

## EVALUATION PROTOCOL

**Embedding mentors with lived experience in schools to reduce violent offending amongst children and young people: randomised controlled efficacy trial of the SOS+ embedded mentoring programme.**

**National Centre for Social Research**

Principal investigator: Jasna Magić

# Embedding mentors with lived experience in schools to reduce violent offending amongst young people: randomised controlled efficacy trial of the SOS+ programme.



## Evaluation protocol

Evaluating institution: National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)

Principal investigator(s): Jasna Magić

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<b>Project title</b>	Embedding mentors with lived experience in schools to reduce violent offending amongst children and young people: randomised controlled efficacy trial of the SOS+ embedded mentoring programme.
<b>Developer (Institution)</b>	St Giles Trust
<b>Evaluator (Institution)</b>	National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)
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<b>Protocol author(s)</b>	Jasna Magić, Terry Ng-Knight, Kostas Papaioannou, Ekaterina Stoilova, Charlotte Chalker, Maria David, Nandita Upadhyay, Nathan Hudson.
<b>Trial design</b>	Two-armed individual-level randomised controlled trial, stratified by school setting.
<b>Trial type</b>	Efficacy trial with integrated implementation and process evaluation.
<b>Evaluation setting</b>	School setting (secondary schools and alternative provision settings).

<p><b>Target group</b></p>	<p>All children and young people (CYP) participating in the programme will be involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation.</p> <p>CYP will be eligible for referrals if they meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Known involvement with the police;</li> <li>2. Multiagency involvement;</li> <li>3. Have a linked statutory worker; (e.g., social worker or youth offending worker) or</li> <li>4. Have self-reported involvement in criminal activity.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Number of participants</b></p>	<p>The efficacy trial will include 960 young people. 480 pupils will receive SOS+ mentoring and 480 pupils will receive pastoral care as usual (PCAU). Children and young people will be sampled from 20 schools with each mentor working across two schools.</p> <p>Implementation and process evaluation covers 5 geographical regions and engages 4 schools per region in a total of 20 schools. In total 90 contacts (interviews) across the following groups: SOS+ mentors (x10), linked statutory workers (x20), school referrers (x20) and mentees (x40).</p>
<p><b>Primary outcome and data source</b></p>	<p>Self-reported offending measured via the volume score of the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS).</p>
<p><b>Secondary outcome and data source</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct/behavioural problems measured with the Conduct Problems subscale of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).</li> <li>2. Prosocial behaviour measured with the Prosocial Behaviour subscale of the SDQ.</li> <li>3. School/setting attendance measured with data obtained from the education-setting attendance and exclusion data.</li> <li>4. Mentor/teacher-CYP relationship measured with the Youth Strength of Relationship (YSOR) scale.</li> </ol>

## Protocol version history

Version	Date	Reason for revision
1.2		
1.1		
1.0	15/08/2023	

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## 1. Study rationale and background

### **Children and young people affected by violence, gang involvement, and carrying weapons**

A large number of children and young people (CYP) are affected by violence and gang involvement in England and Wales, with significant consequences on emotional and physical well-being, school, and lifetime attainment (YEF, 2022a; Children’s Commissioner, 2019). Survey research with 13–17-year-olds found that one in five (19%) committed an act of violence, one in fifty (2%) were a member of a gang, and 2% carried a weapon in the last year (YEF, 2022a). British Crime Survey data indicates that 27,000 children aged 10–17 years old in England self-identify as gang members, and 34,000 children who identify as gang members or know a gang member have been the victims of violence in the last year (Children’s Commissioner, 2019). The Youth Justice Board (2023) also reported that approximately one in five knife or offensive weapon offences resulting in a caution or sentence are committed by children aged 10–17 years old.

School exclusion is a widely recognised risk factor that can predict an increased likelihood of serious youth violence/gang involvement (Early Intervention Foundation, 2015; Children’s Commissioner, 2019; Home Office, 2023a; The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020). Other school-related factors that put CYP at risk are low academic achievement – heightening a child’s vulnerability to gang interaction at 10–12 years old, and low commitment to school – a risk factor for 13–15-year-olds (EIF, 2015). Broader risk factors are neglect, a lack of a stable/safe environment and being in care (EIF, 2015).

In terms of the impacts of violence on children, almost half (41%) of children exposed to violence as victims or witnesses experience negative consequences due to being worried about violence, such as trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, and spending more time online and to themselves (YEF, 2022a). Children involved in the criminal justice system (CJS) face further negative outcomes, including stigma and discrimination, disruption of family/community network, poor health conditions, high rates of mental health disorders and high rates of suicide/self-harm (The Local Government Association, 2022). Impacts of involvement in the CJS are greater for younger children, those with a history of assault, and children from ethnic minority groups (excluding White minorities) (The Local Government Association, 2022). Furthermore, CYP in gangs are almost twice as likely to have social and emotional health issues and eight times more likely to misuse substances compared to other children referred to children’s services (Children’s Commissioner, 2019).

A major development in youth justice has been the decrease in children entering the CJS. Between 2012 and 2022, the number of children entering the youth justice system for the first time was reduced by 78%, with only 8,000 first-time entrants (FTE) in 2022 (Youth Justice Board, 2023). However, the reduction in FTEs disproportionately benefits White children. The rate of White children's FTEs has steadily decreased since 2010, while the proportion of Black children amongst FTEs has increased (Home Office, 2023b). Black children remain over-represented in the system, as they make up 4% of 10–17-year-olds but comprise 15% of arrests, 18% of stop and search and 29% of children in custody (YEF, 2022a). Children receiving a caution or sentence are also more broadly disproportionately from ethnic minority groups, excluding White minorities (27%, as opposed to 18% of the general population), males, and those aged 15 or over (Home Office, 2023b).

In this policy context of youth offending and youth justice, the Youth Justice Board introduced the Child First approach to the youth justice system in 2019 to promote pre-emptive prevention and diversion from the justice system (Youth Justice Board, 2023). Similarly, the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), was established in March 2019 with the mission to prevent CYP from becoming involved in violence (YEF, 2024).

### **Preventing/reducing youth offending: Early-intervention programmes**

To tackle youth violence and support CYP affected by it, early intervention programmes are delivered in schools to raise awareness about, prevent and address knife crimes, gang exploitation and youth violence. They can focus on targeting children at risk of violence, the general student population, or the school environment more broadly.

Most school-based early intervention programmes in the UK are universal, which means they include CYP more generally and the school environment – instead of at-risk children (Silvestri et al., 2009). Within a school setting, these programmes aim to develop CYPs' understanding of potential risks and empower them to make informed choices (Home Office, 2018). Broader aims include creating a safe learning environment and encouraging positive relationships (Browne et al., 2022; Gavine et al., 2016; Jones, 2016; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015; Ross et al., 2010).

Effective early intervention programmes are associated with positive effects on aggressive behaviour, an increase in attachment to the school with participation and attainment, and small beneficial effects on attitudes towards violence and physical aggression (College of Policing, 2022; Gavine et al., 2016; Silvestri et al., 2009). Early intervention specifically targeting gang involvement and violence was shown to contribute to changes in attitudes to and understanding of gangs, reductions in gang-related violence, and improvements in school attainment and attendance (Hamilton et al., 2016; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015). For CYP at risk of violence, combining school-based intervention with an additional intervention such as mentoring was found to be effective (The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020; Ross et al., 2010; Joliffe & Farrington, 2007).

There are, however, mixed results on the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of early intervention programmes (Gavine et al., 2016; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015; Ross et al., 2010). Schools can struggle when identifying 'at risk' children and young people at an early stage, and mistakes subsequently result in labelling and stigmatisation which may lead to a risk of offending later in life (The University of Edinburgh, 2022). Broader practices which make early intervention programmes ineffective include minimum staff input, police presence in the school, poor implementation, and a lack of flexibility (Browne et al., 2022; Hamilton et al., 2016; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015; Ross et al., 2010).

Although evaluations of early intervention programmes in the UK are limited compared to the US (Ross et al., 2010), quantitative research and mixed-method research have been used to evaluate the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of these programmes (Browne et al., 2022; Hamilton et al., 2016). It has been, however, recommended that future research include process evaluations (Gavine et al., 2016). Randomised control trials (RCTs) are also uncommon in evaluations of UK early intervention programmes tackling youth violence. As a result, there is still a need for robust evidence on the cause-and-effect relationship between early intervention programmes and outcomes for pupils that considers confounding factors.



## **Preventing/reducing youth offending: Mentoring programmes**

Mentoring involves an interaction between two individuals, a mentor (professional or non-professional) and a mentee over an extended period (College of Policing, 2016). The broad aims of mentoring programmes are to improve behavioural, socio-emotional, and academic outcomes and to create a supportive, non-judgemental environment (Buck, 2021; College of Policing, 2016; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015).

Mentoring schemes are varied in terms of the programme model, target groups, duration of intervention, location of intervention and mentor characteristics, with mentoring programmes for youth at risk of violence or substance misuse also varying in their effectiveness (YEF, 2022b; Axford et al., 2023; Erdem & Kaufman, 2020; Adler et al., 2016; Tolan et al., 2014). When effective, mentoring programmes can improve academic achievement and relationships, and reduce violence and offending (YEF, 2022b; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015). At the same time, mentoring can be ineffective in isolation (Adler et al., 2016).

A strong personal relationship between mentor and mentee and the mentee identifying with the mentor facilitates programme effectiveness and benefits to CYP (College of Policing, 2016; Tolan et al., 2014). However, children from marginalised groups and children at risk of crime – including gangs – may distrust professionals and other authoritative figures (Axford et al., 2023; Gunay & Bacon, 2020). In this context, mentors with lived experience act as positive role models and provide hope for change (Buck, 2021; Creaney, 2018).

Evidence on the effectiveness of mentoring schemes in supporting ‘at risk’ CYP is, however, mostly US-based (YEF, 2022b; Erdem & Kaufman, 2020; Early Intervention Foundation, 2015; Tolan et al., 2014; DuBois et al., 2011).

### **St Giles’ SOS+ Embedded Mentoring Model**

St Giles’ SOS+ Embedded Mentoring Model is an early intervention, prevention, and aspiration support programme delivered in schools. The programme provides targeted support to students involved in crime, youth violence or exploitation, and is delivered in schools by mentors with lived experience of the criminal justice system. Given data gaps on early interventions delivered to pupils to prevent crime and violence, and on the effectiveness of mentors with lived experience, the impact, process, and cost evaluations of the SOS+ programme will make significant contributions to our evidence base on preventing gang involvement and youth violence.

SOS+ embedded mentoring was initially set up in 2015 to deliver preventative awareness-raising school assemblies. However, pupils were disclosing information indicating they were already involved in gangs, violence, and exploitation. At the same time, schools were overwhelmed and lacked the expertise and time to effectively support these pupils. As a

result, the SOS+ Embedded Mentoring Model was set up in 2018. The programme is now delivered in (often deprived) areas across the country where there is an increasing issue with gangs and violence, including evidence of increasing severe youth violence and crime.

St Giles has previously commissioned independent evaluations of the SOS+ embedded mentoring programme (Thorne, 2021; JH Consulting, 2021). These have been primarily qualitative, although significant recent developments have ensured a more robust quantitative evidence base to support further evaluation. Findings from these evaluations have demonstrated the unique perceived value of having a mentor with lived experience of the criminal justice system embedded in an AP/school environment to provide support to the most vulnerable young people. Feedback from children, mentors, parents, and school interviews also suggests the programme can have a positive impact on behavioural difficulties and reduce violence in the school setting.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion in programme delivery**

St Giles' commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion will enable the programme to meet the diverse needs of the CYP they will be supporting. St Giles achieve this by tailoring delivery to reflect the sociodemographic composition and profile of offending and exploitation in local areas. This helps ensure the programme is gender-informed, anti-racist, culturally sensitive, and inclusive. More broadly, St Giles' programme materials, including language and imagery, have been developed with diverse communities in mind. Materials for SOS+ embedded mentoring have been revised since the delivery of the programme started in 2018, based on practical experience within educational settings across the UK and tested through working groups and pupil focus groups. This ensures programme materials are suitable for CYP from diverse ethnic backgrounds and for those who are neurodiverse.

Mentors will also have lived experience of the issues faced by the CYP and will be recruited locally wherever possible to ensure strong cultural competency and local insights into the community. SOS+ mentors will have experienced complex needs and additional barriers to engaging with education and support services, so they have a unique insight into how best to mitigate the associated risks and increase inclusivity for CYP from all backgrounds and across a range of circumstances. In addition, St Giles will:

- Provide ongoing training to mentors to build knowledge and competence in supporting CYP with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Provide ongoing training to mentors to build knowledge and competence around trauma-informed practice.
- Encourage access of all mentors to Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA) and training in trauma-informed practice which allows mentors to respond to and engage

with CYP in a way that considers and responds to their needs and potential barriers to participation in the programme.

- Where possible, place mentors with language skills suited to the cohort.

### **Evaluation design**

This evaluation will have three components: Impact Evaluation (IE), Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE) and Cost Evaluation (CE).

The main research questions are:

#### Impact evaluation:

Primary outcome:

- RQ1: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **self-reported offending** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

Secondary outcomes:

- RQ2: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **conduct problems** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?
- RQ3: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **prosocial behaviour** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?
- RQ4: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **education-setting attendance** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?
- RQ5: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **education-setting exclusions** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?
- RQ6: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on the **mentor/teacher-YP relationship** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

- RQ7 (+IPE): is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme on self-reported offending mediated by the quality of the mentor/teacher-YP relationship?

#### Implementation and process evaluation:

- RQ1: How was the programme delivered? Was it delivered as intended?
- RQ2: Are changes needed to accommodate context and different population needs?
- RQ3: Do all participants complete the programme? If not, who completes the programme and how do they differ from who drops out?
- RQ4: To what extent are the programme activities different from existing pastoral care as usual?

#### Impact evaluation

For the IE, NatCen proposes a two-armed individual-level Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT), stratified by school setting. The control condition will be pastoral care as usual (PCAU). Individual-level randomisation is proposed as it provides greater statistical power for a given sample size and is more compatible with the sample size available for the SOS+ embedded mentoring programme. There would be some benefits to using clustered RCT, for example, the ability to account for peer effects, but the required sample sizes are not achievable for the programme team (approximately 150 schools based on our power calculations). We also expect that the impact of peer effects on control outcomes will be small, compared to the intensity of mentoring on offer. Thus, the design opted for individual randomisation, through which the evaluation can power the trial to detect relatively smaller effect sizes. We will also qualitatively explore peer effects as part of the IPE.

Developing and maintaining a robust system of randomisation will be important for trial integrity. It is, however, essential that CYP are not denied access to support.

