

EVALUATION REPORT

YES Outdoors CLIMB programme

Feasibility study

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About the evaluator

The evaluation team at Sheffield Institute of Education includes experts in trial design, analysis, implementation and process evaluation and adventure learning. The team have extensive experience conducting evaluation studies as part of the Youth Endowment Fund evaluator panel and for other organisations, including Education Endowment Foundation government departments, charities and other policy makers.

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The project

The CLIMB programme is a nine-month, three-stage mentoring programme (including climbing, bicycle maintenance and an Outward Bound Trust [OBT] residential) that aims to improve the behaviour of young people at risk of involvement in crime. Delivered by the charity YES Outdoors, in this evaluation, the project targeted 10- to 14-year-olds who were identified by teachers or youth workers as being at risk of being involved in crime (including youth violence) and who require specialist services. Children in Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Islington were targeted. Stage 1 was a nine- to 14-week climbing intervention, where young people attended weekly rock climbing led by qualified instructors at the Castle Climbing Centre in Islington. Volunteer mentors (recruited primarily from the climbing centre and trained by YES Outdoors) accompanied the young people on these sessions and delivered active mentoring that aimed to focus on developing trust, exploring hopes and dreams, building positive self-awareness and adopting a growth mindset. Stage 2 was a bicycle maintenance programme led by at least two qualified bicycle mechanics and delivered at the Rose Bowl Youth Centre, Islington. Working with the same mentors from Stage 1, young people attended up to six weekly, two-hour sessions where they would aim to understand how to fix a bicycle while engaging in active mentoring and wider group conversations. Stage 3 was a five-day, four-night residential trip led by the OBT with YES Outdoors staff (and a youth worker) present to provide support. The residential provided a range of intense outdoor activities in a rural setting. The programme ended with a celebration event at which participants were given a bicycle and their achievements and progress on the programme were highlighted.

The YEF funded a feasibility study of the CLIMB programme. This aimed to answer whether YES Outdoors had the organisational capacity to reach and recruit young people, the suitability of the referral pathways, young people’s perspectives of the intervention, the suitability of the mentors, whether the programme was deliverable within nine months and the extent to which young people engaged with each stage of CLIMB. The study also explored how appropriate different evaluation methods were to assess the programme. Twenty-five young people took part; the study used quantitative data collection with these young people, including a pre- and post-intervention Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) with 22 children, in addition to surveys of 25 mentors and five setting-based leads (staff from schools or youth centres). Evaluators also used qualitative methods (such as interviews and focus groups) undertaken with the YES Outdoors team, three setting-based leads, seven young people and eight mentors. The feasibility study commenced with recruitment in September 2022, and the last data was collected by June 2023 with the programme delivery finishing in May 2023.

Key conclusions
YES Outdoors successfully recruited young people. However, the resource required to achieve this and secure the attendance and engagement of young people across all three stages of the programme was larger than initially anticipated. In future delivery, YES Outdoors should consider how to streamline recruitment and selection and allow further lead-in time for building relationships with schools and youth centres.
Young people were positive about the programme and its component parts, although climbing was more popular than bicycle maintenance. Attendance across the programme was variable. Attendance at climbing sessions was 70%; it was 67% at bicycle maintenance, and 64% attended the residential. Attendance rates were higher among those recruited from youth centres (compared to those recruited from schools). However, given that the cohort recruited were often very disengaged at school, this is an encouraging sign
Mentors demonstrated passion and enthusiasm. They were motivated by helping their community and young people and also by a desire to teach young people to climb. Rather than a more formally delivered, one-to-one mentoring approach (which was what was initially intended), mentoring was delivered in an activity-based, coaching format, while mentors were used interchangeably with different young people.
The nine-month duration of CLIMB appeared to be appropriate, and the length of each component part appeared suitable, providing young people with adequate time to build their relationships and skills.
Overall, data collection was challenging for this cohort of young people.

Interpretation

YES Outdoors successfully recruited young people (10 from two schools and 15 from two youth centres). Securing the recruitment of 25 young people was a key achievement, particularly as YES Outdoors targeted young people with significant levels of need. However, the process through which they were recruited to the programme was challenging. Overall, the recruitment and retention of young people, along with the administrative tasks needed to sign participants up to the CLIMB programme (especially the OBT trip) and the evaluation demands, appear to have been both substantial and, to some degree, unexpected in terms of staff time cost. This point should be considered in future programmes and evaluations that recruit young people with similar levels of need. The evaluator notes that core YES Outdoors staff are very dedicated, enthusiastic, relatable to the young people and impressively hands-on with all aspects of their programme, often providing adaptable and bespoke solutions for young people. Although a key strength in ordinary circumstances, in the context of both this feasibility study and future evaluation, some of this tendency to respond in a bespoke way needs to be tempered to allow scalability.

Overall, the young people were positive about the programme and its component parts. Indeed, 70% (n = 16) of those who responded to the survey would recommend the programme to their friends. The focus groups and surveys with the young people showed that climbing was more popular than bicycle maintenance. The majority of the young people surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the programme had a positive impact on their confidence, ability to cope with challenging things, communication skills, group work, relationship with adults, level of motivation, the likelihood of trying new things, effort at school and relationships with other young people. While young people's perceptions were good, attendance rates were variable. Attendance at climbing sessions was 70%; it was 67% at bicycle maintenance, and 64% attended the residential. Those children recruited from youth centres (rather than from schools) had better attendance rates. YES Outdoors staff, mentors and youth workers noted that they had to be quite persistent with some of the young people to encourage engagement in sessions, having to 'prove' to the young people that the staff were committed and prepared to discuss any issues; for example, collecting young people from school to attend sessions. Consistency and continued support were identified as being important in connecting with the young people.

The mentors demonstrated passion and enthusiasm, feeling positive about their involvement. YES Outdoors aimed to recruit mentors who would be from backgrounds that the young people could relate to. However, analysis indicates that the profiles of the mentors may not have been highly representative of the young people they were mentoring. Mentors were largely motivated by a desire to give back to the community, help young people, and by teaching young people to climb. The evaluator found it difficult to judge which characteristics among mentors influenced their effectiveness, largely because the mentors worked interchangeably with the young people (rather than in a formal one-to-one approach as was originally planned). However, they do note that some mentors proved more popular and were more versed in mentoring activities than others.

There were initially some doubts over the length of the climbing section of the programme for youth workers, as they thought it was too long. However, 12 to 14 weeks seems to have been considered a good time frame for this activity, giving the young people time to become more confident at climbing and to form relationships with their mentors. The six-week time frame for the bicycle maintenance was thought to be appropriate, given that although the young people were highly motivated by receiving a bicycle, they were still less engaged in this stage of the programme. As such, the nine-month time frame appears appropriate.

