of mentoring (Interviewer note: the weekly record includes targets, discussion points, actions for pupil, actions for mentor, and input from the teacher)
  - Relationship/ rapport building between mentor and mentee
  - Pupils' feedback on sessions / how well they are engaged with the content
  - What is working well and less well; areas for improvement (where relevant probe for differences between Yr. 1 and 2)
- Other LNK activities pupils may have engaged in e.g. Youth Hub
- Communication and feedback
  - How progress is monitored (probe for role of mentors, teachers, extent they work together)
  - What is working well and less well; areas for improvement

## 7. Outcomes and impacts

*Aim: to explore perceived and expected outcomes and opportunities*

- Main perceived impact/s of scheme so far– ask openly and then probe different groups
  - **Young people receiving universal element** (probe differences between any particular groups)
    - can spot warning signs of anger / distress
    - increased knowledge/ understanding of violence and crime and its negative impact
  - **Young people receiving targeted element** (probe differences between any particular groups)
    - better understanding/ awareness of their 'purpose', the opportunities that exist and how to achieve their goals
    - increased confidence and greater sense of control
    - change in behaviour, approach for dealing with conflict/distress
    - remain in mainstream school
  - **Teachers and schools** (probe relationships with students, discussion of difficult topics, managing behaviour, school adopts a whole school approach to reducing school exclusions, other)
  - **Any others / wider society**

- Any unexpected outcomes - probe positive and negative for the groups as above
- Longer-term impact/s they anticipate
  - Young people receiving universal element
  - Teachers and schools
  - Others

## 8. Reflections and next steps

*Aim: to discuss key learning from the set-up and early delivery of LNK Educate*

- Reflections on progress / success of scheme so far
  - What has worked well
  - Particular challenges/ barriers
- Impact of COVID-19 (*Researcher note: may have been covered above*)
  - How COVID-19 has affected delivery (e.g. referrals, staffing, delivery model, partnership working, interest/ enthusiasm etc.)
  - Facilitators and barriers (e.g. things that have made it easier/ harder to deliver since COVID-19)
  - Anticipated ongoing impact
- Any other changes expected that may influence delivery and impact in schools
  - Staff changes
- Hopes for scheme going forward
  - Reflections on whether/ how the scheme is currently meeting expectations
  - Thoughts on reality of achieving aims (viability etc.)
  - Views on sustainability
- Lessons learned and recommendations
  - Key challenges and facilitators
  - If you were to do this again, what changes would you make?

## 9. Close

- Final closing comments: any additions/questions
- Thank participants
- Check that participants are comfortable with the content of the interview/ discussion in light of the limits to anonymity.
- Process for withdrawing data

**End recording, thanks and close**

## Appendix N – School information sheet

### About the research

The [National Centre for Social Research](#) has been appointed by the Youth Endowment Fund to carry out an independent evaluation of the LNK Educate programme. This research aims to understand how LNK Educate is working so far and will support its future development.

As part of this work, we have already spoken to a range of people involved in working with and delivering LNK Educate, including the LNK project leads, mentors and teachers. We have also spoken with some pupils who have received the programme.

We would now like to progress to the next stage of the evaluation, which is the **pilot study** and we would like to invite your school to participate in this part of the evaluation.

### Who are NatCen?

NatCen is an independent research organisation working to improve people's lives through research. You can find out more about us by visiting [www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk).

### What does taking part in the pilot study involve for your school?

The pilot study involves asking some children in the school to complete a short questionnaire at two timepoints, as set out below:

#### LNK Educate lessons

- Before the LNK Educate lessons are delivered by the teachers, all of the pupils in the selected class/es in the relevant year groups would be given a short questionnaire to complete.
- The same pupils would then be given another short questionnaire to complete some time after the LNK Educate lessons have been delivered, so we can measure behaviours, emotions and relationships in the pupils

#### LNK Educate mentoring sessions

- The pupils who have been selected to take part in the LNK Educate mentoring will be given a short questionnaire to complete at the start of the mentoring sessions.
- The same pupils will then be given another short questionnaire later in the school year, so we can measure behaviours, emotions and relationships in the pupils.

The questionnaires are age-appropriate and child-friendly and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete at each timepoint.

NatCen will analyse the questionnaire data to assess the progress made.

### What information will be collected?

In addition to pupils completing questionnaires, NatCen will ask you to share the following information about pupils who complete the questionnaires so we know who took part:<sup>58</sup>

- Pupil name
- Gender
- Date of birth
- Ethnicity
- Unique Pupil Number (UPN)

At the end of the project we will also ask you to share: Pupil attendance to lessons and mentoring, so we can take account of attendance in the analysis.

All data will be stored securely and only NatCen researchers will be able to see it.

### **What if pupils and parents don't want their information to be shared?**

Participation in all evaluation activities is voluntary. NatCen will provide schools with a parent and pupil information sheet. Parents will be given the option to withdraw their child from the evaluation before your school shares pupil details with us. Details of pupils whose parents have withdrawn them should not be shared with NatCen. Their participation LNK: Educate will not be affected.

### **What will happen to the information collected?**

The information gathered will be analysed and used to write a report of the evaluation findings for the Youth Endowment Fund. The report may be publicly available. Pupil, teacher and school names, or any other identifiable details, will NOT be included in the report. All personal information, and any other data held, will be securely deleted from NatCen records a year after the study is completed.

After this research has finished, all the questionnaire answers and information about who took part will be stored indefinitely for future research. The data may also be linked to government datasets such as the Department for Education's National Pupil Database and the Police National Computer. The purpose of this is to allow for research of the long-term outcomes of the LNK: Educate programme. The data will be used for research purposes only and all identifiable information will be removed, meaning that any researchers using the data in the future will not be able to identify individual young people. The data will be stored in the Office for National Statistics secure research archive. For more information on data archiving please visit the [Youth Endowment Fund data archive FAQ page](#)

The flow of data will be as follows: NatCen will securely transfer the data to the Department for Education, where the data will be 'pseudonymised' so that anything that could directly identify a child with a unique reference.