Referrals will be made by school staff, who will fill out a referral form and then administer the baseline survey to referred CYP. The education setting will submit all referral forms to St Giles (SOS+ Programme Coordinator and/or SOS+ Data and Compliance Officer), who will, in turn, collect and forward a list of referred pupils to NatCen at the end of the referral period for each of the three cohorts of CYPs (outlined in the section below).

NatCen will carry out the randomisation of CYP into the SOS+ or PCAU for each cohort and inform St Giles of the outcome of the randomisation for each young person. St Giles will inform referrers (i.e., school leads) of CYP allocation to SOS+ or PCAU. Referrers will then be responsible for ensuring CYP allocated to control are referred to PCAU support. Each of the five delivery areas will have 4 partner education settings (20 education settings in total) that

will each refer 48 CYP into the SOS+ programme over two years. The 48 CYP will be recruited in three cohorts (i.e., 16 CYP per education setting per cohort) running for 6 months each.

CYP people not receiving the SOS+ mentoring will be supported through pastoral care provision within the education setting and NatCen and St Giles will develop a school survey to map local PCAU provision in each school. The evaluation will take place in five different regions of the UK so PCAU will likely vary in each area. Nevertheless, PCAU in educational settings would typically include:

- Educational setting pastoral staff;
- Educational setting safeguarding and pastoral systems/structures;
- Additional professionals utilised by the educational setting.

The evaluation will capture variations in PCAU within each school via the school survey, IPE interviews and a pupil tracker completed by school leads. Additional detail on typical PCAU in educational settings is provided in section 2, control condition.

#### Implementation and process evaluation

The IPE will assess whether the programme is being delivered as intended, exploring facilitators and barriers to effective implementation and fidelity, and contextualise findings from the impact evaluation. To achieve the main objectives and answer the main research questions, the IPE will draw on 90 in-depth interviews across 4 key stakeholder groups: 1) SOS+ mentors (10 in-person interviews); 2) linked statutory workers e.g., social worker or youth offending worker (20 online interviews); 3) school referrers (20 online interviews); and mentees (40 in-person interviews).

As part of the IPE, we will interview all mentors involved in delivering the programme. These mentors will each work with 24 mentees across two schools for the two-year duration of the programme. The interviews conducted with the mentors will explore various aspects of the programme including its delivery and implementation, variations and adaptations, how engaged the mentees are, dropout rates, social context, and any potential risks or vulnerabilities of the mentees.

The IPE will also engage with school staff, including senior leaders, behaviour managers, and designated safeguarding leads, who refer CYP to the programme. These interviews will focus on the internal referral process and screening procedures, any observed changes in mentee behaviour, the impact on school attendance, the overall delivery of the programme in each school, and the differences between the programme and PCAU delivered in each school.

To gain insight into the programme's effectiveness from the perspective of the mentees, interviews with CYP will explore their perceptions and experiences of the programme, perceived impact, the mentor-mentee relationship, programme engagement, social context,

and any risks or barriers CYP may face in accessing the programme. We will also investigate peer-effects contamination. Data collection with the mentees will be supplemented by a large-scale survey as part of IE.

Finally, the evaluation will include in-depth interviews with statutory workers, such as social workers or youth offending workers, who provide support to mentees outside of educational institutions. Their insights can help us understand how mentoring has affected CYP and whether it has influenced their behaviour outside of school, such as within their families or in compliance with processes like YOT orders, child protection, or child-in-need plans.

The evaluation approach will prioritise the safety of all CYP involved in interviews and will adhere to safeguarding guidance from the central St Giles Team, St Giles regional leads, and SOS+ mentors. In selecting CYP for the study, NatCen will strive to create a sample that accurately reflects the programme's demographic makeup and the various levels/statuses of mentor engagement.

To ensure breadth and depth of data across all 4 key stakeholder groups, NatCen will work closely with the central St Giles team, St Giles regional leads, and SOS+ mentors to build an understanding of the specific geographical area, in particular building knowledge and understanding of the needs and circumstances of CYP participating in the programme.

## **2. Intervention and control condition**

### **2.1 Intervention: St Giles' SOS+ Embedded Mentoring Model**

#### Why: rationale

Mentoring and peer mentoring are increasing features in youth justice settings. Literature recognises mentors with lived experience as positive role models to influence the behaviour of mentees (Gunay & Bacon, 2020; College of Policing, 2016; Tolan et al., 2014). Mentoring is viewed as an empowerment and strengths-based practice that can counter feelings of powerlessness, lack of skill, and distrust that are common among CYP at higher risk of involvement in crime (Buck, 2021).

The YEF (2022b) shows mentoring programmes can be effective in reducing crime, offering a moderate impact on protecting CYP from violence. The findings suggest mentoring schemes predominantly offer secondary and tertiary prevention and are varied in terms of the programme model, target groups, duration of intervention, location of intervention, and mentor characteristics.

As a way of preventing gang involvement and youth violence, St Giles Trust has pioneered a model of employing mentors with lived experience, offering 1:1 casework practice supporting vulnerable young people.

The SOS+ programme has been evaluated for its impact on mentees, families, school staff, and the overall school community (Thorne, 2021; JH Consulting, 2021). These evaluations have been primarily qualitative. The results have shown a positive effect on mentees' behalf, especially in developing better relationships with professionals and parents/caregivers. This support network is crucial for sustaining progress in the young person's life.

SOS+ mentors have lived experience of crime and offending, which is rare for providers commissioned by state agencies to work with vulnerable CYP and may be beneficial. Therefore, SOS+ merits a rigorous, thorough impact and process evaluation, building upon and addressing the gaps in the existing qualitative evaluations.

#### Who: implementers

The SOS+ embedded mentoring programme has been developed by St Giles Trust. All SOS+ mentors are employed by St Giles Trust and are trained professionals with lived experience and knowledge around CYP violence, criminal gangs, exploitation, and/or the criminal justice system. All mentors will have expertise in school-based service delivery.

To ensure Mentors are equipped with appropriate tools and support, which take into consideration their lived experience, the below training and support package is in place for all Mentors at St Giles:

- Level 2 award in Mentoring (gateway qualifications). This sets the benchmark around how to establish mentoring relationships. Senior Mentors can progress to the Level 3 award.
- Access to a range of internal and external training courses, including supporting CYP at risk of violence training, trauma-informed practice training, safeguarding training including contextual safeguarding, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training, and Induction training delivered by experienced mentors.

- Mentors have 1 day per week ringfenced to work within a St Giles office for administrative purposes, but this is also intended to ensure there is a natural weekly break to prevent burnout.
- During school holidays SOS+ Mentors come together for reflective practice, ongoing training, creating opportunities to debrief with their wider team, creating peer support and contributing to ongoing resilience.
- St Giles has a generous annual leave allowance to ensure mentors take time out of work and maintain a work/life balance.
- Mentors will have a dedicated line manager with regular supervision and access to clinical supervision that ensures a safe space for Mentors to prevent and/or address the impact of vicarious and secondary trauma.
- All staff have access to clinical supervision which is confidential.
- All staff and volunteers are subject to enhanced DBS checks and rigorous safer recruitment processes and risk assessments.

#### Who: Participants

The SOS+ programme targets CYP of secondary school age who are known to be involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation. The majority of CYP mentored are expected to be between the ages 11 and 16, however, CYP aged 17 to 18 may be included if they attend a secondary school which has sixth form provision.

In addition to the above, to be referred into the programme CYP will have to meet at least one of the following three eligibility criteria:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
1. Known involvement with the police	This includes any involvement that the school are aware of including truancy warning; anti-social order; arrest; caution
2. Multiagency involvement	Due to involvement in criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation. Professional targeted support and/or intervention with the young person that could include: Team Around the Child; Multi-Agency Gangs Panel (MAGPAN); local safeguarding board; health professionals



3. Have a linked statutory worker	Due to involvement in criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation. Social worker; YOS worker; probation worker; family support worker; outreach support worker
4. Self-reported	Young person has expressed involvement in criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation to another professional parent or carer

Any young person who does not have at least one of the above criteria will be excluded from the study.

School staff will be making referrals to the programme based on the eligibility criteria above. Involvement in criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation may include known involvement with a gang, involvement in county lines, carrying a knife and antisocial behaviour. This information could be self-reported by CYP or relayed to the school by external safeguarding partners.

Schools are in a unique position as they are key safeguarding partners in the context of child protection and safeguarding efforts. The CYP who are eligible for this programme are likely to be known to safeguarding partners (i.e., police, youth offending teams, social services, local multi-agency forums) as involvement in criminal activity for under 18s is a clear safeguarding concern as well as a criminal justice matter.

Schools play a central role in safeguarding because they are in regular contact with children, as such designated safeguarding leads within schools will receive information from the safeguarding and criminal justice partners listed above and will be working collaboratively with these partners to meet the needs of children at risk.

All referrals will be screened to ensure the eligibility criteria is met. The referrals form will provide explicit confirmation of the young person's involvement in criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation and confirm the role of (any) statutory agency as further evidence of the vulnerability of the CYP. The form will include the name, role, involvement, and contact details of the professional network involved with the young person.

Based on the SOS+ current embedded mentoring across England, St Giles anticipates:

- 50% of mentees to be from Black and Asian background.
- 60% to have Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

- 20% to be in care or have been in care.
- 20% to be girls. This will be higher in some regions where Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) are highly prevalent issues for young women.
- 70% to be from deprived households.

#### How: mode of delivery

SOS+ embedded mentoring programme is a face-to-face, one-to-one support service delivered in secondary schools and alternative provision (AP) settings (e.g., Pupil Referral Units).

Sessions are structured in line with a co-produced mentoring action plan which is informed by:

- The initial mentor-mentee conversation exploring early mentee context, perception and understanding.
- Contextual information on the mentee within the Referral Form.
- Professional conversation between Mentor, Referrer and other professionals involved with the mentee.
- Initial Distance Travelled Tool (DTT) for the mentee to identify key social needs.

Session delivery is supported by several structured activities within the Engagement Exercise Booklet, alongside the mentor's experience. A brief overview of the session is recorded by the mentee in their Mentee Record, and by the mentor within their Mentor Record.

Session length and main activity are also recorded via the electronic tracking mechanism Mentor Progress Record (MPR). Sessions are need-led, as set out by the initial Action Plan, cover a range of themes, and utilise a range of activities including role-modelling, critical thinking exercises, coaching, presentations, case study discussion, and peer and self-evaluation. All activities are mapped against the DTT and intervention outcomes.

#### How much and when: dosage

One-to-one mentoring involves weekly sessions lasting approximately one hour over 6 months. Each young person typically attends a total of 23 sessions.

#### Where: location

Sessions typically take place in the education setting. During the school holidays, or when the young person is not attending their education settings, meetings may take place in agreed

'safe spaces'. These locations are agreed with CYP as places where they feel comfortable and safe, such as St Giles offices, coffee shops, community venues, or food outlets.

The SOS+ programme will be delivered across five regions – London (Southwark, Lambeth), East of England (Bedford), Midlands (Telford), Yorkshire (Leeds and/or Bradford), Wales (Cardiff and/or Swansea) and engage 4 schools per region, totalling 20 schools.

St Giles works closely with Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and Education Leads in these areas and has local authority and school buy-in to deliver the model. These schools will be known to have CYP that are affiliated with gangs, violence, and exploitation.

#### Tailoring: adaptation

- **Mode of delivery:** The SOS+ mentoring typically consists of weekly one-to-one sessions lasting between 45 and 60 minutes for 6 months. In rare high-risk cases, the mentoring may be extended up to 9 months. To ensure timely evaluation and accommodate school schedules, the evaluated model of SOS+ mentoring will offer 6 months of support with an option for a brief extension of one month in exceptional cases, while ongoing support from local services is sought and secured for these CYP by St Giles. Any changes and variations to the programme, including extensions, will be tracked, documented, and analysed within the IPE.
- **Scope of delivery:** As part of its SOS+ programme, St Giles provides a variety of activities in the school and AP (Alternative Provision) settings to expand its reach and offer extra assistance and awareness to children and young adults through onsite support (enhanced presence). This includes conducting school assemblies and/or group sessions, as well as providing training and support to parents, caregivers, and professionals. The primary focus for evaluating this programme is to measure violent behaviour, with a secondary focus on the mentee-mentor relationship. Therefore, the core interest of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of one-to-one mentoring support.
- **Data collection:** St Giles uses various monitoring tools to gather data on CYP receiving mentoring. These tools include referral forms, customised distance travelled tool (DTTs) forms, and monthly progress reports from both mentees and mentors. To ease the load on mentors and mentees, the project and evaluators have decided to use referral forms and mentors' monthly progress reports as the primary tools for data collection. Furthermore, the evaluation will use the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) questionnaire to measure the primary outcome and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Youth Strength of Relationship (YSOR) scale to measure the secondary outcomes. The questionnaires will be distributed online to eligible CYP twice - at the baseline and endpoint.

- Eligibility criteria/target group: St Giles' one-to-one mentoring programme is designed for CYP between the ages of 11 and 18 who are affiliated with groups involved in crime, violence, and trafficking, or who have been affected by serious violence, criminal exploitation, or sexual exploitation. To accurately measure the impact of our SOS+ programme on reducing violent offending behaviour, St Giles will specifically target secondary school-aged individuals who have a known involvement in criminal activity.

## **2.2 Control condition: Pastoral care as usual in education settings**

This section uses the Template for Intervention Description and Replication (TIDieR) checklist (Hoffmann et al., 2014) to describe our current understanding of existing care available to schools to support CYP involved with crime. It is based on the St Giles team's experience of working in this area. The exact details of PCAU will be investigated and recorded during the evaluation.

### Why: Rationale

The implementation of effective pastoral care is a key component of the work of every UK education setting, serving as a crucial element in fostering an environment conducive to the learning and personal growth of every student. This work is underpinned by several pieces of statutory guidance (cf. Appendix 1). It is also recognised by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED), through their inspection of the well-being and personal development of students, that pastoral care is an integral component of overall school effectiveness – and as such is a key strand of the evaluation and assessment of the work of education settings.

Effective, daily pastoral care is fundamental to the holistic development of students. Recognising that education extends beyond academic achievement, effective pastoral care underpins the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of every student, whilst robust pastoral systems not only ensure that students feel safe and supported but also contribute to a positive school culture. By promoting a sense of belonging, emotional resilience, and social cohesion, pastoral care enhances the overall school experience for students and acknowledges their individuality and seeks to address their unique needs, fostering a sense of belonging, promoting positive mental health, and equipping them with essential life skills, resilience, and emotional intelligence.