Data collection proved challenging, with the evaluator noting that it was difficult to collect data from this cohort of young people. YES Outdoors were initially reluctant to pursue a randomised design in future evaluations; however, as the project progressed, they became more supportive of this approach in future evaluations. The YEF has opted not to proceed with further evaluation of YES Outdoors at this stage. This is due to the deviation in delivery from the original model, the challenges with recruitment, and the additional capacity required to deliver the intervention.

Introduction

Background

Mentoring

Formal mentoring programmes are widely considered an effective preventative approach for young people at risk of involvement in criminal activity (Blakeslee and Keller, 2018, Raposa et al., 2019). Findings from systematic reviews/meta-analysis have pointed to mentoring having a moderate effect on problem behaviour (Tolan et al., 2008). Whilst many definitions of mentoring exist within the research literature and mentoring interventions vary by context; the common thread throughout is that they conform to models that establish dialogue, trust, and rapport, and focus on action (Morgan and Rochford, 2017; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). However, there is wide debate as to the effectiveness and impact of mentoring, which are dependent on factors such as the age and socioeconomic status of the children and young people from backgrounds considered as disadvantaged (DuBois et al., 2011). It is important to note that Raposa et al. (2019) also suggest that the influence and effectiveness of mentoring is not universal. For example, various sections of society from different demographic groups are likely to experience diverse outcomes. There is some evidence to suggest that mentoring programmes are more impactful in children aged 7–12 compared to adolescents, while another study found that young people from less affluent circumstances gain more from mentoring programmes (Thompson et al., 2013).

Furthermore, significant numbers of young people put forward to engage in mentoring programmes experience complex circumstances, challenges and barriers (Raposa et al., 2019), which may have an impact on their engagement with mentoring programmes. Likewise, despite various positive outcomes demonstrated across the research, such as impact on education, behaviour and self-esteem, it has been observed that mentoring as a standalone intervention is not sufficient and would be best placed as part of a wider set of interventions (Dubois and Silverthorn, 2005).

Adventure-based activities and crime prevention

Evidence suggests that activity-based programmes, such as climbing, sports and mountaineering, have efficacy in engaging young people at risk of problem behaviour and can also be successful (in the right context) at reducing problem behaviour (Wilson and Lipsey, 2000; Bedard, 2004; Nichols and Crow, 2004). Outdoor and adventurous educational experiences often invoke feelings of fear for participants (young or old), as activities such as climbing or caving carry both perceived and real risk. However, fear, in the context of outdoor and adventurous education, is often understood and even employed as a necessary and important tool in learning and personal development (Reed and Smith, 2021).

More specifically, outdoor sports and activities of these kinds, especially those carried out in natural environments, have been shown to have a range of positive influences on society (Eigenschenk et al., 2019). The literature demonstrates benefits relating to physical health (Eigenschenk et al., 2019); mental health and wellbeing (Thompson Coon et al., 2011; Tillmann et al., 2018; Eigenschenk et al., 2019); education and learning, including across the life course (Eigenschenk et al., 2019); and citizenship. Of particular resonance to the CLIMB programme's goals, there are some indications of a link to crime and anti-social behaviour reduction, but this association lacks a strong evidence base and is predominately supported by 'reports and qualitative evaluations from the field' (Eigenschenk et al., 2019).

Existing evidence base for YES Outdoors

YES Outdoors is a well-established charity that was founded over 10 years ago in the aftermath of the London riots. Since then, they have delivered various strands of youth work across several London boroughs. A large proportion of children and young people in London are identified as at risk of being involved in serious crime, and there is a need for evidence-based interventions that tackle this issue (Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime, 2022). For example, in 2020–21, 3,500 young people were identified as being at risk of involvement in gangs and 2,650 at risk as a result of child sexual exploitation (Commission on Young Lives, 2022). YES Outdoors have developed the climbing, mentoring and bicycle maintenance (CLIMB) programme, which incorporates adventure-based activities and life skills. YES Outdoors have previously undertaken internal evaluation work, but this feasibility study aimed to provide evidence to inform a pilot trial in 2023. This study also sought to add to the YES Outdoors evidence base around how their programme works and why, alongside further developing their theory of change (ToC) and logic model (LM).

Intervention

The description below outlines the intention, as specified in the study plan, that was developed at the start of the evaluation. It does not detail where delivery plans have been deviated from but instead outlines what was intended to be delivered, how and by whom. Deviations from the original intervention plans are discussed throughout the findings section and in the ToC section (see Appendix 4).

YES Outdoors mentoring intervention

Who

The CLIMB intervention was aimed at 10- to 14-year-olds from across north London (specifically, within the boroughs of Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Islington) and was delivered at several locations.

- The climbing/mentoring part of the intervention (see below for full description) was delivered at the Castle Climbing Centre, Islington (<https://www.castle-climbing.co.uk/>).
- The bicycle maintenance and mentoring sessions (see below for full description) were delivered at the Rose Bowl Youth Centre, Islington (<https://www.rosebowlislington.org.uk/>).
- Metropolitan Police Officers connected to YES Outdoors played a key role in attending both the climbing/bicycle maintenance sessions and the residential week. Furthermore, they fulfilled a crucial role in assisting core YES Outdoors staff to transport the four different groups of young people throughout the programme.
- The Outward Bound Trust (OBT) residential (see below for full description) took place at Aberdovey, in Snowdonia, Wales (<https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/aberdyfi>).

The young people identified as suitable to take part in the intervention were those classed as ‘at risk’ of becoming involved in crime, either by teachers or youth workers and as aligned with the YES Outdoors threshold criteria. The young people attended (although the frequency of attendance was variable) either a North London–based Secondary School or youth centre. See Appendix 2 for YES Outdoors referral criteria.

What

The YES Outdoors CLIMB intervention was intended to be a nine-month intervention focused on harnessing the benefits of mentoring. The original plan was that it would comprise three stages: 16 weekly rock climbing and mentoring sessions (Stage 1); 12 weekly bicycle maintenance sessions, with opportunities for activity-

based mentoring at each (Stage 2); and a one-week OBT residential (Stage 3). The intervention would then culminate in a celebration event involving the young people, their mentors and family. The size of the groups would increase through the programme, with the climbing taking place in smaller groups, the bicycle maintenance in larger groups and then all groups coming together for the OBT trip.

The continuing mentoring aspect that accompanied the activities of the CLIMB programme was unlikely to follow a strict or standardised format week in and week out (indications of what might be covered are included below). The deliverers intended that it would be a combination of running the content of the sessions through doing, with the mentoring happening around the activity, that would help to remove barriers or inhibitions (and create a more authentic exchange). This mentoring activity was intended to be accompanied by more formal mentor–mentee conversations – for example, in the Castle café or the Rose Bowl Youth Centre. It was a combination of these two methods that would make up the mentoring process throughout the CLIMB programme.