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<sup>58</sup> NatCen will provide a spreadsheet to complete and details on how to securely transfer to NatCen. Please **do not** send pupil details via email.

Once identifying information has been replaced with the unique reference, the Department for Education will send the data to the Office of National Statistics, where it will be held in a secure archive.

The Youth Endowment Fund will become legally responsible for what happens to the data and how it is protected once the projects/evaluations have finished. The Youth Endowment Fund state that they will never allow the data in the archive to be re-identified and the Department for Education would never facilitate this.

## GDPR and data security

While the study is being conducted, NatCen is the data controller and the data processor. Once this evaluation has ended and the data is transferred to the Department for Education at the end of the project, the Youth Endowment Fund will be the data controller and the Department for Education will be the data processor.

When the data is deposited at the Office for National Statistics archive, the Youth Endowment Fund will be the data controller and the Office for National Statistics will be the data processor. The data controller is responsible for deciding the purpose and legal basis for managing the data.

The legal basis is legitimate interest. This means that we believe there is a good reason for us to collect and manage this data. And that this data is needed to evaluate and learn about the LNK: Educate programme. Using this data won't interfere with individuals' interests, rights or freedoms. For more information on how NatCen stores and handles data, please visit the [webpage]. Once the data has been stored in the archive, the legal basis for processing data will be public task. Please see the Youth Endowment Fund's [data archive privacy statement](#) for additional information.

## School involvement

NatCen will provide parent/guardian and pupil information leaflets and a privacy notice for the teachers to share with parents/guardians of pupils in the selected to participate in the pilot study. These will outline the aims of the evaluation, inform parents/guardians and pupils that participation in the evaluation will involve the collection and processing of pupils' personal data and provide an opportunity for parents/guardians and pupils to withdraw from the evaluation. Teachers will be required to provide a minimum of two weeks for parents/guardians to withdraw prior to approaching pupils about taking part in the evaluation.

We would also appreciate teachers' support in facilitating the data collection. Clear guidance will be provided around this.

Participation in the research is voluntary and confidential. Whether or not your school takes part will not affect your relationship with LNK, the Youth Endowment Fund, or any other organisation. The data we collect will be analysed to feed into a report for the Youth Endowment Fund. Identifiable data about individuals or schools will not be included in this report.

## What happens next?

If your school is happy to take part in the evaluation, please read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding provided to you with this information sheet.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

Please contact the NatCen research team on [telephone number] or at [email].

## Appendix O – Memorandum of Understanding

# Pilot evaluation of LNK: Educate

## Headteacher/SLT Agreement

If you are happy for your school to be part of the evaluation in school year 2021/2022, please complete this Memorandum of Understanding form and return it to LNK by [date].

### Part 1: Requirements of the evaluation

NatCen Social Research (NatCen), an independent social research organisation, has been commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund to evaluate the LNK: Educate programme.

Please read the following statements and initial the boxes if you agree with the statements. For more information on each, please see NatCen’s information sheet for schools.

Statement	Please initial each box
I have read and understand the school information sheet for this evaluation.	
This evaluation aims to test whether the LNK: Educate programme benefits pupils and how it is implemented and delivered in schools. I understand that my school has been selected to take part in the evaluation.	
I agree to distributing information sheets about the evaluation to parents/carers and pupils, including the collection of parent/carer withdrawal forms.	
I agree to facilitate the activities required for NatCen’s evaluation, namely supporting the administration of a pre and post questionnaire to pupils in selected class/es.	
I agree to securely share background data (full name, date of birth, gender, ethnicity and Unique Pupil Number (UPN)) for all consenting pupils in the selected class/es.	
I agree to NOT sharing any background data of pupils in the selected class/es who themselves and/or whose parents/carers have withdrawn them from the evaluation.	
I agree that pupil attendance for the LNK sessions and mentor sessions will be collected and shared securely with NatCen.	
I understand that NatCen will store information collected from staff and pupils securely and that findings will be anonymised in the final report. Designated individuals from NatCen may view documents containing participants’ names when monitoring or auditing the study.	

I give permission for these individuals (assigned NatCen staff) to view this personal data. Maintenance of confidentiality of information is subject to normal legal requirements and GDPR.	
I understand that the pupil background data, questionnaire responses and attendance to LNK: Educate lessons data will be stored in the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service for future research purposes, and may be linked to government datasets in the future, such as the Department for Education's National Pupil Database and the Police National Computer.	
I know who I can contact if I have any concerns or complaints about the study.	
I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through NatCen's Ethics Committee.	
I understand that my school's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	

## Part 2: Headteacher/SLT agreement

Please sign below to confirm that you consent to your primary school taking part in the LNK: Educate pilot evaluation.

<b>School name</b>	
<b>Headteacher/senior management signature</b>	
<b>Headteacher/senior management name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## Contact information

You can contact the NatCen research team at [email] or on [telephone number]

## Appendix P - Pupil information sheet

### What is LNK: Educate?

LNK: Educate is a series of lessons delivered in schools, which are designed to help prevent young people from being drawn into knife crime and violence. LNK: Educate is run by the charity Lives not Knives (LNK) and it is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund.

### What is the research about?

We are carrying out research to understand what pupils think about the LNK: Educate lessons, including what they like and don't like, and how well it supports pupils.

### Who is doing the research?

NatCen Social Research are doing this research for the Youth Endowment Fund. Your school is helping us.