### Who: Implementers

Educational setting teaching and non-teaching pastoral staff

All staff working with CYP within education settings are required to have received child protection training that is reviewed and updated regularly. They should understand the following guidance and topics:

- Keeping Children Safe In Education Guidance (KCSIE; Department for Education 2023)
- Preventing Radicalisation – including the Prevent Strategy
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Grooming
- Forced Marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Bullying
- Self-harm and neglect
- Child on child abuse

In addition, they should have completed a school induction and be familiar with the school Behaviour, Inclusion and Safeguarding policies and the associated pastoral care provisions. In many instances, those working in education settings will not have the cultural competency and/or lived experience that can be utilised to build trust, develop empathy, and support the young person. They would, however, be supported through in-house professional training delivered by St Giles before intervention delivery to support them in identifying the risk factors and indicators around exploitation, gang and criminal involvement.

Additional professionals utilised by educational settings such as Attendance Officers; Local Authority Integration Teams; external consultants or support agencies. These are limited by availability, capacity and budget and often represent only short-term support).

Non-educational professionals such as youth offending; social care; health workers; family support workers; and youth workers (typically these will only have limited interactions, if any, with educational settings).

#### Who: Participants

Pastoral care as usual should be accessible to every student within the education setting. The nature of the care will be led by the needs of each student.

Given the referral criteria for participation in the study, typically participants will display a range of characteristics as identified below:

Disengagement with education:

- Below expected academic progress

- At high risk of fixed-term and/or permanent exclusion
- Higher than average behaviour logs/incidents
- Regular school sanctions
- Lower-than-average reward logs
- Lower-than-average school attendance
- Poor punctuality to school/lessons
- Limited positive relationships with school staff/professionals

Low aspiration:

- Disengagement with education (as above)
- Disengagement with the school careers programme
- Little or no career pathway
- Lack of self-value / worth
- Poor mental wellbeing
- Negative perception of future

Low self-esteem / poor mental wellbeing:

- Failure to appreciate the consequences of actions
- Limited ability to control emotions and identify triggers

Poor social interactions:

- Confrontational and aggressive behaviours towards friends; family and/or adults
- Limited ability to resolve conflict non-violently
- Negative friendship groups
- Poor parent/carer relationship
- Reluctance to seek support

Additional characteristics could include:

- Lack of trust in educational staff and other professionals
- Unhealthy and toxic personal relationships
- Increasing risk-taking behaviours
- Missing episodes within the school and community
- Engagement with police or criminal justice system

How: Mode of Delivery, How Much and When

There is no definitive mode of delivery for pastoral care within education settings (Long, 2022). Most, however, will operate on a model that builds an affirmative culture through the recognition of positive behaviours and achievement whilst implementing consequences for inappropriate behaviours. For most pupils, these rewards and consequences are reactive, but where there is an identified need or risk, proactive interventions and support can be available. A best practice is that such rewards, consequences, and support interventions are designed to meet the needs and context of the education setting community and are consistently applied to every pupil by all those working within an education setting. More proactive interventions tend to be implemented for high-level behaviours, concerns or support by specialist pastoral staff external partners or specialist professionals.

St Giles’ experience working with schools suggests most pastoral care systems are delivered through three stages in response to need. An example of a typical pastoral care approach including pastoral care interventions is illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below:

**Figure 1: Typical Pastoral Care**

Typical model of delivery		
Wave III	Specialist Provision	Longer term Provision focused with the expectation to reintegrate and/or reengage into mainstream
Wave II	Pastoral and Inclusion Teams and Specialist Providers	6-18 weeks Targeted and short-term with a clear exit strategy
Wave I	All	Daily High-quality teaching and pastoral care

**Figure 2: Examples of Pastoral Care Interventions**

Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour logs</li> <li>• Home contact</li> <li>• Parent /Carer meetings</li> <li>• Restorative practices</li> <li>• Flexible timetabling and learning support.</li> <li>• Daily report</li> <li>• Behaviour contract</li> <li>• Peer mentoring</li> <li>• Buddying</li> <li>• Career guidance</li> <li>• Transition support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support / Behaviour Plans</li> <li>• Mentoring (non-specialist)</li> <li>• Professionals or Senior Meetings</li> <li>• Risk assessment</li> <li>• School nurse service</li> <li>• Anger management</li> <li>• Key worker support</li> <li>• Nurture Group</li> </ul> <p>Professional support including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life Coaching</li> <li>• Social skills</li> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Drugs and alcohol</li> <li>• Emotional Literacy Support</li> <li>• Emotional resilience</li> <li>• Trauma</li> <li>• Bereavement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist / Alternative Provision placement</li> <li>• CAMHS involvement</li> <li>• Education Psychologist</li> <li>• SEND Advisor</li> <li>• Multi Agency Gangs Panel (MAGPAN) involvement</li> <li>• YOT involvement</li> <li>• Specialist intervention and support e.g., St Giles SOS+</li> </ul>

Many of those students who meet the criteria for referral into the project will already have a number of Wave II and/or Wave III interventions and support around them. The actual level of support provided will vary between settings and will most typically depend on:

- Individual pupil needs;
- Local context; and
- Local authority and school budgets.

### 3. Impact evaluation



### 3.1 Research questions

Primary outcome:

RQ1: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **self-reported offending** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

Secondary outcomes:

RQ2: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **conduct problems** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

RQ3: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **prosocial behaviour** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

RQ4: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **education-setting attendance** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

RQ5: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on **education-setting exclusions** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

RQ6: What is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme delivered by a mentor with lived experience on the **mentor/teacher-YP relationship** among CYP involved in incidents related to criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation, compared to pastoral care as usual?

RQ7 (+IPE): is the impact of a 6-month 1:1 mentoring programme on self-reported offending mediated by the quality of the mentor/teacher-YP relationship?

### 3.2 Design

We propose a two-armed individual-level RCT, stratified by educational setting. The control condition will be pastoral care as usual (PCAU).

**Table 1: Trial design**

<b>Trial design, including the number of arms</b>	Two-armed individual-level randomised controlled trial, stratified by school.
<b>Unit of randomisation</b>	Individuals (young people).

<b>Stratification variables</b>		Education setting.
<b>Primary outcome</b>	Variable	Self-reported offending behaviour.
	measure (instrument, scale, source)	The Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) volume of the offending score.
<b>Secondary outcome(s)</b>	Variable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct/behavioural problems</li> <li>2. Prosocial behaviour</li> <li>3. School/education setting attendance</li> <li>4. School/education setting exclusions</li> <li>5. Mentor-mentee relationship</li> </ol>
	measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)	<p>1– 2. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores on respective subscales, self-reported by CYP.</p> <p>3. School/setting attendance from school records.</p> <p>4. School/setting exclusions from school records.</p> <p>5. Youth Strength of Relationship (YSoR) scale scores, self-reported by CYP.</p>
<b>Baseline for primary outcome</b>	Variable	Externalising behaviour problems.
	measure (instrument, scale, source)	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score for externalising behaviour, self-reported by CYP.
<b>Baseline for secondary outcome</b>	Variable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct/behavioural problems</li> <li>2. Prosocial behaviour</li> <li>3. School/setting attendance</li> <li>4. School/setting exclusions</li> <li>5. Mentor-mentee relationship</li> </ol>
	measure (instrument, scale, source)	<p>1– 2. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores on respective subscales, self-reported by CYP.</p> <p>3. School/setting attendance from school records.</p> <p>4. School/setting exclusions from school records.</p> <p>5. Youth Strength of Relationship (YSoR) scale scores, self-reported by CYP.</p>

### 3.3 Randomisation

The unit of randomisation in this trial is at the individual level. CYP who are referred, agree to participate, and complete a baseline survey, will be stratified by their school, and randomised into SOS+ or PCAU within each stratum. All participating CYPs will have a 50:50 chance of being assigned to the SOS+ or PCAU within each stratum. Stratification will ensure that there will be equal allocation to the programme and control groups within each school.

We will randomise CYP after baseline data collection to minimise the risk of baseline survey non-response and response bias. In total, this efficacy trial will include 960 CYP of which 480 CYP will receive SOS+ mentoring and 480 CYP will receive pastoral care as usual (PCAU). CYP will be drawn from 20 education settings with mentors working across two schools each.

Randomisation will be conducted on all consenting referrals (referral and consent procedures are outlined below) before the start of mentoring for each of the three cohorts (c.f. section 1: Evaluation design). Within each school, we will allocate CYP in one of two conditions: receiving SOS+ mentoring or not.

Randomisation of CYP into SOS+ or PCAU will be carried out by the evaluation team at NatCen during a one-week window before the start of mentoring for each cohort. The randomisation will be carried out in Stata, with *.do* and *.log* files used to record the process. At the time of randomisation, researchers will be blind to CYP identity. CYP identifiers will be linked back with condition allocation after randomisation.

### **3.4 Participants**

During the mobilisation period, the St Giles SOS+ programme will work with partner schools to ensure a detailed understanding of the eligibility criteria as it will be school referrers who identify the CYP and then make the referral. Schools will be aware of CYP who meet this eligibility criteria as it is essentially based on self-disclosure or involvement with a statutory agency as a result of involvement in criminal activity, youth violence or exploitation. Schools' designated safeguarding leads, at minimum, will have information shared with them from these statutory agencies. This will guide school referrers on who is eligible for the SOS+ Programme. St Giles, with NatCen, will produce guidance for schools and this will be included in school training during the mobilisation phase to ensure there is a consistent approach for referrals.

The programme will be delivered in secondary schools and alternative provision (AP) settings (e.g., Pupil Referral Units) across five regions – London (Southwark, Lambeth), East of England (Bedford), Midlands (Telford), Yorkshire (Leeds and/or Bradford), Wales (Cardiff and/or Swansea). Some education settings might have previous involvement with St Giles as part of other programmes. A total of 20 education settings will be identified and recruited by St Giles regional leads.

### **3.5 Referring into the intervention**

Each identified delivery area, i.e., five regions named above, will have 4 partner schools that will in total refer 192 CYP into the SOS+ programme (the proportion of CYP per setting will depend on the size of the school). Of these, half within each setting will be randomly assigned to mentoring and half to PCAU. There will be 3 cohorts of mentees across the evaluation timeframe, each scheduled for 6 months. All referrals will be made by school staff (teachers, safeguarding leads or others) using a referral form to identify needs and screen CYP against the inclusion criteria. External agencies will not refer directly to the programme but will be able to identify CYP to school staff for referral. The referral process comprises:

- An opt-out letter sent to parents.
- A referral form completed by school staff.
- Completion of an online self-report survey by the referred CYP. Consent for survey data collection and taking part in the evaluation will be included at the start of the survey and administered by school staff.

The referral process, including planned training at all schools during the mobilisation period and ongoing engagement with school staff, alongside the set-up on the referral form (the eligibility criteria being a gateway question to completing the rest of the form) and the concrete eligibility criteria (i.e., objective criteria) will ensure only eligible CYP are referred and go on to complete the baseline survey.

However, consultation with schools is built into the mobilisation stage, and if schools feel they need referrals to be signed off before administering the survey, St Giles can adapt the process to include referrals going directly to the SOS+ Programme Coordinator/Data and Compliance Officer/Project Manager to assess and confirm the referral. The next stage would be the school administering informed consent and supporting the CYP to complete the survey. St Giles will collect demographic data such as sex, age, date of birth, school year, ethnicity, and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), along with data on any previous offences. This information is collected from schools via the referral form before randomisation and will be shared with NatCen.

CYP will then be randomised to receive SOS+ mentoring or PCAU by NatCen as described above (see 3.3 Randomisation). Referrers will be informed of CYP allocation and of their responsibility to refer CYP allocated to the control condition to alternative PCAU support as part of their duty of care. The SOS+ mentoring will be primarily school-based.

### **3.6 Eligibility criteria**

The eligibility criteria will be a gateway question for school referrers when completing the referral form.

Schools will be advised to utilise the following checklist to screen for eligibility criteria of the CYP within their setting:

- School records review
- Safeguarding records review
- SEND / inclusion records review
- Community police checks
- Child welfare system checks
- Children and young people self-reporting / disclosing
- Family reporting/disclosing

The applicable referral pathway(s) will be identified at the point of referral within the referral form completed by the school.

Pastoral and/or safeguarding leads responsible for the completion of the referral form within each setting will, as part of the project mobilisation period, undertake training (delivered by St Giles) and application of the referral process that will include:

- Explanation of the referral criteria and process
- Completion of the referral form
- Worked submission (utilising 'live' student record)
- Prevention and management of potential biases and discrimination

Referral pathways will be tracked and monitored by St Giles for each education setting and across the project. It is, however, anticipated that through pastoral care as usual, the principal referral pathway would be utilising the young person's school record.

School records typically contain a variety of information that documents the academic progress, behaviour, attendance, and other relevant aspects of the educational experience of a young person. The exact contents of a school record may vary slightly from one school to another, but, generally, it includes the following components: personal information; attendance records; academic progress; behaviour and conduct; SEND information; individual education plan (IEP); personal development information; school reports and assessments; transition records; medical information and communication log.

As part of the St Giles quality assurance process, a random sample of 10% of school files (4 files per setting per referral window) of CYP referred into the programme will be undertaken as part of the quality assurance monitoring. This will be completed within each setting before the intervention/control pilot. In this, the Project Manager or Regional Leads will cross-reference individual student files to the information provided within the referral form. This

will be written up in the form of a sample report that will be shared by St Giles with the education setting and NatCen.

Where the eligibility criteria are found not applied the following will occur:

- The school point of contact will be notified, and a further 3 files will be cross-referenced by St Giles.

Should concerns still arise:

- A meeting will be held with the school point of contact and St Giles to exemplify the concerns.
- A further review of the Referral submitted will be undertaken to ensure that the eligibility criteria have been fully applied. Where this occurs, these CYP will be withdrawn from the study groups (mentoring or control). St Giles will inform NatCen.
- Additional training will be delivered to key pastoral leaders on the application of the referral criteria.
- St Giles Regional Leads will offer needs-led ongoing support and pre-screening of referrals prior to submission.