How much and when

The YES Outdoors mentoring programme was planned to start in early to mid-October 2022. Following the recruitment period, the young person would be equipped with the information to be able to attend their first session. Mentors were predominately recruited from the climbing community at the Castle Climbing Centre. The majority were experienced climbers who were given training in mentoring techniques and safeguarding by YES Outdoors staff.

Climbing sessions were to be held at the Castle Climbing Centre. The young people would attend in cohorts of five and were to be met there by the programme staff and volunteer mentors; each young person would be in the same group throughout the climbing sessions. These sessions were to take place on different days and times, depending on which group the young person was in, and consisted of one two-hour session a week.

The sessions were intended to be tailored to the needs of the young people through the use of the stress–performance curve chart. This chart measures the level of the young people’s performances versus the challenge, helping to ensure that the programme was developing at the best pace for all the young people.

In addition, starting with small groups of five and building up to a larger group in the bicycle maintenance sessions meant that the young people gradually built up their confidence and rapport with their mentor and their interactions with their peers before culminating in a group of 25 when attending the OBT residential.

The first weeks were intended to be the befriending stage, during which young people could pair up with a different mentor every week and begin to establish relationships and trust. This process was to ensure that mentors and mentees were paired up in the most effective way possible for the development of the young person. During these four weeks, confidence was to be built and skills would begin to develop within the physical activity of rock climbing. Each session would always start and end with attendance registers being completed. The first hour-and-a-half of sessions would involve the physical activity, where the young people would work both together and with their mentors. The final half-hour was to be spent at the rock climbing wall’s café facilities, where a debrief was to be held and where there would be an opportunity to discuss challenges and achievements from the day. Mentors were to ask a range of questions based on their suitability and relevance to that particular young person. The plan was that the mentors would ask similar questions to the information they would offer about themselves, and typical themes were to include asking

about the young people’s backgrounds/interests/hobbies; school lives, both socially and academically; and family relationships (brothers and sisters, etc.).

The CLIMB programme was purposefully designed to start with rock climbing, as opposed to bicycle maintenance, as the activity lent itself to being able to establish trust and break down barriers more rapidly. For example, belaying (controlling the safety rope while a partner climbs) was safely monitored and a great tool for building trust and giving young people responsibilities. The rock-climbing sessions were to build physical confidence and to bond the mentor and mentee as they shared the physical achievements and challenges together. They would build on the shared experience, and each week, they would build on previous developments. The intention was that strong relationships between the young people and their mentors would be established by the time the bicycle maintenance phase began, enabling the mentor to have a greater and more beneficial impact on the young person. Table 1 gives an overview of the programme and its stages. Table 26 gives the intended delivery versus the actual delivery.

Table 1 Intended structure of the CLIMB programme

Proposed programme dates	Activity stage	Mentoring activities
October 2022–February 2023	Stage 1: 16 sessions of rock climbing Groups of ~5	Mixture of informal and formal mentoring (see Table 1)
February 2023–April 2023	Stage 2: 12 sessions of bicycle maintenance Groups of ~10	Mentors present but no formal mentoring
May 2023 (five days, four nights)	Stage 3: Outward Bound Trust trip Group of ~25	No mentors

Stage 1: Rock climbing

Session 1 was to take place in mid-October 2022 and was to include introductions in the group setting, along with some icebreaker exercises. The process planned for the next few weeks was to be explained, including health and safety while doing the activity. The young people were expected to pair up individually with a mentor, who would then begin preparing them and teaching them about the equipment they would be using during their first session. The young people would then be supported and encouraged by a mentor to attempt their first climb. In addition to the mentors, each group was accompanied by a climbing instructor from the centre who led the sessions to ensure the health and safety procedures were followed.

Sessions 2–4 were planned to take place in late October to mid-November 2022. Picking up from the first session, the young people would be, at this stage, still free to pair up with any of the mentors in order to learn to climb and to start to develop relationships and build trust.

Sessions 4–16: the young people and mentors would continue to climb on a weekly basis, with the young people learning skills and techniques to improve their climbing and how to climb safely with others.

Mentoring stages for the rock climbing stage

The various mentoring stages (Table 1) were intended to take place across sessions with the young people, allowing them to build trust and start thinking about goals and reflecting on their progress across the 16 climbing sessions. These stages are summarised in the table below. Further details on these sessions can be found in the [study plan](#).

Table 2 Mentoring activities during the climbing stage

Timings	Mentoring activities	Mentoring outcomes
<p>Weeks 1–8</p> <p>Weeks 1–4: getting to know each other</p> <p>Week 5 onwards: more formal mentoring</p>	<p>Hopes and dreams</p>	<p>Develop trust between mentor and mentee, establish confidentiality and exceptions to this.</p> <p>Mentor establishes the young person’s needs.</p> <p>Mentor encouraged to think about what the young people like, what is important to them and what their life goals are. They should consider how these might be achieved via exercises (e.g. ‘climbing the ladder to success’, ‘life luggage’).</p> <p>YES Outdoor staff and mentors are to support the young people via information provided to local services and courses (e.g. volunteering or educational opportunities).</p> <p>Support with referral to services where appropriate.</p> <p>Initial SMART goals identified (to be completed over the next four weeks).</p>
<p>Weeks 9–12</p>	<p>Further development</p>	<p>Reflection on progress made on CLIMB activities and around personal growth.</p> <p>Mentors to complete forms recording the young person’s progress, positive outcomes/steps, any actions taken and any developments or concerns.</p> <p>Conversations around positive relationship self-awareness through queries about the relationships in mentees’ lives and activities.</p> <p>New SMART goal to be completed over the next four weeks.</p>
<p>Weeks 13–16</p>	<p>Growth mindset</p>	<p>Questions around the young person’s past accomplishments and how they achieved them.</p> <p>Emphasis on empowering young people and application of techniques to challenges.</p> <p>Information on the growth mindset strategies box.</p> <p>SMART goal related to growth mindsets established (to be completed over the next four weeks).</p>

Stage 2: Bicycle maintenance

The bicycle maintenance sessions, consisting of around 10 young people, were intended to be run in larger groups than the rock climbing sessions and from February to April 2023. This was because, while the mentors were still involved, the formal mentoring sessions and activities had finished (see Table 1). It was originally intended that 12 bicycle maintenance sessions would be held. Table 2 gives the proposed activities for these sessions; more details can be found in the [study plan](#).

All the bicycle maintenance sessions were designed to start with a briefing for the session and any points/issues/concerns from the previous weeks. Open dialogue was to be encouraged, and conversations were intended to be informal to encourage increased participation. This method was purposely used to bond the group at the start of each session and to lay out both the agenda for the day and health and safety instructions.

During these sessions, the young people were to work with their mentors (these were expected to be the same mentors as in Stage 1) to understand and fix the bicycle, one component at a time. The mentors were to be supported on-site by at least two qualified and experienced bicycle mechanics, who, it was planned, would be on hand to offer help with any specific technical challenges. These sessions were to be held once a week and run for up to two hours.