### Why are you contacting me?

Your school is running LNK: Educate and you will attend some or all of the lessons, which is why we are getting in touch with you. We want to know if LNK: Educate helps pupils.

### What will taking part in the research involve?

- We will ask you to complete a questionnaire about your behaviour, thoughts, and feelings before and after you complete LNK Educate lessons.
- If you take part in one-to-one mentoring sessions with an LNK youth mentor, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire about your behaviour, thoughts, and feelings before and after you complete the mentoring.
- The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to do.
- There are no right or wrong answers.

### What information will you collect?

We will also collect some information about you, like your name, your birthday, and the number of LNK: Educate lessons that you have attended.

### What will happen to the information I give?

- We will write a report about what we find out from all schools and pupils about what is good or needs to be changed about the LNK Educate programme. **We won't use your name or any information that could identify you or your school.**
- The questionnaire answers will help us know if the LNK Educate programme supports pupils.

- **We will not tell anyone about your answers to the questionnaire**, including your teachers and parents. However, if you tell us something that makes us worried for you or someone else, we might have to tell someone (like a teacher) for your protection.
- All information that we collect from you **will be kept safe**.
- We will only use your information **if the law says it's ok** and that the law allows us to use your information.
- The **information** that we collect and **your answers** to the questionnaire **will be kept so that researchers can use it in the future**.
- You can find out more about how your information will be used by viewing the Youth Endowment Fund's [data archive privacy statement](#) and NatCen's [privacy statement](#) for this research.

### Do I have to take part?

No, it's up to you. **If you don't want to take part, you don't have to**. You can stop taking part at any time without having to give a reason. You will still get to take part in the LNK Educate lessons, even if you don't want to be involved in the research.

### When and where will this happen?

The activities will take place at your school. Your teacher will tell you when.

### Do my parents or carers know?

Yes, we also wrote to your parents/carers. We told them about research and that you might be taking part in the research.

### Who do I contact if I have questions?

For more information visit [webpage] or ask your teacher.

## Appendix Q – SDQ and SRS measures

### Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get very angry and often lose my temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually do as I am told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have one good friend or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people my age generally like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often accused of lying or cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think before I do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get on better with adults than with people my own age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many fears, I am easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Student Resilience Questionnaire

Please read every statement carefully and circle the answer that fits you best.

	never	rarely	sometimes	often	always
<b>At school, there is an adult who...</b>					
1. ....Really cares about me	1	2	3	4	5
2. ....Tells me when I do a good job	1	2	3	4	5
3. ....Listens to me when I have something to say	1	2	3	4	5
4. ....Believes that I will be a success	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Home and school</b>					
1. I do things at home that make a difference (i.e. make things better)	1	2	3	4	5
2. I help my family make decisions	1	2	3	4	5
3. At school, I help decide things like class activities or rules	1	2	3	4	5
4. I do things at my school that make a difference (i.e. make things better)	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Are there students at your school who would...</b>					
1. ...Choose you on their team at school?	1	2	3	4	5
2. ...Explain the rules of a game if you didn't understand them?	1	2	3	4	5
3. ...Invite you to their home?	1	2	3	4	5
4. ...Share things with you?	1	2	3	4	5
5. ...Help you if you hurt yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
6. ...Miss you if you weren't at school?	1	2	3	4	5
7. ...Make you feel better if something is bothering you?	1	2	3	4	5
8. ...Pick you for a partner?	1	2	3	4	5
9. ...Help you if other students are being mean to you?	1	2	3	4	5
10. ...Tell you you're their friend?	1	2	3	4	5
11. ...Ask you to join in when you are all alone?	1	2	3	4	5
12. ...Tell you secrets?	1	2	3	4	5

Please turn over

	never	rarely	sometimes	often	always
<b>About me</b>					
1. ...I can work out my problems	1	2	3	4	5
2. ...I can do most things if I try	1	2	3	4	5
3. ...There are many things that I do well	1	2	3	4	5
4. ...I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt	1	2	3	4	5
5. ...I try to understand what other people feel	1	2	3	4	5
6. ...When I need help, I find someone to talk to	1	2	3	4	5
7. ...I know where to go for help when I have a problem	1	2	3	4	5
8. ...I try to work out problems by talking about them	1	2	3	4	5
9. ...I have goals and plans for the future	1	2	3	4	5
10. ...I think I will be successful when I grow up	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix R – Propensity score weighting

### Methods

We used propensity score weighting (PSW) with overlap weights to explore the question of whether a future quasi-experimental design would be feasible. PSW begins by predicting the probability that each pupil will receive targeted mentoring. It uses these predicted probabilities (the propensity scores) of being in the mentored group to derive weights. These weights are designed to balance the two groups on baseline characteristics and are used in the model to estimate the causal effect of mentoring.

We use overlap weights for several reasons (see Li & Thomas, 2019). They are robust to the effects of extreme propensity scores; are valid in smaller samples than alternative weighting approaches; they also have the advantage of being valid even when there is poor common support, which is a feature we found in our data (see Figure 1 below). Importantly, the estimand from analyses estimated using overlap weights has a substantive interpretation: what is the causal effect for pupils for whom there was decisional equipoise; that is, pupils who had a roughly equal chance of being allocated to mentoring or not, given their covariates at baseline.

### Data

To perform PSW, first we estimated the probability of being allocated to mentoring, using logistic regression. We used gender, ethnicity, year group, and baseline scores on SDQ and SRS as covariates. Following this, we fitted a model to estimate the outcome of interest with the same covariates plus a binary indicator of whether the pupil received mentoring. The model was weighted by overlap weights, which are defined as  $1-p$  for the mentored group and  $p$  for the non-mentored group, where  $p$  is the estimated propensity score. We chose to test the approach using empathy as the outcome variable, as this showed the most evidence of promise in the pre-post analyses.