### **3.7 Obtaining school administrative data on exclusions and attendance**

Collection of individual attendance and exclusion data will be undertaken to cover two periods:

1. The start of mentoring engagement: Six months before the mentoring starts for intervention/control
2. The end of mentoring engagement: Six months up to a final scheduled week of mentoring for the intervention/ control

This data will be collated by school staff via a simple electronic return that will be administered by NatCen. Data on each student within the study will be collected from school electronic attendance and behaviour systems and will include:

- Individual School attendance (number of sessions attended and possible, 6 months to date)
- Authorised and unauthorised absences (number of sessions attended and possible, 6 months to date)
- Number of fixed-term exclusion events (6 months to date)
- Number of fixed term days (6 months to date)

### **3.8 Tracking of PCAU**

Due to expected variation in PCAU provision across different settings and areas, there is scope to capture PCAU support available within each education setting participating in the evaluation. To do this, NatCen and St Giles will develop an online school survey that will be completed by one member of school staff at each institution before, or very soon after, the start of the SOS+ programme. The survey will be based on the Provision Mapping Categories (outlined in Appendix 2). NatCen will set up the survey and analyse the data, while St Giles will facilitate data collection via their contact with schools.

St Giles' Data, Compliance and Evaluation Manager will be responsible for sending the survey to each educational setting, alongside recruitment information drafted by NatCen detailing why the data is being collected, how it will be used, and providing the contact details of the research team. The Data, Compliance and Evaluation Manager will also be available to remind school leads about completing the surveys and to provide instructions and respond to questions about completion that would ensure consistency in reporting across schools. Once completed, the online survey results will be directly received by NatCen.

To track PCAU support received by each student during the intervention/control period, NatCen and St Giles will also develop a pupil-level PCAU provision tracker that will be completed by school staff after the intervention is completed (e.g., an Excel sheet listing pupils and a checklist for all PCAU received). The tracker will be designed based on the Provision Mapping Categories (outlined in Appendix 2), and results from completed school surveys.

NatCen will create secure folders where trackers for each school (across both the intervention and control groups) will be uploaded securely by school staff. St Giles' Data, Compliance and Evaluation Manager will also be able to provide instructions and respond to questions about completion that would ensure consistency in reporting across schools and remind school staff to complete the trackers. The primary purpose of collecting this data is to better understand the PCAU that CYP receives to inform the impact analyses. Data on PCAU from external agencies will not be collected unless it is known to school staff and therefore recorded on the pupil trackers. We believe this is a proportionate approach that balances the needs of the impact analyses, research resources and costs, and the burden on professionals.

In addition to mapping and tracking PCAU, St Giles will track and quality assure real-time intervention delivery via mentor and mentee records. These records are submitted weekly. St Giles' Data Manager will monitor these records and mentor case notes to identify any contact with CYP not allocated to the intervention (i.e., identify contamination).

### **3.9 Pupil survey**

An online pupil survey will be conducted at baseline and endline. This will serve multiple purposes: (1) record consent to the evaluation and its components, (2) collect data on

outcome measures at baseline, and (3) collect data on outcome measures at endline (including self-reported delinquency).

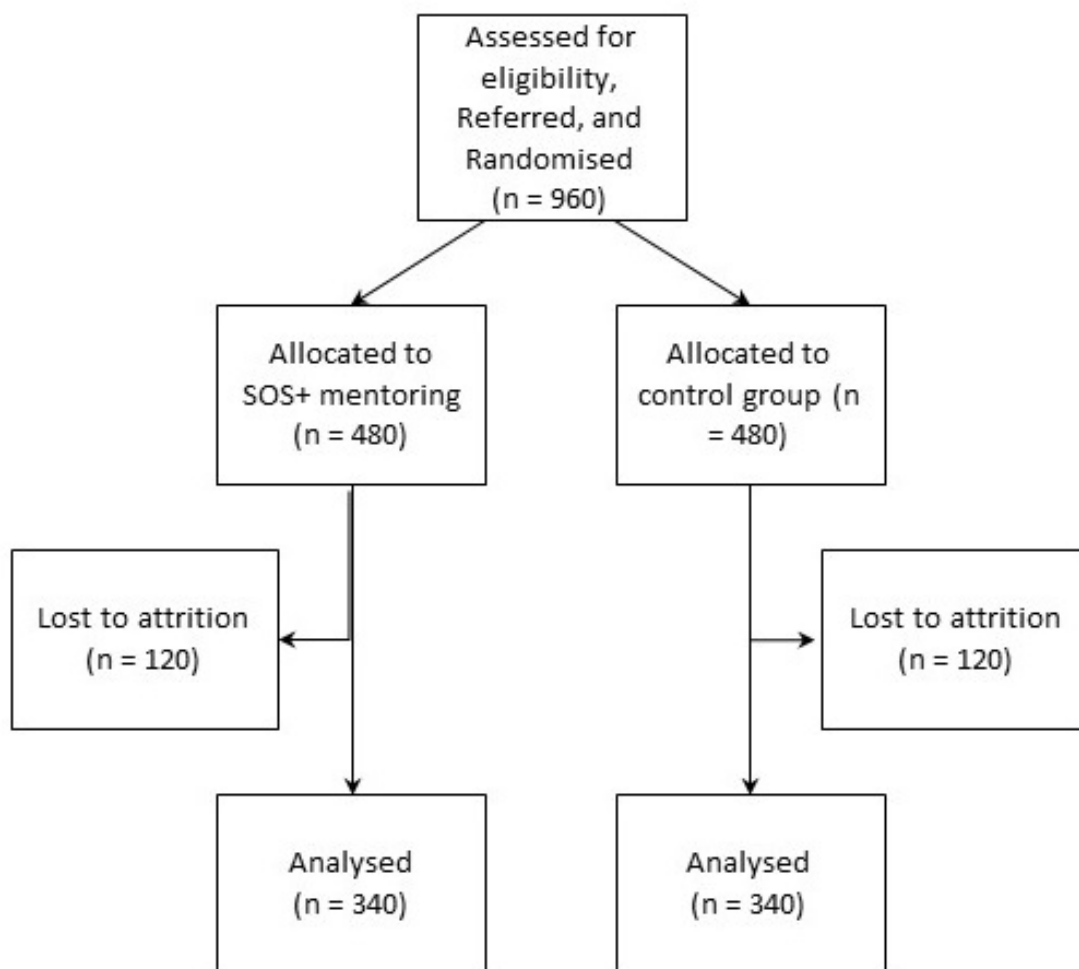
- (1) NatCen will develop materials for teachers to explain the evaluation and request informed consent from CYP. St Giles, with NatCen, will produce guidance for school staff and this will be included in school training during the mobilisation phase to ensure there is a consistent approach to discussing consent with CYP. Specifically, teachers will be given an information sheet to read with CYP to explain what they are consenting to. The survey will ask CYP to confirm each activity they are consenting to and that they understand their rights.
- (2) At baseline, the survey will be shared with CYP by the school lead. The CYP will complete the survey during school time, supervised by a teacher or school lead but will be able to do this in privacy (e.g., in a quiet room and not overlooked by a staff member). The CYP will be told they can request the help of a teacher or other staff member to complete the survey if they need it. School leads will be responsible for making sure the CYP survey is submitted to NatCen to complete the referral process.
- (3) The endline survey will be online and participation facilitated by two approaches. The first will mirror the approach at baseline, where school leads will ask CYP to complete the endline survey. Second, the CYP will also be sent the survey by NatCen if the CYP is no longer in school or the lead teacher is not able to reach them in the designated week. The survey link will be sent via email and text message reminders. A £20 incentive will be offered to CYP for completion of the survey.

### **3.10 Sample size calculations**

Figure 3 displays the anticipated participant flow through the trial and attrition to endline survey response.



**Figure 3: Anticipated participant flow for power calculations**



Considering restrictions of the maximum delivery capacity by St Giles for the SOS+ mentoring programme, the evaluation will aim to recruit 960 CYP over the two years of the programme, with half randomly allocated to the intervention condition (i.e., 480 CYP) and the other half randomly allocated to the usual practice control condition (i.e., 480 CYP). CYP will be recruited from approximately 20 schools across five geographical areas.

Table 2 (Sample size calculations) demonstrates the estimated Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES) for the trial without accounting for attrition and/or endline survey non-response, as the primary outcome will only be measured at endline. No published estimates of pre-test/post-test correlation between baseline and follow-up were found for the Self-Report Delinquency Scale (SRDS) measure. Studies considering other self-reported or administrative offending measures have found pre-post correlations ranging from 0.09 to 0.76 for these outcome measures (Myner et al., 1998; Zhang et al., 2000; Goodman, 2001; Hamilton et al., 2007; Dolan et al., 2011; Assink et al., 2015). Given this wide range of estimates, we will use

a mid-range estimate of 0.40 in the power calculations which is primarily informed by the following evidence:

- A small efficacy trial found the SDQ's externalising score (which combines the SDQ hyperactivity and conduct scores) was correlated with the SRDS volume score at  $r = .50$  (Coulton et al., 2023<sup>1</sup>). SDQ conduct and hyperactivity scores were correlated with SRDS volume score, at  $r = .43$  and  $r = .40$ , respectively.
- A large-scale efficacy trial (Culliney et al., 2022<sup>2</sup>) found correlations between baseline SDQ hyperactivity and conduct scores and subscales of a different measure of delinquent behaviour - the Problem Behaviour Frequency Scale (PBFS), with estimates ranging between 0.162 and 0.445 and subscales including delinquent behaviour ( $r = 0.249$  and  $r = 0.162$ ), physical aggression ( $r = 0.445$  and  $r = 0.303$ ), verbal aggression ( $r = 0.398$  and  $r = 0.243$ ), relational aggression ( $r = 0.323$  and  $r = 0.216$ ).
- In a sample of 230 children previously involved in delinquent behaviour, SDQ self-report scores on the conduct and hyperactivity subscales were also correlated, at  $r = .315$  and  $r = .259$ , respectively, with scores on the Observed Antisocial Behaviour Questionnaire (OAB) which covers items similar to the SRDS (van Domburgh et al., 2011).
- Longitudinal correlations of 0.40 for the SDQ conduct problems subscale were found for a sample of primary to secondary school students in England (Ng-Knight et al., 2019).

Power calculations were conducted using PowerUp!<sup>3</sup> (Dong & Maynard, 2013). Under these assumptions and an ideal scenario of no attrition, the trial would have the power to detect an overall MDES of 0.166 in the primary outcome. This MDES is smaller than the effect sizes in the literature. For example, a meta-analysis of the effects of mentoring programmes on youth delinquency (Tolan et al., 2013) suggests that the expected effect size would be around 0.20 for self-report measures.

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<sup>1</sup> Correlation coefficients were provided by personal correspondence with S.C., principal investigator of Re-Frame: Randomised Controlled Efficacy Trial of a Diversion Programme for Adolescents in Police Custody who Possess Controlled Drugs (Coulton, Gannon & Hendrie, 2023), Youth Endowment Fund, <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Reframe-Evaluation-protocol.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Correlation coefficients were provided by personal correspondence with M.C., principal investigator of DARE25 Efficacy randomised controlled trial study (Culliney, Willis, Formby, Clark & Demack, 2022), Youth Endowment Fund, <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/DARE25-YEF-Efficacy-RCT-Sep-22-1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Model 2.2. Sample size calculator for 2-Level fixed effects (blocked by school) individual random assignment was selected.

Attrition and survey non-response are risks for any longitudinal study and key considerations for this trial. Table 2 shows the estimated MDES for the trial when accounting for attrition and/or endline survey non-response rates. These figures are informed by our review of 17 previous YEF trials. The figures indicate that survey response rates range from 47% to 91%. YEF-funded studies that are most similar and therefore informative of this evaluation include Empire Fighting Chance, Out and Re-Frame, which report endline response rates of 62%, 74% and 88% of the randomised sample, respectively. Therefore, we estimate endline response rates of 70% and model this in our power calculations (Table 2). Under these assumptions, the trial would still have the power to detect an MDES of 0.198, which is close to the 0.20 effect size that the literature suggests (Tolan et al., 2013).

**Table 2: Sample size calculations**

	NO ATTRITION	ACCOUNTING FOR ATTRITION AND ENDLINE SURVEY NON-RESPONSE
Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES)	0.166	0.198
Pre-test/ post-test correlations	0.40	0.40
Alpha <sup>4</sup>	0.05	0.05
Power	0.8	0.8
One-sided or two-sided?	Two	Two
Average school/cluster size*	48	34

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<sup>4</sup> Notes: Power calculations were performed using PowerUp! under an alpha level of 0.05 and a power of 0.8. The calculations include estimates of the proportion of variance explained through the included covariates at each of these levels (also known as R<sup>2</sup>). The R<sup>2</sup> values here have been estimated by squaring the pre-test and post-test correlation (which is assumed to be 0.4). An R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.16 at the individual-level is used in the power calculations in PowerUp! As randomisation is stratified by the school, the same school will provide both intervention mentees and young individuals in the control group. \*Average cluster size is reduced from 48 to 34, assuming a 70% endline survey response rate.

		NO ATTRITION	ACCOUNTING FOR ATTRITION AND ENDLINE SURVEY NON-RESPONSE
Number of participants	Intervention	480	340
	Control	480	340
	Total	960	680

## 4. Outcome measures

### Primary outcome

To measure offending behaviour as our primary outcome, we will use the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC). The SRDS is a self-report questionnaire assessing the frequency and volume of different types of antisocial and criminal acts committed over a given period. The volume score will be the primary outcome. The original SRDS comprised 36 items, each asking the respondent to indicate whether they have committed a particular act in this period (Yes or No) and, if so, how many times they took part in this behaviour (ranging from Once up to More than 10 times), as well as whether they got in trouble for doing so and with whom. We will exclude SRDS items that record whether CYP got in trouble for acts and with whom for two main reasons: (1) to reduce the survey length and burden on CYP. Higher burden will likely lead to high attrition; (2) to minimise the data collected. These items are not used in the calculation of the SRDS frequency and volume scores and therefore are not needed for this evaluation. For the present evaluation, we will use a reference period of the past 6 months as it aligns with the programme length.

The SRDS has been validated for use with CYP in the UK, used extensively in research evaluating youth crime prevention programmes, and shows good psychometric properties, with high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .87 - .92$ ; Fonagy et al., 2018; Humayun et al., 2017) and external validity (McAra & McVie, 2005).

The SRDS will be distributed online to CYP taking part in the study at the endline only (6 months after the start of mentoring/PCAU). This is primarily to mitigate the risk of non-response to endline data collection associated with NatCen's duty of care to disclose reports of offending behaviours that place the participating child and/or others at risk.

### Secondary outcomes

To measure behavioural problems as a secondary outcome, we will use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The SDQ has a self-report version that can be used with CYP as a brief emotional and behavioural screening tool. The SDQ comprises 25 items and produces five subscales. The questionnaire shows satisfactory-to-good psychometric properties across versions and sub-scales, with an average internal consistency of Cronbach  $\alpha = .73$  (Goodman, 2001). However, in our research, we have noted that the conduct problems subscale used here often reports lower internal consistency in the range of 0.60 to 0.65 (e.g., Ng-Knight et al., 2019).