In the first half-hour, tasks were set for the session. The following 45 minutes were planned to be one-to-one between mentor and mentee, with group instruction given as and when needed. Sometimes, it was envisaged a mentor would want to acknowledge an achievement or ask a young person to demonstrate something in front of the larger group. In the final half-hour, the young people were sent for a group chat and debrief (similarly structured to the rock-climbing café debriefs). This was set up to be a good time to build bonds and check in on everyone's engagement with the programme. At the end of the two-hour session, attendance registers were to be reviewed and any relevant notes made (such as a young person leaving the session before it had been completed).

Informal group chats and discussions were to be held and led by senior bicycle maintenance instructors or by another Metropolitan Police Officer connected to YES Outdoors. Any volunteers who were serving Metropolitan Police staff were not to be acting in that capacity when working on the bicycle maintenance sessions.

Table 3 Bicycle maintenance session activities

Activity weeks for Stage 2	Aims	Activities
Weeks 1–4	Young people were to be introduced to bicycle maintenance and were to be allocated a bicycle to work on which would be in need of repair and not fully functional	Remove/re-fit and adjust rim brake Remove/re-fit and tune derailleur gear system Undertake a puncture repair from start to finish Complete a comprehensive safety check

Weeks 5–8	Skill development	Repair a cycle puncture Remove and replace a cycle rim brake assembly Carry out a systematic cycle check Remove and replace cycle gear systems Remove and replace cycle hub bearings Remove and replace cycle bottom brackets and cranks
Weeks 9–12	Skill development and safety	Build a cycle wheel Prepare frames and forks for cycle assembly Augment a cycle (fitting accessories) Change a cycle frame Service cycle headset assemblies Remove and replace cycle braking systems Show consideration for safety when cycling and of the Highway Code Learn about bicycle marking and registering

Stage 3: Outward Bound Trust trip, mid-May 2023

The residential trip was planned to last for five days and took place around three weeks after the final bicycle maintenance session. The young people were to travel in groups of up to 15, accompanied by YES Outdoors staff. The groups from the climbing and bicycle sessions were mixed for this stage. During these five days, OBT staff, accompanied by YES Outdoors staff, were to run an intense schedule of outdoor activities and challenges in a rural country setting. It was expected that, for many of the young people, this would be a rare trip outside of the city, and mentors were intended to encourage the young people to embrace the difference in the pace of life and to try new experiences. The staff and young people were to travel and stay together, even eating breakfast and dinner together as a group. This was planned as a period of significant bonding that would enable the cementing of ideas and evolutions into improved prosocial behaviours.

It was not intended that all mentors would go on the residential trip, but it was expected that they would be involved in the preparation and planning for the trip with the young people. This could have included SMART objectives for the young person to focus on while they were away.

Final celebration of achievements, late May 2023

YES Outdoors intended to hold a celebration event to which the young people would have been encouraged to bring their parents and/or carers. This event was designed to formally mark the end of the mentoring programme and recognise the achievements of the young people. The event was to be held at one of the YES Outdoors delivery centres and was to include an awards ceremony at which YES Outdoors would issue certificates (printed in-house) to the young people. At the event, photo highlights from the recent trip were to be shared, and the young people were to be reminded about all the challenges they had completed. The young people were also to be reminded about the YES Outdoors Youth Advisory Board and were to be invited to participate in helping to shape the charity's future programmes. The young people were to be helped to identify and connect with appropriate activities/organisations that matched their interests, and that they could engage with beyond the duration of the CLIMB programme.

Research questions

The key focus of the feasibility study was to provide early indications as to the programme’s viability to run in a manner closely aligned to its process map and ToC and thereby provide it with the greatest opportunity to continue into the randomised Year 1 pilot trial stage. Crucial to this was the ability of YES to demonstrate that the 11 agreed progression criteria (Table 1) had been achieved. The progression criteria are aligned with an overall aim and several research questions. Further details about the study design can be found in the [study plan](#).

The feasibility study research aim: to determine whether the YES Outdoors programme can achieve its intended outputs.

The research questions for the feasibility study are as follows:

1. Is there organisational capacity to reach and recruit young people to the programme and evaluation?
2. Can the eligibility criteria used by referral pathways for young person referral be developed to achieve consistency and objectivity before the pilot trial?
3. Is the YES Outdoors intervention seen as worthwhile from the perspectives of the young people recruited?
4. Explore the range of mentor characteristics and the extent to which any of these affect their commitment to the programme. Do any of these characteristics appear to influence the mentor’s relative effectiveness at mentoring young people?
5. Is the YES Outdoors intervention deliverable over a nine-month timescale?
6. To what extent are young people engaged with each section of the programme (climbing, bicycle maintenance and the OBT residential)?
7. Can business as usual at schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) be determined?
8. Are the outcome measures and the IPE methods suitable for the young people engaged with the YES Outdoors programme?
9. How acceptable is the prospect of randomisation perceived by key stakeholders (young people, mentors and setting-based leads [SBLs])?

Table 4 YES Outdoors success criteria and/or targets

Progression criteria (PC)	Description	Mapped to research question (RQ)
PC1	<p>A retrieval augmented generation (RAG) approach to recruitment was utilised. The aim was for YES to recruit 25 young people and five reserves (between June and September 2022) before the feasibility year programme started in October 2022. Records were kept on the number of young people that signed up and the number that withdrew.</p> <p>RAG approach: 25+ = green, 18–24 = amber and 17 or fewer = red.</p>	RQ1

Progression criteria (PC)	Description	Mapped to research question (RQ)
	<p>A rating of amber or red would warrant further discussion during the progression review period. If, during the feasibility study, 17 or fewer young people were recruited, it would have suggested that the suitability for progression to a pilot trial would be less viable.</p>	
PC2	<p>A school-/pupil referral unit– (PRU) based lead was recruited to liaise with the evaluators for the completion of baseline and endpoint outcome measures. Records were kept on the details of the school-/PRU-based lead.</p>	RQ1
PC3	<p>The aim was to achieve a baseline assessment for 25 young people. We used a RAG approach to ensure that the progression criteria were fair and reflected the complexities of the target population.</p> <p>RAG approach: 100% = green, 70–99% = amber, 69% or less = red.</p> <p>At the point of progression, a RAG rating of amber would have suggested that more input was needed at the baseline testing phase, to maximise responses. As with the other progression criteria, a red rating questioned the appropriateness of a pilot randomised controlled trial.</p>	RQ1
PC4	<p>YES aimed to secure dates for the OBT trip that were within a three-week period of completing Stage 2 of the programme (bicycle maintenance). We suggested that these dates could be agreed with the OBT in advance of signing up the young people so that this date could be seen and agreed on by the young people and their schools/parents.</p> <p>The aim would be that all the young people would continue through to the OBT residential trip. We will again use a RAG approach: 100% = green, 70–99% = amber, 69% or less = red.</p>	RQ4