### Analysis

Analyses were performed using the PSweight package (Zhou et al, 2022) in R 4.1.0. We calculated the c-statistic using the DevTools package (Wickham, Chester, Chang & Bryan 2022); this statistic is helpful for future power calculations.

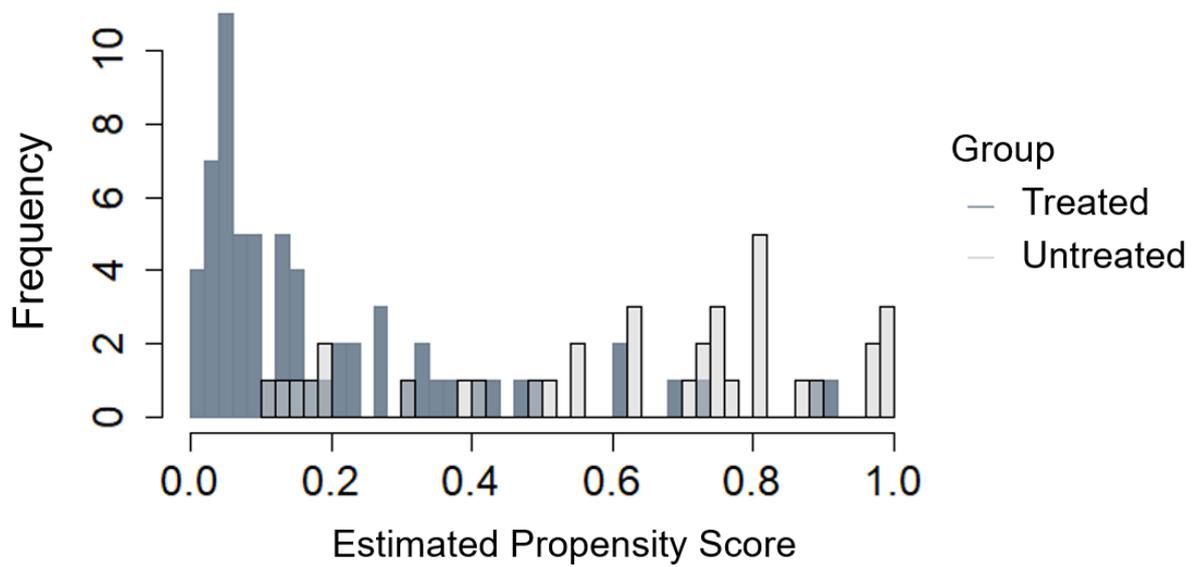
The propensity score model coefficients are listed in Table 30. SDQ Conduct Problems, SRS Participation, and SRS Empathy were statistically significant predictors of receiving mentoring, when controlling for the other variables.

**Table 30. Coefficients for the Logistic Regression**

	Estimate	Standard Error	z value	P-value
(Intercept)	-1.772	3.284	-0.540	0.589
Gender Male	-0.092	0.883	-0.104	0.917
Ethnicity Asian	-1.690	1.278	-1.323	0.186
Ethnicity Black	0.677	0.866	0.782	0.434
Ethnicity Mixed	-0.090	0.787	-0.114	0.909
Year Group	-0.028	0.242	-0.116	0.908
Emotion	-0.306	0.176	-1.745	0.081
Conduct Problems	0.495	0.214	2.312	0.021
Hyperactivity	0.105	0.196	0.537	0.591
Peer Problems	0.167	0.200	0.833	0.405
Pro-social	0.012	0.211	0.057	0.955
School Connection	0.001	0.101	0.007	0.995
Participation	0.238	0.119	2.002	0.045
Peer Support	0.024	0.042	0.576	0.565
Empathy	-0.514	0.210	-2.447	0.014
Problem Solving	-0.145	0.130	-1.114	0.265
Goals	0.141	0.196	0.719	0.472
C-Statistic: 0.888				