The SDQ will be administered in whole to participating CYP online at baseline and endline. The analyses will use scores on two subscales that align with the SOS+ theory of change: the conduct problems subscale, and the prosocial behaviour subscale.

As further secondary outcomes, we will use education-setting attendance and exclusion data from school and AP setting records. This data will be collected from schools and settings by St Giles and shared with NatCen at baseline and endline. These will cover 6-month periods.

To explore the effect of mentoring on CYP's relationships with adults we will measure the mentor-mentee relationship at the endline using the Youth Strength of Relationship (YSoR) scale, a 10-item youth-reported scale developed and validated by Rhodes et al. (2017) to capture levels of emotional engagement between mentors and mentees. The YSoR scale shows good internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ; Rhodes et al., 2017). For CYP in the control group, we will measure the quality of the relationship with a teacher, social or youth worker, involved in PCAU.

### **Baseline measures**

The SDQ will be distributed to CYP via an online survey at baseline. The SDQ externalising behaviour score (which combines SDQ hyperactivity and conduct subscale scores) will be used as a baseline covariate for the primary outcome of self-reported offending behaviour. This score was selected as a previous study found it was the most strongly correlated with the SRDS volume score ( $r = .50$ ; Coulton et al., 2023<sup>5</sup>).

SDQ scores on the conduct problems subscale and the prosocial behaviour subscale will be used as a baseline for the respective secondary outcomes. To ensure high response rates at

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<sup>5</sup> Correlation coefficients were provided by personal correspondence with S.C., principal investigator of Re-Frame: Randomised Controlled Efficacy Trial of a Diversion Programme for Adolescents in Police Custody who Possess Controlled Drugs (Coulton, Gannon & Hendrie, 2023), Youth Endowment Fund, <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Reframe-Evaluation-protocol.pdf>.

baseline, surveys will be collected pre-randomisation. Attendance and exclusion data for the previous year will also be collected from settings at baseline.

### **Exploratory subgroup analyses**

To feed into the REDI analysis and interpretation, we will conduct subgroup analyses of impact. Possible grouping includes ethnicity, SEND, and gender. Data on these subgroups will be collected from referral forms. It is highly likely these analyses will be underpowered to find small-to-medium effects and therefore will be presented as exploratory. We will aim to present the findings graphically and to represent uncertainty (due to smaller group sizes) with error bars or similar.

### **Compliance**

A measure of compliance will be constructed according to CYP attendance to the 23 planned mentoring sessions. This data will then be used to conduct analyses in the presence of non-compliance and give an indication of the programme effects amongst those who participated (i.e., complied) in the intervention.

Attendance at mentoring sessions will be captured via a St Giles register. The threshold for compliance will be set as 20 sessions as agreed at set-up. The compliance analysis section below details our empirical approach to tackling compliance. The IPE will also investigate compliance and dosage when assessing implementation fidelity (c.f. section 6 pg. 25).

## **5. Analysis**

### **Primary outcome analysis**

The primary analysis will assess the impact of SOS+ mentoring on violent offending of the mentees compared to CYP receiving PCAU. The primary outcome (violent offending assessed via the SRDS) will be analysed using a linear multiple regression model with baseline SDQ externalising score and school fixed effects constituting the covariates. We will run this analysis as an Intention-to-Treat (ITT) analysis with all participating CYP and their schools analysed as part of the intervention arm to which they were randomised. This will be the primary analysis and provide the most statistically robust evidence of the causal impact of the SOS+ mentoring programme on the primary outcome.

The SRDS score at the endline will be the dependent variable, with a binary indicator of the allocation group (i.e., receiving SOS+ or PCAU), baseline SDQ externalising score and school will be included in the model as independent variables.

This efficacy trial will not attempt to generalise the findings beyond the sample of schools eligible for this trial. Thus, the clustering of CYP within schools will be accounted for with fixed effects (YEF, 2021). This means we will introduce binary variables for each school. The use of a fixed effect model will not allow for assessing the intervention's heterogeneous impact across schools (i.e., school-by-intervention interactions). Our model will follow YEF statistical analysis guidance (YEF, 2021), and all impact estimates will be reported as a standardised effect size (ES) such as Hedges'  $g$  with a 95% confidence interval.

### **Secondary outcome analysis**

We will estimate the impact of the SOS+ mentoring programme on the secondary outcomes (SDQ subscales, school/setting attendance, CYP-adult relationship). The analytical approach will depend on the type and distribution of the outcome data. We will run negative binomial regression models to assess the influence of the SOS+ mentoring programme on count outcome variables such as school attendance and exclusion data and linear multiple regression model for outcomes like SDQ subscales and CYP-adult relationships. These models will incorporate baseline scores (excluding the CYP-adult relationship, as it is not collected at baseline) and school-fixed effects as covariates.

### **Additional analyses**

We will conduct mediation analyses to assess the role of mentor-mentee relationship quality as a mediator between programme receipt and the primary outcome. Mediation analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) will be employed to test whether the quality of the CYP's relationships with their mentor (or a teacher for those in the control condition receiving PCAU) is a significant mechanism by which SOS+ improves CYP adjustment (i.e., reduced perpetration of violent crime).

Although the main analysis will be ITT with a stratification variable for schools, we will also examine and report differences in PCAU across schools and between SOS+ and PCAU groups to deepen our understanding of differences. Subgroup or stratified analyses will be conducted to investigate the impact of different levels of PCAU (e.g., wave 1, 2 and 3 as described in Appendix 2), if appropriate. This will depend on the levels of heterogeneity observed in the data.

### **Compliance analysis**

The ITT analysis outlined above may underestimate the effect of an intervention if some individuals, in either trial arm, do not adhere to their assigned condition. As a result, additional analysis will be conducted to consider any non-compliance among those who received the intervention.

Compliance is defined as the fulfilment of a set of minimum criteria which determine whether a mentor has delivered the SOS+ mentoring programme as intended. Full compliance is defined as when a CYP has received 23 mentoring sessions. Based on the expert opinion of St Giles about the required level of engagement with the SOS+ programme, we will use 20 sessions as the threshold for compliance. St Giles has estimated that 85% of the cohort will be able to attend 20 sessions. We will also examine compliance data once it is collected and consider exploratory sensitivity analyses at different levels of compliance and/or as a continuous measure if deemed appropriate (further details will be provided in the Statistical Analysis Plan (SAP)).

In terms of analysis, compliance will be a binary measure, indicating whether a mentee was compliant (i.e., 20 or more sessions attended) or not. In a situation of imperfect compliance (e.g., some CYP receiving fewer than 20 mentoring sessions), we will undertake a Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE) analysis using two-stage least squares (2SLS) estimation to obtain the causal effect for those who complied with the assignment (see Angrist & Imbens, 1995).

The first stage of the IV estimation estimates whether assignment to the SOS+ mentoring programme encourages CYP to attend sessions (i.e., the first stage regresses compliance on the group assignment). Results for the first stage will report the regression coefficient for allocation and results of the F-test (YEF, 2021). The second stage of the IV estimation predicts the outcome measure (i.e., self-reported offending) using the predicted probabilities of compliance from the first stage as the predictor. The results of this model will answer the research question: 'To what extent does compliance with receiving SOS+ mentoring delivery requirements lead to reduced violent offending for CYP?'. We will use the model for estimations for the primary outcome measure, i.e., violent offending assessed via the SRDS.

### **Missing data analysis**

We will follow the YEF's statistical analysis guidance to address missing data (YEF, 2021), the selected option will be decided after we have a better understanding of the extent of missingness and the patterns of missingness. A detailed account of our missing data approach will be outlined in the SAP.

## **6. Implementation and process evaluation**

### **6.1 Research questions**

1. RQ1: How was the programme delivered? Was it delivered as intended?
2. RQ2: Are changes needed to accommodate context and different population needs?
3. RQ3: Do all participants complete the programme? If not, who completes the programme and how do they differ from who drops out?



4. RQ4: To what extent are the programme activities different from existing Pastoral Care as Usual?

## 6.2 Research methods

The IPE will assess whether the programme is being delivered as intended, exploring facilitators and barriers to effective implementation and fidelity, and contextualise findings from the impact evaluation. To achieve the main objectives and answer the IPE research questions, we propose to conduct 90 in-depth qualitative interviews across 4 key stakeholder groups: SOS+ mentors (10 in-person interviews), linked statutory workers (20 online interviews), school referrers (20 online interviews) and CYP (mentees) (40 in-person interviews).

Each participant will be provided with a specific participant information sheet and provide consent before participating in an interview. Interviews will be conducted by members of the NatCen research team who are experienced in conducting research with sensitive groups. In addition, our team of researchers is also trauma-informed and trained in EDI / REDI issues all of which will allow us to embed these principles firmly into research design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research findings.

For school referrers and linked statutory workers, interviews will be held online to minimise the burden for already busy professionals. However, interviews with mentors and mentees will be conducted in person to establish a stronger, more trusting relationship with these two groups of stakeholders.

The interviews will be semi-structured, following an interview schedule specific to the type of stakeholder interviewed. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

### Mentor interviews

The IPE will engage with all mentors delivering the programme (n = 10). Mentors will be recruited by St Giles, following a robust recruitment process, to provide face-to-face, one-to-one mentoring support to CYP within school settings.

The interviews will use open questions to explore the delivery and implementation of the programme (RQ1), exploring in more depth whether the programme was implemented and delivered according to plan, barriers and facilitators to delivery, and type and nature of support offered to mentors (e.g., training, induction etc.) (RQ2). Interviews will also use open questions to increase understanding of mentee engagement, risks, and vulnerabilities of mentees, whether all mentees complete the programme and, if not, who completes the

programme and how they differ from those who drop out (RQ3). Conversations with mentors will also examine PCAU across schools and AP settings that mentors work in to determine the extent to which programme activities differ from existing practice (RQ4).

### CYP interviews

The number of mentees selected for mentoring will be 480 across the 10 mentors and 20 schools. This is on average 24 mentees per school and 48 mentees per mentor across the two years of the delivery of the programme. We will conduct interviews with a sample of CYP (n = 40), which, on average, means we will sample 4 mentees per mentor.

Where possible, CYP will be purposively sampled to reflect the demographic composition of the programme. Sampling criteria will include considerations around age, gender/sex, ethnicity, and SEND needs, alongside information on the history of offending. An important sampling consideration will also be engagement with the intervention (e.g., participants who complete the programme versus those who drop out). Finally, we will also look at the setting of the delivery; we will aim to engage 2 mentees per participating school.

The purposive sampling is to ensure that we can understand how wider structural factors affect different sub-groups engagement with the programme and whether the SOS+ programme is sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of e.g., young girls, CYP with SEND, or CYP from Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

YP interviews will explore programme delivery (including adaptations), perceptions and experience of the programme (RQ1, RQ2), the mentor-mentee relationship, programme engagement (RQ3), social context, risks and vulnerabilities of mentees and the experience of structural barriers (RQ2, RQ3) and perceived impacts (IE RQ6). We will also explore peer-effects contamination (IE RQ6). Data collection with the mentees will be supplemented by a large-scale survey we propose as part of IE.

CYP participating in interviews will be remunerated £20 for their participation.

### School referrers' interviews

IPE will also engage school staff (n = 20) who refer to the programme. These will include senior leaders, behaviour managers, and designated safeguarding leads. We will engage one school lead per participating school. Where schools will have more than one staff referring to the programme, school referrers will be purposively sampled; sampling criteria will include considerations around the number of referrals made into the programme, knowledge and engagement with the programme, and the role or position of the referrer within a school.

Interviews will explore the familiarity with the eligibility criteria, internal referral process and screening (RQ1), observed changes in mentee behaviour (IE RQ6), the overall PCAU delivery within a school (RQ1), the extent to which the programme activities differ from PCAU (RQ4), and observed (or recorded) impact on school attendance and observed changes in behaviour (IE RQ6).

### Linked statutory workers' interviews

We will also conduct interviews with linked statutory workers (n = 20) (e.g., social worker or youth offending worker) supporting mentees who will be participating in interviews. These professionals will have a statutory duty to support the young persons with a history of offending and will be known to both the school and St Giles through the referral process (c.f. section 3.4, pg. 17). While not all CYP interviewed will have a linked statutory worker, depending on their circumstances, St Giles expects that most CYP will.

After interviewing a CYP, we will reach out to their statutory key workers and ask for an interview. Sampling criteria will include considerations around the nature and frequency of support provided by the professional and the level of engagement with the young person. Sampling will be done on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific circumstances of each CYP we interview as part of IPE.

During these interviews, we will explore how mentoring has affected the young person's behaviour outside of the educational setting, within their family setting and compliance with agency processes such as YOT orders and engagement with child protection or child-in-need plans (IE RQ6).

### **6.3 Fidelity framework and criteria**

We plan to use the Mowbray et al. (2003) fidelity framework to address issues of compliance and fidelity (RQ1, RQ2). This framework outlines ways to a) establish fidelity criteria (such as training, recruitment, and SOS+ activities), and b) measure fidelity in process and implementation evaluations (such as delivery and adherence, as well as participants' experiences and perceptions of the intervention). Since the SOS+ programme is already established and in operation, we will rely on existing sources and models, as recommended by Mowbray et al. (2003), such as the Theory of Change, programme resources, and qualitative inquiry with stakeholders to develop valid fidelity criteria.

#### Development of fidelity criteria

We will use the data we collect during the scoping phase to identify the important elements of the intervention and create a framework that captures all the crucial components and their roles in delivering the SOS+ programme. We will test and refine this framework by

benchmarking it against the Theory of Change and by piloting it with the mentors and central St Giles team.

Since the SOS+ mentoring programme is already established and some mentors will have experience delivering it, we plan to develop a fidelity framework during the setup and mobilisation phase.

### Measuring fidelity

We will monitor adherence to fidelity in the following ways:

1. Monitor referral pathways, the number of referrals and adherence to eligibility criteria.
2. Monitor the number of sessions delivered/attended by CYP and the length of each session.
3. Monitor engagement in the programme (e.g., progress made - through mentee/mentor records, qualitative interviews with mentors/mentees).
4. During qualitative interviews with mentors, we will explore, barriers and facilitators to programme delivery.
5. During qualitative interviews with school referrers, we will explore whether they have delivered any 'live' elements of the SOS+ programme as outlined in the fidelity checklist as part of PCAU (i.e., contamination).

### **6.4 Analysis**

Interviews will be digitally audio-recorded with the permission of participants, and professionally transcribed. We will use the NatCen Qualitative Framework; a case and theme-based approach to qualitative data analysis developed by NatCen to chart (collate and summarise) transcribed data by theme and case (Ritchie et al., 2013). Using the themes covered in topic guides and new emerging themes, we will assemble a matrix in which each row represents an individual interview and each column a theme and any related sub-themes. We will then summarise the interview data in the matrix, including illustrative verbatim quotes where appropriate.