Progression criteria (PC)	Description	Mapped to research question (RQ)
	<p>A rating of amber or red would not mean that progression to the pilot trial would be unviable, but would prompt a further discussion about the place of the OBT residential in the YES Outdoors mentoring programme</p>	
PC5	<p>The young people took part in an acceptable amount of the programme. We suggest a RAG rating for this:</p> <p>81% > = Green, 70-80% = amber, <69% = red (this is where YES would look at the reasoning behind why the attendance had suffered)</p> <p>This was applied to each part of the programme separately.</p>	RQ5
PC6	<p>A 70–80% response rate is achieved for the primary outcome measure.</p> <p>RAG approach: 100% = green, 70–99% = amber, 69% or less = red.</p> <p>As with PG3, at the point of progression, a RAG rating of amber would suggest that more input would be needed at the testing phase, to maximise responses. As with the other progression criteria, a red rating would question the feasibility of a pilot RCT.</p>	RQ5
PC7	<p>Feasibility of individual or school-/PRU-level randomisation was explored. A decision can be reached by the evaluators (YES and YEF) about which is the most appropriate, should the trial move forward.</p>	RQ6
PC8	<p>Appropriateness of the measurement tool(s). Data collected during the feasibility stage has been analysed.</p>	RQ7
PC9	<p>YES deliver the number of sessions as intended (16 rock climbing sessions, 12 bicycle maintenance sessions, OBT residential and celebration event).</p>	RQ4

Progression criteria (PC)	Description	Mapped to research question (RQ)
PC10	Working relationships between YEF, the evaluators and YES continue to develop. YES, the YEF and the evaluators are responsive to communications made and advice and adaptations are considered.	N/A
PC11	Fidelity to programme as outlined. The session content was to be recorded and compared to lesson plans that have been given by YES prior to the feasibility year starting.	RQ4

Ethical review

Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Article 6, Paragraph 1e, the legal basis for this project was covered under ‘public task’. However, in keeping with good research ethical practices, children and young people (CYP) and guardian consent was sought prior to participation in the evaluation. The YES Outdoors CLIMB feasibility study underwent ethical review using Sheffield Hallam University’s (SHU) CONVERIS ethics system. This required the evaluation team at SHU to provide a detailed plan of the feasibility study alongside information sheets (young person and parent/carer; see Appendix 6), a consent form (see Appendix 7) and a data management plan. The SHU team were especially mindful that they needed to make the information sheet/memorandum of understanding (MoU) transparent regarding why the young people had been ‘targeted’ and to show that involvement in all research-related activity was voluntary throughout.

These plans and forms then underwent a high level of scrutiny by independent, trained ethics reviewers at SHU. These reviewers had no part in the evaluation. The feasibility study received ethical approval under reference number ER45546941.

The young people participating in the CLIMB programme were considered to be old enough to consent to data collection. As a result, a key area highlighted in the ethics application was that the young people had a clear understanding of what giving consent for data collection implies and entails. Parental consent (see Appendix 7) was also sought for their child’s participation in the evaluation activities by YES Outdoors on behalf of SHU; this was in addition to the consent that the parents provided to YES Outdoors for their children to participate in the programme itself. During the qualitative field work, further written consent was obtained from the young people taking part as part of their ongoing assent to be involved in evaluation activities such as focus groups. Mentors also completed consent forms to allow us to (anonymously) use their responses to the mentor survey.

Schools/youth centres were required to review and sign a detailed MoU (see Appendix 5) to ensure that they were aware of what was required from them as part of the evaluation and the proposed timings for each part of the programme and related evaluation activities.

Data protection

The personal data from participating young people collected by YES Outdoors and the evaluation team was stored securely in a password-protected folder accessible only to members of the evaluation team. The SHU evaluation team will comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR Article 6 (1e): Public Task and the SHU Data Protection Policy Statement. Further details on the GDPR and our data subjects' rights statement are provided below on the [SHU privacy policy](#) and [data subject rights](#) pages.

Once the evaluation is finished (in 2024), the pupil data collected (name, unique pupil number [UPN] and date of birth [DOB]) will be sent to the Department for Education (at which point SHU will cease to be responsible for the data), where the pupil data will be deleted and replaced with a pupil-matching reference number (pseudonymisation). Further details on the [YEF data archiving policy](#) can be found in the hyperlink. At this point, SHU will remove all personally identifiable data (including UPN, DOB, name, etc.) from their systems.

The data will then be transferred to the ONS Secure Research Service to be stored in pseudonymised form to allow future research into the relationships between participating in the YES Outdoors mentoring programme, educational attainments and criminal records. No young people will be individually identifiable through the data archived.

Project team/stakeholders

Dr Sarah Reaney-Wood, Sheffield Hallam University – Co-principal investigator, co-project manager and quantitative lead. Sarah has a wealth of expertise in quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, which she has successfully deployed across numerous trial-based evaluations. Sarah has a background in psychology and a keen interest and experience in using and creating measures (including strengths and difficulties questionnaires) to assess how children and young people change in response to interventions, with a focus on non-cognitive outcomes. Most recently, Sarah has jointly led the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) funded Adventure Learning three-armed randomised controlled trial (RCT).

Benjamin Willis, Sheffield Hallam University – Co-principal investigator, co-project manager and qualitative lead. Ben has over 15 years of research and evaluation experience focused on children and young people across a range of educational and youth-based settings. His research interests focus on the broader dimensions of education, particularly in relation to children and young people's health and well-being. Ben is particularly well-versed in undertaking a variety of both traditional and more innovative children- and young people-centric qualitative techniques to encourage a multiplicity of perspectives. Ben has most recently jointly led on the EEF-funded Adventure Learning three-armed RCT.

Dr Josephine Booth, Sheffield Hallam University – Senior adviser. Jo is a highly experienced researcher who has worked in education research and evaluation for over 14 years. She has led and managed a range of high-profile projects and consultancy for funders, including the Wellcome Trust, the Institute of Physics, the YEF and EEF. She is a mixed-methods researcher with expertise across both quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis. She has a wide range of research interests, including teachers' continuing professional development, professionalism and engagement with research, and pupil wellbeing.

Sean Demack, Sheffield Hallam University – Senior adviser. Sean is a quantitative social scientist and lecturer in sociological research methods. He is also Deputy Head of Centre at SIRKE. His key research interest is to statistically map social bias within the English education system, and he regularly leads on the design, direction and analyses of evaluation research projects centred on experimental (Randomised Controlled Trial) and quasi-experimental methodologies.