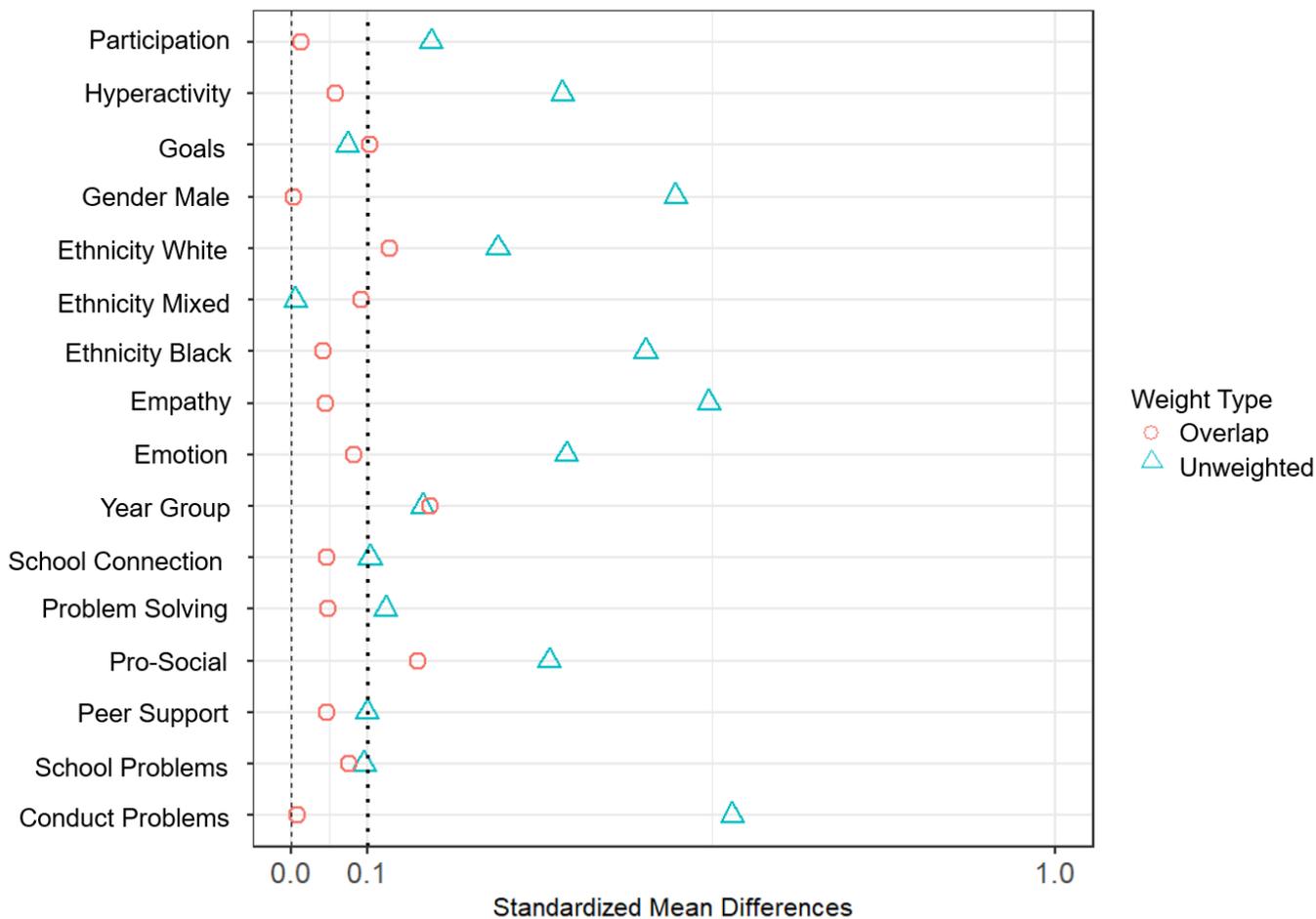
We also explored common support (see Figure 4) to see whether other weighting approaches might be applicable, such as inverse probability weights. In this figure, we can see the overlap of propensity scores for the treated and untreated group. There is a region of common support towards the centre of the histogram where the scores overlap considerably with each other. Note the lack of overlap towards the far left and far right of the histogram. This confirms that overlap weights are the most appropriate.

**Figure 4. Propensity scores - common support**



The plot of balance statistics in Figure 5 shows that the overlap weights improve baseline balance; that is, the difference at baseline between mentored and non-mentored pupils across demographic characteristics and baseline SDQ and SRS scores is smaller for the weighted analysis than for the unweighted analysis.

**Figure 5. Balance of covariates**



In the second stage outcomes model, estimating the impact of mentoring on the outcome of SRS Empathy (in the original units of the measure), we found an average treatment effect at overlap (ATO) of 0.76, 95% CI = [0.12, 1.40]. This was statistically significant;  $p = 0.02$ . This echoes the statistically significant unadjusted mean change in empathy scores between baseline and endline; however, it is different to the null effect we found when adjusting for regression to the mean.

## Appendix S - Analysis tables – gender

**Table 31 SDQ and SRS mean scores for targeted intervention group, universal intervention group: Boys**

Mentoring Was pupil selected for targeted mentoring?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P value	Cohens d
SDQ Emotional symptoms	No	48	3.23	2.75	-1.471	.145	-0.295
	Yes	55	2.53	1.97			
	All	103	2.85	2.38			
SDQ Conduct problems*	No	49	2.59	1.98	3.887	<.001	0.711
	Yes	57	4.28	2.43			
	All	106	3.50	2.38			
SDQ Hyperactivity/ inattention*	No	49	4.65	2.46	2.741	.007	0.518
	Yes	57	5.89	2.20			
	All	106	5.32	2.40			
SDQ Peer relationships	No	48	2.10	1.78	1.234	.220	0.241
	Yes	57	2.56	1.98			
	All	105	2.35	1.90			
SDQ Prosocial behaviour	No	49	6.88	1.80	-1.022	.309	-0.196
	Yes	57	6.47	2.27			
	All	106	6.66	2.07			
SDQ Total difficulties score*	No	48	12.63	6.27	2.150	.034	0.417
	Yes	55	15.18	5.80			
	All	103	13.99	6.13			
SRS School connection	No	47	3.56	1.08	0.514	0.608	0.102
	Yes	56	3.67	1.00			
	All	103	3.62	1.04			
SRS Participation in home and school life	No	47	2.86	0.75	1.446	0.151	0.279
	Yes	55	3.12	1.04			
	All	102	3.00	0.92			
SRS Peer support	No	47	3.63	0.86	1.438	0.153	0.282
	Yes	57	3.86	0.81			
	All	104	3.76	0.84			
SRS Self-esteem	No	43	3.72	0.74	0.965	0.337	0.199
	Yes	52	3.85	0.59			
	All	95	3.79	0.66			
SRS Empathy*	No	45	3.92	0.76	-2.966	0.004	-0.561
	Yes	54	3.38	1.05			
	All	99	3.63	0.97			
SRS Problem-solving	No	43	3.23	1.00	0.403	0.688	0.082
	Yes	55	3.32	1.01			
	All	98	3.28	1.00			
SRS Goals and aspirations	No	45	4.06	0.94	0.330	0.742	0.066
	Yes	56	4.12	0.90			
	All	101	4.09	0.91			

**Table 32 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) subscales mean scores for targeted intervention group, universal intervention group: Girls**