At an early stage of analysis, the IPE research team will chart a selection of transcripts, drawing on the relevant analytical frameworks. The team will then gather to address any ambiguities and to refine the analytical frameworks and relevant themes and sub-themes.

Once all interviews are coded in the matrix, we will analyse the data. This will involve a phase of ‘detection’, which includes studying the elements participants said about a given topic, listing these, and then sorting them thematically. Once we identify different themes in the data, we will create higher-level categories that work as meaningful conceptual groupings for participants’ views and experiences. The analysis will look for patterns, consistencies and inconsistencies in data collected from different respondents to help answer the research questions.

The following steps will be taken to ensure rigour in the analysis and reporting of qualitative data:

- Confidence that the findings are an accurate reflection of participant experience will be ensured through the presentation of examples of participant responses using quotes, and triangulation between different participants and data collection methods.
- The degree to which findings are transferable to other contexts will be considered through the description of contextual factors and the collection of data from participants with different characteristics to gather a range of perspectives.
- Transparent reporting of the research and analysis process will ensure the study methods are clear and repeatable.
- When interpreting findings, consideration will be given to contrasting and inconsistent accounts.

We will triangulate and synthesise IPE data according to our research questions. This will enable us to provide a comprehensive assessment of implementation, report findings against the finalised Theory of Change model and contextualise/explain results from the impact evaluation.

**Table 3: IPE methods overview**

Data collection methods	Participants/data sources (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed	Implementation/logic model relevance
Semi-structured interviews	Mentors (10x)	Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded using the NatCen Qualitative Framework (Ritchie et al., 2013)	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4	The delivery and implementation of the programme, fidelity, compliance, barriers and facilitators to delivery, type and nature of support

				offered to mentors' engagement of mentees and drop-out PCAU.
Semi-structured interviews	MenteesCYP (40x)	Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded using the NatCen Qualitative Framework (Ritchie et al., 2013)	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4 + IE RQ6	Perceptions and experience of the programme, the mentor-mentee relationship, programme engagement, structural barriers, perceived impacts, and peer effects.
Semi-structured interviews	School referrers	Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded using the NatCen Qualitative Framework (Ritchie et al., 2013)	RQ1, RQ2, RQ4 + IE RQ6	Referral process (eligibility criteria) observed changes in mentee behaviour PCAU, observed (or recorded) impact on school attendance.
Semi-structured interviews	Linked statutory workers	Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded using the NatCen Qualitative Framework (Ritchie et al., 2013)	IE RQ6	Observed changes in behaviour, engagement, and compliance with other statutory processes.

## 7. Cost data reporting and collecting

We will collect and analyse cost data in line with the YEF's Cost Reporting Guidance. Costs will be estimated based on the delivery costs of the intervention; this will not include evaluation costs. We plan to administer a survey/pro forma (i.e., excel spreadsheet) to collect information on the costs of programme delivery from St Giles and any other organisations involved in the delivery of the intervention. This will be done in a bottom-up approach as per the YEF's guidance. To collect this data each school and St Giles regional manager will be provided with pro forma to complete in Autumn 2025, covering costs incurred during the

duration of the programme. This will assign costs to three different categories, prerequisites, set-up costs and recurring costs. The cost evaluation will estimate the average marginal costs per individual (mentee), by dividing the total set-up and recurring cost by the number of mentees who were planned to receive SOS+ mentoring throughout the two-year programme (i.e., assuming full compliance, ignoring non-attendance). We will also provide costs per participant for set-up and recurring costs separately. Uncertainty in the precision of cost estimates will be discussed in the final report and alternative scenarios presented if necessary.

## **8. Race, equity, diversity and inclusion**

### **8.1 Designing evaluation with a focus on diversity, equality and inclusion**

St Giles data shows that the SOS+ programme supports high proportions of mentees from racially minoritised groups and high proportions of CYP with SEND, care experience, and experiences of socioeconomic deprivation. Mentees of the SOS+ programme are also affected by gangs, violence, crime, and exploitation, all of which disproportionately impact racially minoritised CYP and likely introduce experiences of trauma. Within this context, both, the evaluation, and the intervention are committed to and will adopt an explicitly anti-racist, intersectional equity approach, underpinned by trauma-informed practice.

The evaluator will:

1. Conduct specific Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI)- focused activities. This includes:
  - a. Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) as part of our Research Ethics Committee (REC) application. This will help ensure the evaluation reflects upon and pre-emptively addresses practical and structural barriers to research participation; ensures inclusive and diverse recruitment strategies and sampling; and explores the ways we can support and safeguard participants from minoritised and/or marginalised groups.
  - b. Conducting a Quick Scoping Review (QSR) specifically exploring the role of lived experience in peer mentoring programmes, and their potential value for minoritised and marginalised groups. This is to ensure the evaluation is being conducted in light of the most recent and relevant evidence base.
  - c. Conducting landscape assessment workshops with the St Giles team. These workshops will be focused on better understanding each of the 5 local areas where the evaluation will be conducted. This is to ensure the evaluation is designed in a way that reflects the specific varied demographics and experiences of mentors and mentees. As part of these workshops, we will also seek support and guidance from

St Giles to gain a better understanding of how to identify and remove obstacles to engaging with underserved and minoritised groups, exploring issues such as legitimacy, trust, cultural sensitivities, and language.

- d. Undertaking participatory, community analysis workshops in each of the 5 local areas where the evaluation will be conducted. During the workshops, community members will be supported to code, categorise, and develop themes indicated by IPE data. This will ensure communities are involved in the interpretation of data and avoid the homogenisation and misinterpretation of findings.
- e. Conduct dissemination workshops in each of the 5 local areas where the evaluation will be conducted. This will ensure the final evaluation report and accompanying outputs are shared directly with local communities and communicated in a way that is reflective of their experiences before publication.

To aid community analysis and dissemination workshops NatCen will partner with five local community partners (one per area) that will support facilitation. These partners will be VCS organisations who can provide access to members of local communities and spaces, and help ensure the evaluation, and its findings, are informed by lived experience. The choice of VCS partner organisations and participating community members will be directly informed by the demographic and experiential profile of the local areas in which the evaluation is being conducted (as identified during the landscape assessment workshops). Partners and community members will be remunerated for their participation. NatCen recognises that our positionality shapes our approach to this intervention, evaluation, and the participants whom it seeks to engage. Our intention is therefore to partner with organisations that can provide a critical lens to NatCen's work. As part of this, NatCen will also be working closely with a YEF-appointed Race Equity Advisor (REA). The REA has already contributed to the design of the project evaluation and will further support NatCen in identifying and working with local third-party organisations.

2. Design and deliver core evaluation activities in a way that explicitly explores the experience and outcomes of the programme for different groups. This includes:
  - a. Examining the impact of the programme on subgroups, particularly based on ethnicity. This includes conducting relevant sub-group analysis and ensuring transparency around data and evidence gaps. This will be facilitated through the collection of key demographic data at baseline, the categorisation of which will be informed by best, inclusive practice.
  - b. Exploring experiences of different groups of CYP through the IPE, including any structural factors that may have contributed to mentees' access/participation in



the SOS+ programme. This will be achieved via quota-based recruitment and purposive sampling of those who are under or over-represented in the programme, as well as of groups of CYP who likely have very specific examples of exploitation and offending (such as young women and girls). A key part of this is exploring mechanisms of referral from schools (and other supporting partners) into the programme, particularly how referral criteria, such as low attendance and experiences of school exclusion, may be disproportionately weighted amongst CYP from marginalised and minoritised groups.

More broadly, NatCen will ensure the evaluation is fully accessible to all participant groups. This will include providing additional versions of recruitment and fieldwork materials, such as EASY-READ and British Sign Language (BSL), when required, and providing flexibility around research participation. Our approach will be informed by St Giles' experience developing and testing the SOS+ programme, and through engaging with gatekeepers on accessibility throughout the evaluation.

All NatCen staff undertake equality and diversity training as part of their induction and ongoing refresher training. Our team have also undergone trauma-informed practice training and has substantial experience conducting research with marginalised groups, including studies specifically exploring racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system.

## **8.2 Monitoring bias and discrimination with referral partners**

The project team recognises that bias and discrimination, including within institutions and systems such as the criminal justice system, exist, which may impact which CYP are eligible due to, for example, involvement with police. However, this potential discrimination and bias will have taken place before the project's involvement with CYP and referrers and is beyond the influence of this project. However, we will be collecting, collating, and monitoring demographic and contextual information during the referral process that could inform and influence work by the YEF (and others) within these systems.

For each school we work with we will request a demographic breakdown of the whole school community, St Giles and NatCen throughout the life cycle of the project will compare demographics of referrals against the school community and engage in regular dialogue with each school to encourage open communication about identifying and resolving any bias or discrimination within the referral processes. This expectation will be set during the initial engagement with schools and will be included with any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) / Service-Level Agreement (SLA) arrangements.

### **Training and professional development within the school community**

During the initial engagement with all schools, St Giles' SOS+ Team will deliver professional awareness-raising sessions with relevant school professionals including referrers on topics such as:

- Issues CYP within their school and community are facing.
- Cultural competency and sensitivity.
- Understanding of diverse backgrounds, cultural nuances, and intersectionality (intersectionality of identities, such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, to ensure a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by CYP).

St Giles' Head of EDI will develop and deliver training and resources for schools that cover:

- Implicit bias and how this may affect decision-making processes; supporting school professionals and referrers to develop strategies to recognise and challenge their own bias within their interactions with CYP including within the referral process (incl. identifying CYP).
- Inclusive language and how to utilise inclusive language to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or stigmatising language.

Feedback:

The project will establish feedback mechanisms for CYP, their families and school professionals to voice concerns and suggestions including anonymous feedback. This feedback will be actively utilised to make necessary adjustments to the project, interventions, and the referral process – in consultation with the YEF where appropriate.

## 9. Ethics and registration

### 9.1 Ethics

This research was approved by NatCen's Research Ethics Committee (REC) on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. NatCen's ethics procedure meets the requirements of the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the UK Government Social Research (GSR) Professional Guidance. The REC processes are further detailed in Appendix 3. The evaluation will be undertaken according to NatCen procedures designed to ensure our research is conducted in line with five principles outlined by the GSR guidance:

- Sound application and conduct of social research methods and appropriate dissemination and utilisation of the findings.
- Participation based on valid informed consent.
- Enabling participation.
- Avoidance of personal and social harm.

- We will ensure participants are not identifiable in the outputs.

We acknowledge that CYP selected for the programme can be especially vulnerable. Care will be taken to ensure that they are given opportunities to give explicit consent. Consent will be treated as continuous, and participants will be able to opt out at any point before, during, and immediately after data collection, i.e., before analysis begins.

We will develop a bespoke safeguarding and disclosure policy for this project. All the CYP in the IE sample will be referred to the SOS+ programme due to involvement in criminal activity and we therefore expect most (if not all) to report taking part in serious criminal and violent behaviour when asked to complete our primary outcome survey measure (the SRDS which assesses 'delinquency' including violence, selling drugs, carrying weapons). Therefore, our bespoke policy will disclose only new information on behaviours that the school are not already aware of (i.e., activity not previously disclosed to them). New information will be determined by comparing CYP responses to the reasons for referral given by school staff. All disclosures will be made to the school safeguarding lead.

For the qualitative interviews with CYP, we also recognise the risk that participants may disclose information that may raise the researcher's concerns for CYP's safety and wellbeing (including, for example, the risk that children may inadvertently mention they have been a victim of abuse). To address this, we will develop a bespoke project disclosure policy in collaboration with St Giles and the YEF, building on NatCen's standard protocol. Our procedure will include informing participants as part of the recruitment process and verbal introduction to each encounter about the circumstances in which confidentiality may have to be breached and following specified steps in the event of a disclosure.

Researchers will be thoroughly briefed before interviews. The briefing will focus particularly on managing interviews with vulnerable participants. It will also include information on the NatCen disclosure policy, to make sure they are clear on the process to follow in the event of disclosure.

To ensure the safety of CYP participants at both IE and IPE strands of the evaluation, researchers will closely follow safeguarding guidance from the St Giles Team, St Giles regional leads, and mentors. We will also compile a comprehensive list of national support services that will be included in our surveys and fieldwork instruments. In addition to our ethical standards, we will also follow the YEF safeguarding policy.

Within IPE, the SOS+ mentors will be responsible for supporting the CYP throughout the interview process and will also introduce the researchers to those selected for interviews. The interviews will take place in a school setting after school hours, as one of the main goals of the SOS+ programme is to encourage engagement in school activities. Although mentors will be present during introductions to establish trust, the CYP will participate and access the

interview, on their own, in a secure environment where they can speak freely without being overheard by their mentors or other school staff.

## **9.2 Procedures for obtaining agreement to participate in the evaluation**

### Mentor recruitment

St Giles will recruit and train mentors, with NatCen communicating the requirements for evaluation participation. Mentors will be sent an information letter including a link to the NatCen project webpage and will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding where they express consent to take part in the evaluation. Details of participating mentors will be transferred to NatCen securely via FTP.

### Linked statutory workers' recruitment

Linked statutory workers will be known to Schools and St Giles through the referral process. Where named, schools will contact statutory workers to inform them about the evaluation, with NatCen communicating the invitation to participate in interviews as a follow-up to a successful interview with a mentee. Statutory workers will be sent an information letter including a link to the NatCen project webpage and will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding where they will express consent to take part in the interview. Details of participating statutory workers will be transferred to NatCen securely via FTP.

### School referrers recruitment

Delivery partners will identify and recruit eligible schools, with NatCen advising on eligibility criteria and communicating the requirements for research participation. Schools will be sent an information letter including a link to the NatCen project webpage and will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding where they will express consent to take part in the evaluation. Details of participating schools' project leads will be transferred to NatCen securely via FTP.

### Children and young people recruitment

Prior to the IE and IPE data collection, schools will send an information sheet and opt-out letter to all parents of children identified as eligible for referral. They will be advised that the young person has been identified as needing support. Parents/carers can return the opt-out form to schools if they do not want their child to participate in the evaluation.

Following the opt-out letter being sent to parents, the CYP will be advised by school staff that they have been identified as needing support. At this stage, teachers will use an age-appropriate information sheet prepared by NatCen to explain to CYP the nature of

participation in the evaluation and ask for their consent. Consent will be captured at the start of the online baseline survey.