Delivery team

Tony Quinn, YES Outdoors – Project lead and QA. Tony is a dynamic leader in youth crime prevention, with over 20 years' experience in reducing crime and tackling criminality. He is the founder and CEO of YES Outdoors charity, which was established in 2011 in the wake of the London riots with the primary mission of diverting disadvantaged young people away from criminality, knife crime and gang culture. He has successfully and repeatedly achieved transformational results in at-risk young people from the inner London boroughs of Islington, Camden, Hackney and Haringey through a wide range of sought-after, fun projects that provide challenging physical, vocational and educational activities combined with mentoring from positive role-models.

Yoni Gal, YES Outdoors – Project manager. Yoni is an accomplished, results-driven and extremely diligent project director with extensive experience in managing large projects, teams and budgets. He has run a multi-national production company for over 10 years and successfully led teams of 25–30 staff to deliver complex projects across the globe. Incredibly organised and calm, he brings a natural aptitude for effective planning, resulting in an enviable track record of delivering multifaceted projects on time, within budget and in a way that fully satisfies expectations. Highly personable, Yoni is talented at sustaining strong stakeholder relationships through attentive listening, a warm and courteous manner and effective multi-lingual communication.

Lucy Brotherston, YES Outdoors – Volunteers manager. Lucy brings a wealth of experience in recruiting volunteers and working with young people throughout her career. She joined YES Outdoors from YMCA North London, where she was the youth co-ordinator and regularly managed and co-ordinated large groups of volunteers and young people. She has run a number of successful mentoring schemes in London and brings a wealth of practical knowledge around optimising youth engagement in intervention programmes. A confident and skilled co-ordinator and excellent communicator, Lucy has helped countless young people into improved situations in life.

Rachel Bean – Session delivery co-ordinator. Rachel is a highly experienced, confident, and skilled co-ordinator who can work well individually or as part of a team. She is very motivated and enjoys doing practical tasks. The majority of her work to date has been outdoor instructional/youth work; she has had the opportunity to work with a wide variety of groups ranging from young Brownies and school groups to special and educational needs and disabilities groups. She has also worked with groups from the probation service, young people with addiction issues and various other young people who have been excluded from the education system. At the many centres she has worked in, Rachel has had the opportunity to be involved in the development of new activities and programmes, along with maintenance work. She is qualified in rock climbing instruction, cycling, hill walking and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Methods

Participant selection

From a mixture of secondary schools, PRUs and reintegration provisions predominantly within the north London area (specifically, the boroughs of Camden, Islington, Hackney and Haringey), 25 young people (30 including five reserves) were to be recruited. In practice, however, the young people were recruited from schools and youth centres; this will be discussed further in our findings.

Twenty-seven young people recruited to take part in the programme were identified and referred to YES Outdoors by teachers and youth workers. YES Outdoors used their usual referral criteria of Level 3 risk to help referrers understand which young people would and would not be suitable for the programme (the referral criteria can be found in Appendix 2). The referral criteria used for the feasibility intentionally included many different specifications, but in summary, Level 3 risk represents **young people at risk of crime who require specialist services**. These are young people who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services. The criteria used to recruit for this feasibility study were very broad; had the programme progressed to the pilot stage, the criteria would have required refinement. The young people may require longer-term intervention and specialist support. They are likely to be exposed to the risk of perpetrating or being the victim of crime, including youth violence. In addition, all the young people needed to still be in education. Twenty-seven young people were referred from a mixture of schools and youth centres, and 25 progressed to starting the programme. YES Outdoors obtained initial consent and additional health and safety–/safeguarding-related information from the young people and their guardians to onboard them to the CLIMB programme as per YES Outdoors usual processes. Subsequently, YES Outdoors, along with other referral partners, collected consent forms related to the evaluation on behalf of SHU (this is discussed in more detail in the ethical review section).

Theory of change

A ToC workshop was undertaken with the YEF, YES Outdoors and SHU during the project setup phase. Development of the ToC was facilitated by both of the principal investigators from SHU, with YES Outdoors providing the information for the ToC. The ToC was reviewed by all parties to ensure that everyone was satisfied with the content and that YES Outdoors explicitly approved the ToC representation of their programme. The ToC informed data collection, particularly around the IPE, while the outcome measure (SDQ) was defined by the YEF.

Data collection

A summary of methods is detailed in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 Quantitative data methods overview

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants / data sources (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed	Implementation/ logic model relevance
Quantitative September/ November 22 (baseline) May/June 23 (endpoint)	Online questionnaire (SDQ)	Young people (n = 27 baseline; n = 22 endpoint)	Descriptive statistics	RQ7	Logic model and theory of change (ToC) relevance: intermediary outcomes of prosocial behaviour
Quantitative and open-text methods	Online questionnaire at endpoint	Young people (n = 22)	Descriptive statistics and quotes from open texts, themes identified	RQ7	Logic model and ToC relevance: short-term outcomes
Quantitative and open-text methods	Online questionnaire	Mentors (n = 20)	Descriptive statistics	RQ3	Implementation relevance: to explore variations in mentor attributes and perceptions

Table 6 Implementation process evaluation methods overview

Data collection methods	Participants/data sources	Total number interviewed/surveyed	Data analysis method	Research question/ logic model relevance
Semi-structured focus groups: February 23 (face-to-face) March 23 (face-to-face) May 23 (online)	Strategic/operational YES Outdoors leads: CEO YES Outdoors Project coordinator Volunteer manager	3 (in each of the focus groups)	Thematic analysis	RQ1, RQ2, RQ4, RQ5, RQ6, RQ7, RQ8, RQ9
Setting-based lead (SBL) questionnaire (May 2023)	SBLs	5	Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis	RQ2, RQ6
SBL online or face-to-face interviews	Youth SBL interviews (two SBLs) Two interviews with an additional youth centre lead (February and May 2023)	2 Youth setting SBLs 1 Youth setting lead ¹	Thematic analysis	RQ2, RQ 5, RQ6, RQ7, RQ8, RQ9
Observation visits of the four key stages of the CLIMB programme delivery	Climbing session (February 2023) Bicycle maintenance session (March 23) Outward Bound Trust residential (May 23) Celebration event (May 23)	N/A	Thematic analysis	RQ4, RQ6

¹ This was an additional youth centre lead but was not an SBL in terms of evaluation commitment.