Was pupil selected for targeted mentoring?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P value	Cohens d
Emotional symptoms*	No	47	5.26	2.42	-2.669	.010	-0.694
	Yes	19	3.58	2.01			
	All	66	4.77	2.42			
Conduct problems	No	48	2.23	1.84	1.661	.102	0.453
	Yes	18	3.11	2.14			
	All	66	2.47	1.95			
Hyperactivity/inattention	No	48	4.77	2.43	1.610	.112	0.440
	Yes	18	5.89	2.72			
	All	66	5.08	2.54			
Peer relationships*	No	47	2.30	1.65	2.120	.038	0.561
	Yes	19	3.26	1.73			
	All	66	2.58	1.72			
Prosocial behaviour	No	48	7.98	1.58	-1.855	.068	-0.494
	Yes	19	7.16	1.77			
	All	67	7.75	1.66			
Total difficulties score	No	45	14.53	6.44	0.829	.410	0.232
	Yes	18	16.00	6.07			
	All	63	14.95	6.33			
School connection	No	46	3.76	0.91	0.809	0.422	0.221
	Yes	19	3.96	0.90			
	All	65	3.82	0.90			
Participation in home and school life	No	46	2.92	0.97	0.941	0.350	0.273
	Yes	16	3.17	0.68			
	All	62	2.99	0.91			
Peer support	No	48	4.02	0.75	0.800	0.426	0.222
	Yes	18	4.19	0.78			
	All	66	4.07	0.75			
Self-esteem	No	49	3.59	0.70	1.847	0.069	0.500
	Yes	18	3.94	0.72			
	All	67	3.68	0.72			
Empathy	No	47	4.14	0.85	-1.170	0.247	-0.355
	Yes	14	3.82	1.03			
	All	61	4.07	0.89			
Problem-solving	No	42	3.17	1.07	-1.367	0.177	-0.390
	Yes	17	2.76	0.96			
	All	59	3.06	1.05			
Goals and aspirations	No	47	3.78	1.10	0.540	0.591	0.154
	Yes	17	3.94	1.00			
	All	64	3.82	1.07			

**Table 33 Pre and post differences in SRS and SDQ scores - Boys**

	Intervention group	Pre score mean	Post score mean	Mean difference (unadjusted)	Pre score SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	SMD	Mean difference (adjusted for RTM)	SMD (adjusted for RTM)	Sig. (2-tailed)
SDQ emotional symptoms	Targeted	2.60	2.53	-0.07	2.06	0.787	-0.03	0.15	0.07	0.523
	Universal	3.27	3.29	0.02	2.79	0.941	0.01	0.52	0.19	0.085
SDQ conduct problems	Targeted	4.35	3.96	-0.39	2.35	0.259	-0.17	1.68	0.72	0.000
	Universal	2.60	2.38	-0.21	2.04	0.455	-0.11	0.48	0.23	0.068
SDQ hyperactivity/inattention	Targeted	5.91	5.76	-0.16	2.21	0.623	-0.07	0.99	0.45	0.010
	Universal	4.37	4.63	0.27	2.28	0.377	0.12	0.42	0.18	0.164
SDQ Peer relationship problems	Targeted	2.44	2.20	-0.24	1.98	0.274	-0.12	-0.11	-0.06	0.593
	Universal	2.15	1.95	-0.20	1.86	0.331	-0.11	-0.19	-0.10	0.338
SDQ Pro-social behaviour	Targeted	6.52	6.67	0.15	2.32	0.516	0.07	-0.34	-0.15	0.128
	Universal	7.00	6.81	-0.19	1.77	0.509	-0.11	-0.71	-0.40	0.006
SDQ Total difficulties score	Targeted	15.20	14.56	-0.63	5.72	0.430	-0.11	2.45	0.43	0.016
	Universal	12.48	12.25	-0.23	6.35	0.742	-0.04	0.66	0.10	0.351
SRS School connection	Targeted	14.69	15.17	0.48	3.99	0.440	0.12	-0.09	-0.02	0.859
	Universal	14.62	14.49	-0.14	4.36	0.803	-0.03	-0.38	-0.09	0.479
SRS Participation in community	Targeted	13.37	12.84	-0.53	4.05	0.403	-0.13	-0.74	-0.18	0.122
	Universal	11.51	11.33	-0.18	3.03	0.722	-0.06	-1.50	-0.49	0.005
SRS peer support	Targeted	47.48	50.41	2.93	8.97	0.006	0.33	2.95	0.33	0.002
	Universal	43.24	44.68	1.45	10.57	0.371	0.14	-0.68	-0.06	0.643
SRS self-esteem	Targeted	11.86	12.05	0.19	1.75	0.606	0.11	-0.02	-0.01	0.943
	Universal	11.39	11.82	0.42	2.25	0.284	0.19	-0.11	-0.05	0.753
SRS empathy	Targeted	6.68	7.29	0.61	2.03	0.066	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.994
	Universal	7.97	7.37	-0.61	1.44	0.067	-0.42	-0.53	-0.37	0.052
SRS problem solving	Targeted	10.23	9.93	-0.30	3.09	0.568	-0.10	-0.74	-0.24	0.145
	Universal	10.31	9.92	-0.39	3.02	0.301	-0.13	-0.65	-0.21	0.083
SRS goals and aspirations.	Targeted	8.56	8.78	0.22	1.75	0.329	0.13	0.23	0.13	0.286
	Universal	8.35	7.95	-0.41	1.92	0.257	-0.21	-0.48	-0.25	0.162