For the IPE, each CYP will initially be provided with information setting out the research aims and ensuring that participants fully understand what taking part involves. This will take the form of age-appropriate written information sheets distributed by mentors – to introduce the research at the recruitment stage. If CYP has particular communication needs, information will be provided in an appropriate mode and format following discussion with the relevant gatekeeper and/or parent/guardian. For all participants, researchers will also provide a verbal introduction at the start of each encounter, with the opportunity to ask questions directly before any data collection takes place.

To ensure the safety/safeguarding of CYP participants, researchers will closely follow safeguarding guidance from the St Giles Team, central SOS+ team and mentors at the sampling and interview stages of CYP. For IPE interviews, we will aim to recruit 2 CYP per participating school. Where possible, CYP will be purposively sampled to reflect the demographic composition of the programme. CYP (or their parent(s)/carer(s) if under 16) will have the possibility to object to their data being processed as part of both the IE and IPE evaluation at any point after data collection and until a draft report is submitted to the YEF. They will also have the right to raise any concerns with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

## **10. Data protection**

NatCen is fully accredited to ISO 27001 (the international standard for information security) and is subject to annual external audits to maintain this accreditation, ensuring continued compliance. NatCen is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into force in the UK in May 2018. NatCen also holds Cyber Essentials Plus Certification. As an organisation, we conduct a large number of nationally representative surveys and are experts at collecting, storing, processing, archiving and securely deleting huge amounts of personally identifiable and sensitive data. We have a reputation of trust with our clients and respondents.

Rigorous data security will be built into all stages of the research. As such, data will be stored securely on NatCen's servers. Like with all NatCen projects that involve the collection, storage or processing of personal data, this project will have its data security plan (DSP). The DSP will detail all data security procedures to be applied, including names of those who have access rights to respondent confidential data, details of third parties (e.g., transcription providers) involved in the project and specific requirements for data destruction. The plan will be

updated throughout the project via regular monitoring and internal audits. Any data transfer to and from third-party organisations will take place via NatCen's secure file transfer service.

NatCen is experienced in mitigating the risk of a data security breach to protect against disclosure of personal or sensitive data. In the unlikely event of a breach of data security procedures, this will be immediately flagged and reviewed by senior staff in the organisation to agree on corrective actions.

Upon completion of the report and acceptance of the final deliverable, we will ensure that all relevant data is securely deleted and that other outputs are securely stored.

### **10.1 Data Archive**

At the end of the evaluation period, data collected as part of the evaluation will be securely archived for future research purposes. We will prepare two separate datasets – one to be submitted to the ONS and one for DfE. In both datasets, we will create unique reference numbers for each young person participating in the evaluation (following the YEF's guidance – YEF, 2023).

The dataset prepared for DfE will include

- Personal identifying data (e.g., reference number, forename, surname and date of birth) and details on the schools attended by a young person participating in the evaluation.

The dataset prepared for ONS will include

- Information on the intervention received, such as, the young person was assigned to SOS+ or PCAU, assessment of fidelity, etc.
- Any characteristic or contextual information on evaluation participants, used by evaluators and published as part of the analysis and/or in the evaluation report; and
- The main pre-post-test outcome variables used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

We will also ensure all necessary data-sharing arrangements will be in place, as described below.

### **10.2 Information sharing agreements and lawful basis overview:**

NatCen are data controllers for this evaluation (through the evaluation period), and St Giles are data processors who will be processing data for evaluation purposes.

NatCen's responsibility as data controller: NatCen will put in place a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) with participating schools, information sheets and a privacy notice for

CYP and their parents/carers to explain how their data will be used in this evaluation. The MoU will detail all GDPR requirements, what information NatCen will be collecting and storing, and state the lawful basis for processing data. NatCen will include all information regarding the YEF data archive within the Information sheets and the Privacy Notices.

St Giles's responsibility as data processor: St Giles will have a DSA with NatCen describing all data that will be collected and processed for evaluation purposes. St Giles, as the SOS+ Programme Coordinator will process all referral forms and securely share them with NatCen for randomisation and other data collection activities (CYP in the SOS+ group). St. Giles will also have DSAs with participating schools as part of their routine practice.

Schools will be responsible for identifying eligible children for the SOS+ programme, making referrals, supporting data collection from CYP, and understanding that participants will be randomly assigned to SOS+ or PCAU groups. Schools will make referrals on the understanding that those who do not receive SOS+, must make referrals to or provide other PCAU provisions.

Schools will discuss the referral with CYP (and where appropriate with parents/carers), explain what the evaluation involves and confirm that they agree to take part in the evaluation. CYP will also agree to data archiving as per YEF requirements and complete questionnaires with support from school staff.

A Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this evaluation has been completed by NatCen.

### Personal data

The legal basis for processing personal data is GDPR Article 6 (1) (f): legitimate interests.

NatCen assesses that the evaluation fulfils one of its core business purposes (undertaking research, evaluation, and information activities) and is therefore in its legitimate interest, that processing personal information is necessary for addressing the research questions in this study. NatCen has considered and balanced any potential impact on the data subjects' rights and finds that its activities will not cause the data subjects any unwarranted harm.

### Special category and criminal offence data

Special category data and criminal offence data are personal data that need more protection because they are sensitive. The special category data NatCen will be processing in the course of this evaluation is the ethnic background of the CYP. The criminal offence data we will be processing in the course of this evaluation is the alleged commission of offences by data subjects (including circumstances where participants self-report information).

To lawfully process special category data and criminal offence data, we must identify both a lawful basis under Article 6 of the UK GDPR (for this project, "legitimate interest") and a

separate condition for processing under Article 9 (for special category data) and Article 10 (for criminal offence data).

For special category data, NatCen relies on condition j under Article 9: Archiving, research and Statistics (with a basis in law). We also need to meet the associated conditions in the UK law, set out in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018. For criminal offence data, NatCen can only process this data if the processing is either under the control of official authority or authorised by domestic law, which entails meeting one of the conditions set out in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Data protection laws allow us to process both special category and criminal offence data based on the **research condition** in paragraph 4 of Part 1 Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018. Specifically, we note that this data processing is:

- necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes;
- carried out by Article 89(1) of the GDPR, as supplemented by section 19 of the DPA (for instance, data will be pseudonymised wherever possible); and
- in the public interest (i.e., it aims to support children's health and public safety).

## 11. Stakeholders and interests

Project Team roles and responsibilities (all affiliated to St Giles Trust):

- Becki Navarro, Director of Service (Regions) – Becki will have overall accountability for the SOS+ Programme and will support the evaluation and lead for St Giles on REDI components.
- Steve Warner, Head of Education Programmes – Steve will be the strategic lead for the SOS+ Programme. Steve will lead recruiting and engaging schools across the country, he will be responsible for collating and sending data to NatCen and will be NatCen's primary point of contact.
- SOS+ Programme Manager – This role will have operational responsibility for the SOS+ Programme including training and inducting mentors, development of mentoring resources and quality assurance.
- SOS+ Data Compliance Officer – This role will lead on data collection, compliance with monitoring and evaluation requirements, ensure compliance with GDPR and support NatCen with the evaluation.



- SOS+ Programme Coordinator – This role will provide administrative support to the St Giles SOS+ Programme Team as well as to participating schools.
- SOS+ Mentor (x10) – Mentors across the country will provide one-to-one mentoring support to CYP within school settings, will record all interventions, collect data as agreed with NatCen and facilitate NatCen’s engagement with CYP as part of the evaluation.

Evaluation Team roles and responsibilities (all affiliated with the National Centre for Social Research):

- Dr Jasna Magić, Research Director – PI and IPE lead. Jasna will be leading the evaluation, overseeing every aspect of the evaluation, from ethical approvals to final reporting. Jasna will be the primary point of contact for the delivery partner and the funder.
- Dr Terry Ng-Knight, Research Director – Terry will be the impact evaluation lead, he will lead the primary and secondary outcome analyses and supervise data collection (baseline/endline survey) from CYP, overseeing compliance and contamination.
- Nathan Hudson, Deputy Director of Equalities Research – Nathan will be responsible for REDI components. Nathan will be responsible for ensuring that REDI is embedded across the design and delivery of the evaluation, liaising with REA and organisations, and delivering the REDI landscape assessment stage and workshops with local partners.
- Nandita Upadhyay and Maria David, Senior Researchers – conducting day-to-day tasks on the evaluation, including conducting interviews, supported by the team of NatCen researchers (2) and assistant researchers (1).
- Dr Andi Fugard, Co-Director of the Centre for Evaluation, will provide quality assurance for the impact evaluation.
- Joe Calouri, Director of Crime, Crime Justice and Equalities Team – Joe will provide overarching quality assurance.

## 12. Risks

RISK TITLE	RISK DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT	RISK CATEGORY	Low/ Medium/ High	MITIGATIONS
Recruitment	The risk that sufficient mentors cannot be recruited by the plan	Resources	Low	Many of the roles will be filled by existing SOS+ Mentors moving from current projects that are ending. St Giles also runs 7 hubs nationally that deliver its Peer Advisor Programme. This gives people with lived experience of overcoming complex disadvantages the opportunity to train to become professional caseworkers. Many peer advisors graduate and get paid jobs immediately within St Giles.
Reach	Unable to reach the target group the YEF is trying to reach	Mentee recruitment	Low	St Giles will identify 4 schools in each region (20 in total). St Giles works closely with VRU and Education Leads in these areas and has Local Authority and school buy-in to deliver the model. These schools will be known to have CYP that are affiliated with gangs, violence and exploitation. Furthermore, the project Referral Form will be redesigned to ensure referral criteria capture targeted at-risk groups.
Challenges of the role	The risk that the mentors may not be able to cope with the challenges of the role	Resources	Medium	Many mentors will be experienced in working within the SOS+ programme. Both experienced and new mentors are selected and trained to be able to cope with demanding and challenging situations. Mentors also receive regular supervision. Mentor caseloads are

				limited to avoid burnout, and allow them time to complete required documentation, and records, attend meetings and pursue their professional development. All mentors are also supported by a local St Giles manager as well as centralised programme support.
Quality Assessment	The risk that the quality of mentoring is insufficient	Quality/ Outcome	Low	As above. The quality of the programme resources and delivery has also been externally verified through independent evaluation.
YP Engagement	YP engagement is low due to factors which the mentors cannot resolve	Quality/ Outcome	Medium	All SOS+ Mentors attend a professional meeting before any engagement with a mentee to fully understand the needs of the CYP and the context in which they live. St Giles also engages with other professionals and within the school to identify reward and recognition mechanisms.
Regional Engagement	Lack of engagement from other sectors that may be supporting CYP within the region	Engagement	Low	St Giles has proposed these areas because they already have regional offices and existing service delivery with established partnerships and referral pathways in each of these locations. St Giles has buy-in from senior stakeholders across VRUs and Local Authorities to deliver the SOS+ embedded mentoring programme.
School Engagement - Delivery	The capacity of schools to support delivery is limited. This could be in terms	School capacity	Medium	All schools are carefully selected to ensure they are fully engaged in the project and its delivery. A

	of physical capacity or, more likely, the time available for staff to attend meetings, fill out referral forms and support the programme.			high-level setup meeting and supporting SLA occurs before working in any school to define the set-up process and clarify and manage expectations from all parties. Regular and open communication is maintained with the school from regional managers, and any concerns or issues are addressed at an early stage. Additional central St Giles' support can be utilised if needed.
School Engagement – RCT	Engagement of schools in RCT	Engagement	High	As above.
Data Access	Lack of access to school data makes it difficult to understand mentee school performance and generate reporting which demonstrates a positive impact.	Reporting	Medium	The SLA and Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) clarify expectations around information handling and data. This will be discussed from the outset to ensure that the desired reports can be generated.
Safeguarding	SOS+ mentors are exposed to the risk of inadequate safeguarding disclosure, putting their ability to resource the programme at risk	Safeguarding	Low	Safeguarding training is part of induction; preschool/ contact. Schools also induct the mentor in the safeguarding processes and systems to ensure mentors are clear on all processes.
Exclusion	The absence or exclusion of mentees makes it impossible for SOS+ mentors to engage in the school.	Mentee availability	Medium	The expectation is that engagement will take place largely at school. However, SOS+ mentors can also work with mentees online or outside of school where necessary. SOS+ mentors maintain contact with mentees and seek to understand the underlying circumstances resulting in exclusion and absence.

<p>Low referrals of CYP</p>	<p>Low referrals for CYP due to the evaluation requiring CYP to disclose criminal activity at the baseline stage before trust can be established.</p>	<p>Engagement</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>A clear procedure for teachers asking CYP to complete the SRDS and other scales (with support from the teacher if needed), but CYP to have privacy during completion. Emphasis to CYP that the information will only be shared with the evaluation team and not the school, parents or police.</p>
<p>Accuracy of SRDS data</p>	<p>Some studies in the literature suggest CYP does not like completing the measure whilst accompanied by people they do not trust, leading to incompleteness or inaccurate responses.</p>	<p>Quality/ Outcome</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>We will use the Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE) research components to assess how the survey completion was for CYP and if they felt able, to be honest. We will also use the SDQ as a secondary measure which is likely to be less problematic. We will also pilot the measures with a group of CYP St Giles Trust work with, to identify potential barriers early or plan for additional mitigations. In addition, the SRDS will be completed by CYP in privacy. This will be communicated to CYP.</p>
<p>Low-endline response rate</p>	<p>Low levels of survey response from CYP at the endline stage.</p>	<p>Quality/ Outcome</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>School leads will be responsible for ensuring CYP complete surveys. St Giles will be working with schools to ensure they understand the implications of engaging with the SOS+ programme; St Giles will offer support with the administrative side of surveys i.e., tracking submissions, providing updates of completions and sending reminders for surveys that are due. In addition, St Giles</p>

				has made provision for surveys to be completed over a longer period during each referral period to reduce pressure on schools. In addition, mentors will support and nudge CYP to engage in the surveys and research.
Ethical objections to PCAU assignment	Teachers, CYP, parents, or other relevant stakeholders object to themselves or others being assigned to the control group rather than receiving the intervention.	Ethics	Low	Clear messaging that the assignment is 50/50 during referral. A teacher is responsible for signposting to other services. Across each education setting, pastoral care would fall under statutory or regulatory guidance (as set out by Keeping Children Safe in Education and the OFSTED Framework for Schools) and as such a baseline provision should exist across each setting with a minimum expectation set under the above frameworks.
Spillover effects from group criminal activity	Criminal activity among groups where some are assigned mentoring and some to control/PCAU.	Quality/ Outcome	Medium	This situation will be identified and explored through the implementation and process evaluation research activities to understand the extent and impact of it occurring.
Low engagement of mentees in the qualitative interviews	CYP don't engage in qualitative interviews, which impacts on quality and relevance of findings	Quality/ Outcome	Low	NatCen has successfully engaged CYP who are at risk of perpetuating serious violence, gang-related offences, and exploitation in our previous studies. We will work closely with the central St Giles team, regional leads and foremost mentors and advisors to build