Data collection methods	Participants/data sources	Total number interviewed/surveyed	Data analysis method	Research question/ logic model relevance
Focus groups with young people participating in the CLIMB programme	School 2 (three young people; February 2023) Youth centre B (four young people; March 23)	7 Young people	Thematic analysis	RQ3, RQ 9, RQ6, RQ8
Mentor questionnaire ² (May 2023)	Volunteer mentors	25	Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis	RQ3, RQ4, RQ6
Online/face-to-face interviews with mentors/instructor	Four online interviews One paired face-to-face interview with mentors/instructor Three face-to-face focus groups	8 Mentors 1 Instructor	Thematic analysis	RQ3, RQ4, RQ6
Attendance data was shared throughout the course of CLIMB programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	RQ5, RQ6

Quantitative data collection

Pupil self-report questionnaires: The SDQs were collected at two time points: baseline and endpoint. Baseline data collection took place between September and November 2022, and endpoint data collection took place between May 2023 and June 2023. The baseline data collection lasted beyond the programme start date; as some young people started the programme late, endpoint data collection was extended due to a lack of pupil responses. The SDQ was the chosen outcome measure, as it aligned with the outcomes of the programme, but it is also the core measure used by the YEF across all evaluations when working with

² The original intention was to undertake both a baseline and endpoint questionnaire but owing to the need for mentors to be comfortable with their role before asking for additional tasks and delays in getting mentors' contact details, it was only possible to undertake one questionnaire.

young people aged 11–18. The feasibility focused on collecting young peoples' self-report SDQs to determine the SDQs suitability and to test the quality of responses.

The SDQ (Goodman, 2001) is a 25-item behaviour-screening questionnaire. The items on the SDQ ask about a range of attributes: some negative and some positive. The total score for the SDQ is calculated by combining 20 items. The SDQ can also be scored as five subscales: emotional symptoms (five items), conduct problems (five items), hyperactivity/inattention (five items), peer relationship problems (five items) and prosocial behaviour (five items). Further information about the [SDQ](#) is available in the embedded hyperlink.

The original plan was for the SDQ data to be collected by the evaluation team at SHU via the online survey platform Qualtrics or via paper copies sent to the school/youth centre. Paper copies were only used when this would result in boosting the response rate. The evaluation team communicated the need for the data to be collected independently, with YES Outdoors helping with reminders, etc., but not with physical data collection. Unfortunately, at baseline, particularly, the collection of SDQ responses needed to be facilitated in person by YES Outdoors staff (either online or on paper). This was owing to the 'hard-to-reach' nature of the YES Outdoors cohort and the need for YES Outdoors to meet their progression criteria. While it is impossible to ascertain the impact of this, a concern here is that the responses given by the young people may have been influenced by the presence of the YES Outdoors team.

In addition to the SDQ, the evaluation team designed a set of questions (these additional questions can be found in Appendix 3) to gain an understanding into which aspects of the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme the young people had enjoyed the most and why, how they felt the programme had helped them and whether they would recommend the programme to friends. While the SDQ was administered to understand how feasible it would be to use in further evaluation work with the YES Outdoors CLIMB cohorts, it was still important to try and capture some soft outcomes as potential evidence of promise.

Mentor survey: A survey was planned to be administered to mentors at two time points to get an understanding of their involvement in the programme and their perceptions of change. Their answers were then going to be matched to the young person's responses to look at any association between the mentor's and young person's characteristics. However, concerns about overburdening mentors, given their volunteer status, along with illness in the evaluation team, meant that these plans needed to be adapted, and instead of two surveys being distributed, one survey was distributed to mentors at the end of the programme. The mentor survey was distributed to mentors directly by the evaluation team; the mentors completed the survey between May 2023 and June 2023

Setting-based lead survey: SBLs were also asked to complete a survey at the end of the programme to understand how they had identified which young people would be suitable to put forward for the YES Outdoors programme and to understand their experience of the communication during recruitment and data collection. The SBL survey was disseminated in May 2023 and closed in June 2023. Data was obtained from three out of four (75%) of SBLs. Three follow-up emails were sent to SBLs to encourage completion and to emphasise the importance of their responses.

Qualitative data collection

At the project inception stage, SHU initially worked with the YES Outdoors Youth Advisory Board (YAB) to help inform and shape the qualitative data collection tools.³ The YAB is a group of young people who have experienced input from YES Outdoors previously and are from similar areas of London to the CYP involved in the feasibility study. One key recommendation we implemented was to ensure that fast food be ordered in when undertaking the focus groups to help facilitate a more relaxed atmosphere.

SHU offered the YAB the opportunity to be more involved in direct data collection with the young people, and one member was very keen to do so. The aim of this was to reduce the power dynamic between the researcher and the young person and to promote a more relaxed atmosphere. Unfortunately, despite our best attempts to do so, the young person in question did not have availability to attend on the days when observations were undertaken.

SHU observed each stage of the programme (rock climbing, bicycle maintenance, the residential and celebration), which was crucial to aiding an understanding of how the programme was delivered and the extent to which the young people were engaged.

Access to the activities and young people involved in the CLIMB programme for qualitative data collection was negotiated with YES Outdoors staff. YES were keen to ensure that any additional qualitative evaluation activity did not become too burdensome on the young people nor unduly distract from the core aims of the programme. Therefore, SHU agreed that they would not undertake observations/data collection at the beginning of each stage of the programme and that they would ensure different groups were observed to minimise the burden. Given the relatively restricted access to the young people, it was not feasible to deploy some of the more innovative and ongoing forms of qualitative data collection (e.g. the photo-elicitation techniques suggested in the original study plan). Despite our best attempts, we acknowledge that the young person's voice is a limitation of this study, being limited to survey responses, two semi-structured focus groups and informal conversations undertaken during observation visits.

In contrast, we collected detailed longitudinal qualitative data from YES Outdoors throughout the course of the evaluation, including three 1.5- to 2-hour semi-structured focus groups with the three key delivery staff. In addition to the formal IPE data collection, regular check-in meetings were held with senior leads from YES Outdoors and the evaluation team throughout the duration of the programme; at peak times of activity, they were undertaken weekly. These meetings were a crucial way of informally communicating and gaining an improved understanding of the programme delivery and evaluation expectations. They were intended to run in a spirit that facilitated the sharing of formative insights and reflections and, therefore, were not formally recorded; however, they were indispensable for informing interview schedules and other evaluation activities.

Finally, there was a stark difference in the qualitative data collection from the referral staff from school versus youth centre settings, which was reflective of our understanding of their comparative levels of

³ Each member of the YAB that participated was provided with a £20 high street voucher as a gesture to recognise the time they provided.

engagement throughout. This meant we only managed to collect interview data from youth centre staff and none from a school setting, which is a further weakness of this study.

Analysis

Quantitative data analysis

All quantitative data analysis was conducted in SPSS version 26. Four sets of quantitative data were collected across the course of the CLIMB programme. These were:

1. Baseline and endpoint self-report SDQ
2. Mentor survey
3. SBL survey
4. Management information (MI)

The responses received for the SDQ at baseline and endpoint were cleaned and then scored as per the SDQ scoring guidelines available from the [developers](#) (Youth in Mind, 2016). This meant that, for each young person, there were five scores pertaining to the SDQ at baseline and at endpoint (where responses were submitted). The six scores are as follows: total SDQ score, prosocial score, emotional problems score, peer problems score, conduct problem score and hyperactivity score.