**Table 34 Pre and post differences in SRS and SDQ scores - Girls**

		Pre score mean	Post score mean	Mean difference (unadjusted)	Pre score SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	SMD	Mean differences (adjusted for RTM)	SMD (adjusted for RTM)	Sig. (2-tailed)
SDQ emotional symptoms	Targeted	3.43	3.43	0.00	1.83	1.000	0.00	0.13	0.07	0.795
	Universal	5.07	4.80	-0.27	2.29	0.290	-0.12	-0.12	-0.05	0.723
SDQ conduct problems	Targeted	3.23	2.85	-0.38	2.49	0.445	-0.15	0.55	0.22	0.277
	Universal	2.13	2.13	0.00	1.81	1.000	0.00	0.45	0.25	0.090
SDQ hyperactivity/inattention	Targeted	5.31	5.62	0.31	2.84	0.700	0.11	1.48	0.52	0.085
	Universal	4.53	4.69	0.16	2.24	0.531	0.07	0.38	0.17	0.160
SDQ Peer relationship problems	Targeted	3.07	2.71	-0.36	1.94	0.542	-0.18	0.55	0.29	0.225
	Universal	2.27	1.89	-0.38	1.67	0.078	-0.23	-0.23	-0.14	0.161
SDQ Pro-social behaviour	Targeted	7.36	7.86	0.50	1.86	0.346	0.27	0.03	0.02	0.954
	Universal	7.96	7.54	-0.41	1.60	0.050	-0.26	-0.52	-0.32	0.013
SDQ Total difficulties score	Targeted	15.23	14.85	-0.38	6.55	0.845	-0.06	3.34	0.51	0.155
	Universal	13.95	13.60	-0.35	5.96	0.511	-0.06	0.42	0.07	0.523
SRS School connection	Targeted	15.71	14.36	-1.36	3.47	0.126	-0.39	-1.30	-0.37	0.152
	Universal	15.46	14.83	-0.63	3.35	0.122	-0.19	-0.62	-0.18	0.116
SRS Participation in community	Targeted	13.60	13.50	-0.10	2.73	0.928	-0.04	-0.29	-0.11	0.752
	Universal	11.98	12.60	0.63	3.90	0.147	0.16	-0.10	-0.03	0.807
SRS peer support	Targeted	48.92	45.92	-3.00	10.37	0.340	-0.29	-3.94	-0.38	0.208
	Universal	48.78	50.00	1.22	8.94	0.362	0.14	-0.39	-0.04	0.698
SRS self-esteem	Targeted	12.00	12.00	0.00	2.31	1.000	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.923
	Universal	10.84	10.84	0.00	2.15	1.000	0.00	-0.40	-0.18	0.168
SRS empathy	Targeted	8.00	9.22	1.22	1.95	0.102	0.63	0.66	0.34	0.032
	Universal	8.37	8.12	-0.26	1.62	0.140	-0.16	-0.27	-0.17	0.120
SRS problem solving	Targeted	8.42	9.42	1.00	2.81	0.132	0.36	0.02	0.01	0.979
	Universal	9.74	9.68	-0.05	3.11	0.910	-0.02	-0.64	-0.21	0.166
SRS goals and aspirations.	Targeted	8.33	8.25	-0.08	1.87	0.809	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03	0.839
	Universal	7.66	7.41	-0.24	2.10	0.376	-0.12	-0.50	-0.24	0.051

11.

## Appendix T – Covariates

The following tables show the test of between-subject effects for each endpoint SDQ and SRS measure, with the corresponding baseline measure added as a covariate and fixed factors of intervention group (targeted or universal), gender, year group and ethnicity. Due to small sample sizes, a summarized ethnicity variable was used grouping pupils into the following: White, Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnic background.

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: SDQ Emotional symptoms score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	516.988 <sup>a</sup>	12	43.082	16.971	.000
Intercept	9.089	1	9.089	3.580	.061
Targeted or universal	.563	1	.563	.222	.639
Gender	6.204	1	6.204	2.444	.121
Year group	15.379	5	3.076	1.212	.308
Ethnicity	24.807	4	6.202	2.443	.050
SDQ Emotional symptoms score - baseline	299.858	1	299.858	118.118	.000
Error	297.020	117	2.539		
Total	2535.000	130			
Corrected Total	814.008	129			

a. R Squared = .635 (Adjusted R Squared = .598)

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: SDQ Conduct problems score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	181.553 <sup>a</sup>	12	15.129	5.905	.000
Intercept	63.875	1	63.875	24.929	.000
Targeted or universal	4.326	1	4.326	1.688	.196
Gender	1.373	1	1.373	.536	.466
Year group	10.708	5	2.142	.836	.527
Ethnicity	2.363	4	.591	.231	.921
SDQ Conduct problems score - baseline	71.478	1	71.478	27.897	.000
Error	310.029	121	2.562		
Total	1592.000	134			
Corrected Total	491.582	133			

a. R Squared = .369 (Adjusted R Squared = .307)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SDQ Hyperactivity/inattention score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	360.622 <sup>a</sup>	12	30.052	9.067	.000
Intercept	48.995	1	48.995	14.783	.000
Targeted or universal	.091	1	.091	.027	.869
Gender	.116	1	.116	.035	.852
Year group	30.653	5	6.131	1.850	.108
Ethnicity	5.771	4	1.443	.435	.783
SDQ Hyperactivity/ inattention score - baseline	266.234	1	266.234	80.329	.000
Error	391.088	118	3.314		
Total	4158.000	131			
Corrected Total	751.710	130			

a. R Squared = .480 (Adjusted R Squared = .427)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SDQ Peer problems score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	144.437 <sup>a</sup>	12	12.036	6.833	.000
Intercept	5.881	1	5.881	3.339	.070
Targeted or universal	1.727	1	1.727	.980	.324
Gender	.181	1	.181	.103	.749
Year group	7.432	5	1.486	.844	.521
Ethnicity	5.642	4	1.410	.801	.527
SDQ Peer problems score - baseline	121.807	1	121.807	69.148	.000
Error	209.623	119	1.762		
Total	948.000	132			
Corrected Total	354.061	131			