				our understanding of the mentees and assure mentees of the credibility of the research team and the benefits of participation.
Poor/insufficient data due to inadequate design/data collection tools.	The data collected does not produce findings relevant to primary and secondary outcomes	Quality/ Outcome	Low	NatCen has a proven track record of developing high-quality research designs and data collection tools which will also be informed by insight from St Giles so that the interpretation of data is relevant to the context.
Loss of key staff in the lifetime of the evaluation.	Staff allocated to lead/work on the evaluation leave/move on, causing delays in the delivery of evaluation plans, impacts on quality of work and findings	Quality/ Outcome	Low	NatCen has proposed a large project team and can draw on a wider NatCen staff, as well as an in-house pool of experienced freelance associates, with suitable skills and experience. The NatCen team will carefully plan capacity around key milestones as outlined in the contract to secure the timely delivery of all the evaluation components.
Slippage in the evaluation timetable	Poor estimation of time required for individual steps or activities can lead to the actual progress of evaluation falling behind the planned schedule, resulting in delays, cost overruns, and stakeholder dissatisfaction	Timeline/deadlines	Medium	Detailed project and recruitment timetables will be developed at the co-design stage and regularly reviewed by both, the project and the evaluators, to identify problems early and focus activity on addressing them. We will review options for using additional NatCen resources as soon as the possibility of delay is identified.
Data protection breach	The evaluator/project fails to comply with data protection guidelines. This can include	Safeguarding	Low	NatCen has clear organizational protocols for handling data in line with ISO 27001 and GDPR which are regularly

	misusing or accidentally releasing personal information or sending personal data to an incorrect recipient			<p>reinforced, reviewed and updated.</p> <p>All NatCen staff receive regular training on GDPR, data security and protection throughout their employment. Additionally, the team will ensure that other stakeholders involved in data handling, e.g., project delivery partners, are also well-informed about the necessary processes concerning data security and protection.</p>
Professional/personal bias impacts on referrals	Racist biases influence the referral process	REDI	Medium	<p>Professional sessions with schools, delivered by mentors, SOS+ Contract Manager and Head of Education Programmes will discuss how some CYP may be over-referred into projects like SOS+ due to bias and stereotypes. As the eligibility criteria will require CYP to be engaged with a safeguarding or criminal justice professional due to criminal activity schools won't be using their professional judgment to refer.</p>
Low engagement of mentees from minoritised backgrounds and SEND in the qualitative interviews	CYP from subgroups don't engage in qualitative interviews, which impacts on quality and relevance of findings	REDI	Medium	<p>NatCen will work closely with the external Race Equity Advisor and central St Giles team, regional leads and mentors to build an understanding of different groups of mentees and develop approaches so all CYP feel included and invited to participate. Will draw on St Giles' experience and materials on the programme, including</p>

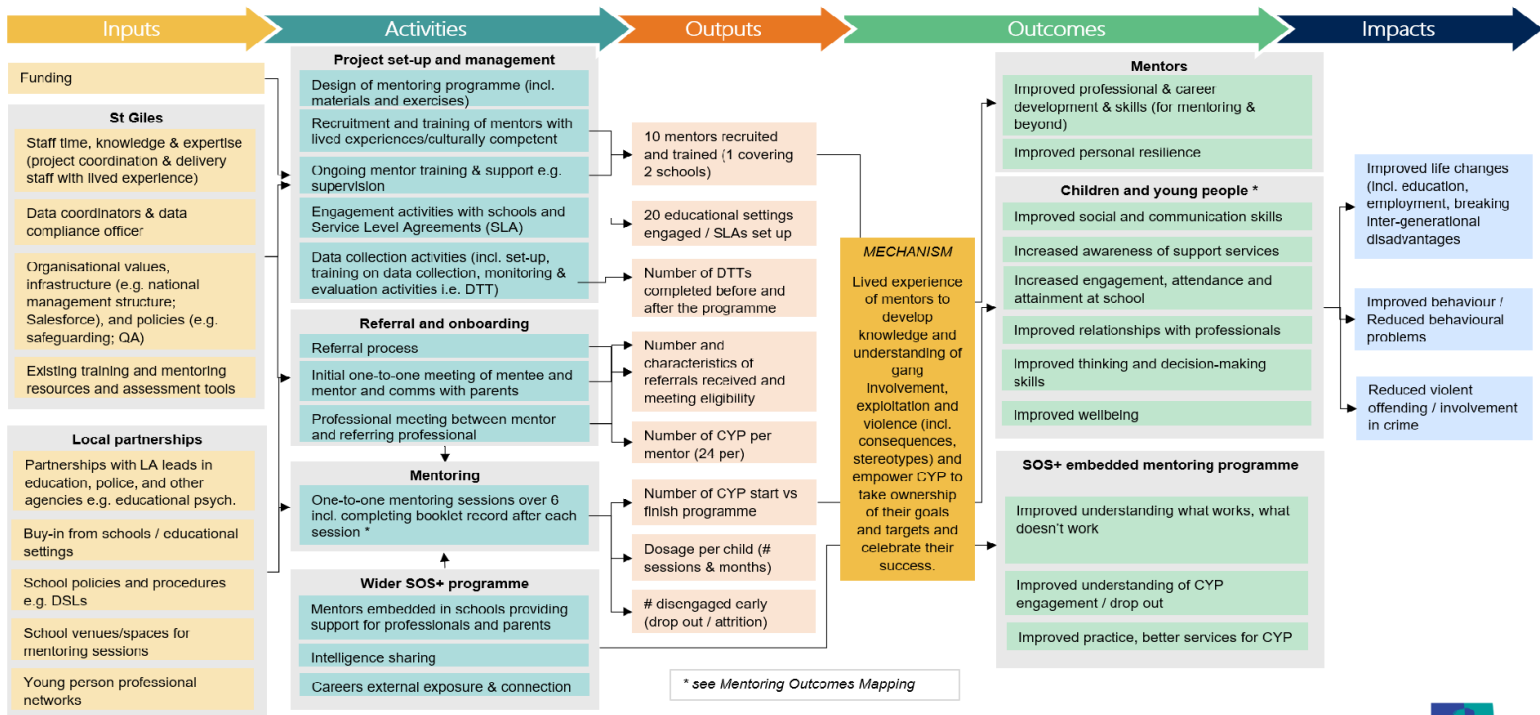


				language and imagery, that have been developed and tested with a diverse group of CYP, including CYP from different ethnic backgrounds and neurodiversity.
Delay in obtaining ethical approval	Causing delays in the delivery of both project and evaluation plans, rushed delivery impacts on quality of work and findings	Ethics	Low	Ethical scrutiny of this project will be provided by NatCen's internal Research Ethics Committee (REC). Within NatCen's ethical procedure, depending on the nature of the research, projects undergo either a Stage 1 expedited or a Stage 2 full review by the REC. The system is designed to ensure that potential delays to projects are minimised. An application is submitted shortly before the fortnightly meeting, and a decision is given then or shortly afterwards.

## 13. Timeline

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
Oct 23 - Mar 24	<p>Set up / mobilisation phase:</p> <p>Ethical approval, recruitment of mentors (+DBS), recruitment of schools (+ mentors' training), randomisation platform and online surveys, REDI landscape assessment, schools' recruitment, and data sharing agreements, in-school induction and training, Statistical Analysis Plan to the YEF.</p>	<p>St Giles (project-related activities)</p> <p>NatCen (evaluation-related activities)</p>
Dec 23 – Mar 26	<p>Project launch and delivery:</p> <p>The project will be delivered in three cohorts (blocks) each running for 6 months, starting in April 2024, and finishing in March 2026.</p> <p>The delivery timeline includes referral windows and end-of-block reporting/data sharing with/ NatCen.</p>	St Giles
Mar 24 – Mar 26	<p>Impact evaluation:</p> <p>Randomisation, baseline and endline (quant) data collection (phase/cohort 1 -3), cost proforma data collection.</p>	NatCen
Mar 24 – Mar 26	<p>Implementation and process evaluation:</p> <p>Qual data collection with CYP, mentors, statutory workers, school referrers, and data management.</p>	NatCen
April – June 26	Data analysis and final report writing.	NatCen
May - June 26	REDI co-analysis, community workshops and data consolidation.	NatCen
June 26	End of project report.	NatCen
July 26	Data Archive.	NatCen

# 14. Embedded mentoring: Theory of Change



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## 16. Appendix 1: Statutory Guidance around PCAU Within Education Settings

**Education Act 2002:** This act outlines the responsibilities of schools in promoting the well-being of students. It places a duty on schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of students, in addition to their academic achievement.

**Children and Families Act 2014:** This act includes provisions related to the support and well-being of children and young people, including those with special educational needs. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration between education, health, and social care services to meet the needs of children and young people.

**Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023:** KCSIE is statutory guidance that provides information on how schools and colleges should safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It covers areas such as staff behaviour, the management of safeguarding, and the responsibilities of schools to identify and support students at risk.

**Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015:** This code provides statutory guidance on duties, policies, and procedures related to special educational needs and disabilities. It emphasizes the importance of schools identifying and addressing the specific needs of students with SEND to ensure they receive appropriate support.

**Promoting the Fundamental British Values:** Schools are required to promote fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This guidance is often embedded in the broader pastoral care approach within schools.

**The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People:** Various guidance documents and initiatives exist to support the mental health and well-being of children and young people. These include resources from the Department for Education (DfE) and the NHS, which provide guidance on identifying, preventing, and addressing mental health issues in schools.

## 17. Appendix 2: PCAU Provision Mapping Categories

PCAU Provision Mapping Categories		
Intervention Type	Wave	Description
Monitoring and Early Intervention	I	Implementing systems to monitor student well-being and identify potential issues early on to address emerging concerns before they escalate.
Flexible Timetabling & Support	I	Providing flexibility in timetabling and additional learning support to accommodate the needs of students with diverse learning styles, ensuring that they can access education at their own pace.
Parental Involvement and Support	I	Engaging parents in the pastoral care process through communication, workshops, and parent-teacher conferences to create a collaborative approach to supporting students.
Peer Mentoring Programs	I	Establishing peer mentoring initiatives to create a sense of community, provide role models, and foster positive relationships among students.
Transition Support Programs	I	Offering support during key transitions, such as from primary to secondary school, to help students adapt to new environments and challenges. Transition support may include orientation programs, mentorship, and targeted interventions.
Anti-Bullying Initiatives	I	Establishing programs and campaigns that prevent and address bullying to create a culture of respect and inclusivity within the school community.
Individual Counselling	II	Provision of one-on-one sessions between a student and a trained counsellor to address personal, emotional, or academic concerns and provide a safe space for students to express themselves and receive personalised guidance.
Group Counselling	II	Pairing students with mentors, often teachers or older students, to provide guidance and support helps students develop positive relationships and receive advice.
Well-being Workshops	II	Delivering workshops on topics like stress management, time management, resilience, and mental health awareness to equip students with skills and knowledge to navigate challenges effectively.
Academic Support Services	II	Providing additional academic assistance through tutoring or study skills workshops to ensure that students receive the help they need to succeed academically.
Conflict Resolution Programs	II	Implementing strategies and interventions that address conflicts among students to teach effective communication and problem-solving skills.
External Referral & Collaboration	II III	Collaborating with external agencies, such as social services, mental health professionals, and youth organizations, to ensure a comprehensive approach to supporting and safeguarding students with complex needs.
Crisis Management Plans or Referrals	III	Developing plans and resources to respond to crises, such as emergencies, accidents, or traumatic events to ensure the well-being of students and staff during challenging times.

## 18. Appendix 3: Research Ethics Committee process at NatCen

NatCen's internal Research Ethics Committee (REC) operates in line with the requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Government Social Research Professional Guidance (GSR). This ensures that all research undertaken by NatCen is ethically sound and meets market and social research professional and quality standards.

There are four REC panels, each comprised of a Chair, Deputy Chair and up to five further REC members. REC Chairs and Deputy Chairs are appointed via a nomination process overseen by the Head of Qualitative Methods. These roles are taken by senior staff with demonstrable expertise and experience in their area and commonly hold other senior positions in the organisation – such as on our Disclosure Board. REC members reflect expertise across a range of methodologies and policy areas. REC panel members are appointed via a competitive application process, which assesses expertise and experience in addressing ethical issues in an applied research and policy setting.

All NatCen research studies require REC approval prior to their commencement. REC applications are made by researchers as soon as their study has been commissioned, and the study design and fieldwork procedures have been decided. Applications for ethical review are made via a standardised form that requires researchers to explain in detail how they will handle key ethical concerns. This includes consideration of recruitment and consent processes, the handling of sensitive topics and information, the burden on respondents, risks to researchers and participants, and equality and accessibility issues.

Examples of ethical issues that researchers need to consider and address in the application are provided below:

- Does the research *specifically* involve or focus on participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent?
- Will the research require the cooperation of a 'gatekeeper' to either provide initial access to the respondent group, make available sensitive data, or introduce the study to potential participants for recruitment?
- Will the research involve discussion of sensitive issues?
- Could the research cause psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences to participants beyond the risks encountered in everyday life?
- Will the study involve prolonged data collection, data collection that places an unusual burden on participants or more than one interview/survey encounter?
- Does the research design entail an 'above normal' level of psychological or physical risk to researchers?
- Will financial inducements (excluding usual incentive payments) be offered to participants?

- Does the study involve sharing data outside NatCen that would potentially identify participants? Does the study involve data linkage with administrative sources?

REC panels are provided with the application(s) for review in advance of the REC meeting. At the meeting, the panel discusses the application before inviting the applicant(s) to join and respond to any queries the panel may have. Once all queries/clarifications have been addressed, the applicant(s) are asked to leave the meeting, and the panel decides on the outcome of the application, including any further clarifications or amendments required to obtain ethical approval. These clarifications and amendments along with the REC decision are sent to the applicant(s) in writing and further correspondence – usually between the panel Chair and the applicant finalises any outstanding queries.

REC panels meet every week. Before each REC panel meeting, there is an application deadline for submissions. The REC panel takes up to two weeks from the application deadline to review and discuss an application, and to communicate the decision to applicant(s).

To ensure independence and objectivity, the REC process aligns with the ESRC and GSR guidance. The REC application and review processes are standardised, setting consistent principles and requirements for approval. Additionally, REC members who have contributed to the proposal or are part of the proposed research team are considered to have a conflict of interest and cannot sit on the REC panel for that specific application.



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