a. R Squared = .408 (Adjusted R Squared = .348)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SDQ Prosocial behaviour score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	205.602 <sup>a</sup>	12	17.133	9.171	.000
Intercept	82.982	1	82.982	44.417	.000
Targeted or universal	1.178	1	1.178	.630	.429
Gender	6.601	1	6.601	3.533	.063
Year group	10.336	5	2.067	1.106	.361
Ethnicity	9.571	4	2.393	1.281	.281
SDQ Prosocial behaviour score - baseline	131.867	1	131.867	70.584	.000
Error	227.924	122	1.868		
Total	7161.000	135			
Corrected Total	433.526	134			

a. R Squared = .474 (Adjusted R Squared = .423)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SDQ Total difficulties score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	2249.939 <sup>a</sup>	12	187.495	10.129	.000
Intercept	169.298	1	169.298	9.146	.003
Targeted or universal	8.640	1	8.640	.467	.496
Gender	4.646	1	4.646	.251	.617
Year group	50.224	5	10.045	.543	.744
Ethnicity	55.513	4	13.878	.750	.560
SDQ Total difficulties score - baseline	1697.501	1	1697.501	91.707	.000
Error	2054.609	111	18.510		
Total	27886.000	124			
Corrected Total	4304.548	123			

a. R Squared = .523 (Adjusted R Squared = .471)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS School connection score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	782.674 <sup>a</sup>	12	65.223	6.787	.000
Intercept	222.405	1	222.405	23.143	.000
Targeted or universal	.387	1	.387	.040	.841
Gender	9.762	1	9.762	1.016	.316
Year group	68.647	5	13.729	1.429	.220
Ethnicity	1.684	4	.421	.044	.996
SRS School connection score - baseline	399.330	1	399.330	41.553	.000
Error	1037.888	108	9.610		
Total	28153.000	121			
Corrected Total	1820.562	120			

a. R Squared = .430 (Adjusted R Squared = .367)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS Participation in home and school life score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	449.913 <sup>a</sup>	12	37.493	5.384	.000
Intercept	241.112	1	241.112	34.625	.000
Targeted or universal	14.993	1	14.993	2.153	.145
Gender	11.968	1	11.968	1.719	.193
Year group	29.659	5	5.932	.852	.516
Ethnicity	6.662	4	1.665	.239	.916
SRS Participation in home and school life score - baseline	240.298	1	240.298	34.508	.000
Error	724.207	104	6.964		
Total	18848.000	117			
Corrected Total	1174.120	116			

a. R Squared = .383 (Adjusted R Squared = .312)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS Peer support score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	3464.593 <sup>a</sup>	12	288.716	5.507	.000
Intercept	1794.481	1	1794.481	34.227	.000
Targeted or universal	51.583	1	51.583	.984	.323
Gender	14.026	1	14.026	.268	.606
Year group	171.853	5	34.371	.656	.658
Ethnicity	101.368	4	25.342	.483	.748
SRS Peer support score - baseline	2871.619	1	2871.619	54.772	.000
Error	6029.274	115	52.428		
Total	308355.000	128			
Corrected Total	9493.867	127			

a. R Squared = .365 (Adjusted R Squared = .299)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS self-esteem score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	170.661 <sup>a</sup>	12	14.222	4.068	.000
Intercept	191.771	1	191.771	54.854	.000
Targeted or universal	.045	1	.045	.013	.910
Gender	9.639	1	9.639	2.757	.100
Year group	41.031	5	8.206	2.347	.046
Ethnicity	2.563	4	.641	.183	.947
SRS self-esteem score - baseline	68.272	1	68.272	19.528	.000
Error	377.570	108	3.496		
Total	16516.000	121			
Corrected Total	548.231	120			

a. R Squared = .311 (Adjusted R Squared = .235)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS Empathy score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	170.787 <sup>a</sup>	12	14.232	7.068	.000
Intercept	81.209	1	81.209	40.332	.000
Targeted or universal	2.023	1	2.023	1.005	.318
Gender	13.381	1	13.381	6.646	.011
Year group	34.781	5	6.956	3.455	.006
Ethnicity	3.133	4	.783	.389	.816
SRS Empathy score - baseline	82.877	1	82.877	41.161	.000
Error	213.432	106	2.014		
Total	7389.000	119			
Corrected Total	384.218	118			

a. R Squared = .445 (Adjusted R Squared = .382)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS Problem solving score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	423.701 <sup>a</sup>	12	35.308	5.840	.000
Intercept	158.927	1	158.927	26.286	.000
Targeted or universal	2.587	1	2.587	.428	.515
Gender	.469	1	.469	.078	.781
Year group	73.154	5	14.631	2.420	.041
Ethnicity	21.136	4	5.284	.874	.482
SRS Problem solving score - baseline	193.672	1	193.672	32.033	.000
Error	622.739	103	6.046		
Total	11957.000	116			
Corrected Total	1046.440	115			

a. R Squared = .405 (Adjusted R Squared = .336)

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: SRS Goals and aspirations score - endpoint

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	240.311 <sup>a</sup>	12	20.026	7.949	.000
Intercept	36.074	1	36.074	14.319	.000
Targeted or universal	1.999	1	1.999	.793	.375
Gender	.598	1	.598	.237	.627
Year group	12.604	5	2.521	1.001	.421
Ethnicity	14.151	4	3.538	1.404	.237
SRS Goals and aspirations score - baseline	168.472	1	168.472	66.870	.000
Error	274.615	109	2.519		
Total	8275.000	122			
Corrected Total	514.926	121			

a. R Squared = .467 (Adjusted R Squared = .408)