Due to the small sample size ($n = 27$ baseline, $n = 22$ endpoint), formal statistical testing would need to be interpreted with extreme caution and, as such, descriptive statistics were calculated to determine whether there had been a change in scores across the course of the programme and to look at any patterns in the responses that were present in the sample. When data is collected from psychometric measures, such as the SDQ, we would usually explore the factor structure in the current sample. A confirmatory factor analysis would be undertaken to critically assess the psychometric outcome and subscales. However, the sample size within the YES Outdoors feasibility study was too small to conduct this analysis.

The mentor and SBL survey data was cleaned, summarised using descriptive statistics and used to contextualise the SDQ findings and support the qualitative findings. Full and partial responses were analysed to maximise the amount of data used to inform the evaluation.

Qualitative data analysis

All the qualitative data collected was fully transcribed and securely stored on password-protected SHU drives for analysis. A thematic framework analysis was undertaken, informed by the principles outlined by Smith and Davies (2010); these included scanning the data to establish an initial overview, building an initial framework drawing on the research questions and ToC, undertaking more detailed coding or charting data connected to the themes from the framework and, finally, interpreting the data within the framework. This analytical process was aided by uploading the transcripts into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package.

Two members of the evaluation team shared the qualitative analysis across the key research questions. In order to aid the overall coherence and rigour of the qualitative findings, including emergent themes beyond the parameters of the research questions themselves, the two team members met regularly to discuss their analysis and ensure shared interpretations of the data.

Triangulation

A smaller number of whole-team meetings also took place to share findings across the IPE and feasibility strands of the project.

Timeline

Table 7 Delivery and evaluation timeline

Date	Activity	Responsible	Changes to plans/delays
September–November 2022	Recruitment of young people	YES Outdoors	In the study plan, recruitment was going to happen prior to September, in June–July.
September–November 2022	Baseline data collection: young person self-report strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ)	Sheffield Hallam University (SHU)	Baseline data collection had to occur on a rolling basis, as YES Outdoors recruited young people
October 2022–February 2023	YES Outdoors mentoring programme delivery: rock climbing	YES Outdoors	16 sessions intended; between 9 and 14 sessions delivered, depending on when the group started
February 2023	Climbing observation fieldwork	SHU	Fieldwork took place later than intended.
March–April 2023	YES Outdoors mentoring programme delivery: bicycle maintenance	YES Outdoors	Changed from 12 to 6 sessions at the start of the programme
March 2023	Bicycle maintenance observation fieldwork	SHU	Conducted as planned
May 2023	Outward Bound Trust (OBT) residential	YES Outdoors and OBT	Conducted as planned
May 2023	OBT fieldwork observation	SHU	Conducted as planned
May 2023	Mentor survey distributed	SHU	The mentor survey was originally to be disseminated at two time points. This plan was adapted to collect the mentor survey at one time

Date	Activity	Responsible	Changes to plans/delays
			point (at the end of the programme).
May 2023	Setting-based lead (SBL) survey distributed	SHU	As intended
May–June 2023	Endpoint SDQ distributed	SHU	Data collection period extended due to non-responses
May–June 2023	Sharing of management information (MI) data	YES Outdoors	Original plan was for continuous sharing of MI data; this was adapted to be shared at one time point in June 2023
February–July 2023	Qualitative interviews, focus groups and observations with young people, mentors and YES Outdoors delivery staff	SHU	Conducted as planned

Findings

RQ1 Is there organisational capacity to reach and recruit young people to the programme and evaluation?

The CLIMB programme used for the feasibility year was the first time all of the constituent components (climbing, bicycle maintenance and OBT residential, alongside ongoing mentoring) were incorporated and ran sequentially. Prior to this, YES Outdoors had significant local experience of running bicycle maintenance courses, climbing sessions and residential trips, which shaped their understanding of which young people to target and helped determine appropriate staffing ratios proportionate to the young people's needs on the CLIMB programme.

A total of 27 young people were recruited: 10 from two schools and 15 from two youth centres. Twenty-five of these would go on to start the programme and be formally included within the evaluation (see Table 8 for a breakdown of their characteristics). This ensured that YES Outdoors met the first progression criteria (PC) to a green standard (see Table 24).

Table 8 Young people recruited that progressed onto the programme

Referral route	N
School 1	5
School 2	5
Youth Centre A	5
Youth Centre B	10

Securing the recruitment of 25 young people was a key achievement, particularly as YES Outdoors targeted young people with significant levels of need. However, the process through which they were recruited to the programme was challenging and differed from the study plan in a number of ways. Overall, the recruitment and retention of young people, along with the administrative tasks needed to sign up participants to the CLIMB programme (especially the OBT trip) and the evaluation demands, appear to have been both substantial and, to some degree, unexpected in terms of staff time and therefore cost. This point should be considered in future programmes and evaluations that recruit young people with similar levels of need.

Details of the referral process alongside some wider reflections and key learning, are provided below.

Referrals and recruitment

Interviews with YES Outdoors staff indicated that there were some issues experienced with recruiting young people within the timescales needed for the evaluation.

The original intention was to recruit 25 young people (and five additional reserves) 'at risk' of becoming involved in crime and meeting YES Outdoors threshold criteria (see RQ2). The young people would be recruited for the feasibility study via referrals from teachers, youth workers or youth offending officers. Key

criteria included that each young person must be attending (although the frequency of attendance may be low/variable) either a North London–based secondary school, PRU or reintegration provision.

In reality, the intended mechanism to recruit young people through police officers/youth offending officers was not successful. YES Outdoors decided against pursuing such referrals, as they felt it risked being off-putting to the young people and incongruent with an ethos that places young people’s sense of agency at the heart of the organisation’s delivery model.

We tried to engage the school’s officers because we work with the youth engagement team with the Metropolitan Police. I don’t think that worked very well... Anybody in uniform being anywhere near it, kind of tainted it. (YES Outdoors Volunteers Manager)

We’ve found that it’s important that the route through to this is a nice route for the young person. It doesn’t want to be something that they feel forced into or is attached to some sort of punishment or it’s punitive and suggested by the police officer...The whole ethos of the course as well is that it is about giving young people autonomy. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator).

There was also a potential logistical issue with reach and capacity if individual referrals came through a youth offending officer or equivalent, meaning a further task of getting the commitment of an appropriate SBL would also be required. Furthermore, there was only a finite amount of capacity for YES Outdoors to provide transportation to the various venues, meaning that accommodating individual referrals from several different settings may not have been feasible.

YES Outdoors thinking also evolved early on in the programme in relation to the involvement of PRUs. Central to this was the recognition that the level of need/behavioural issues was likely to necessitate adult ratios beyond what YES Outdoors had resources to provide. In addition, PRUs do not support high numbers of young people for prolonged periods, meaning that the contact with the PRU, as a referral route, would soon be broken owing to the length of the programme. This would require an additional SBL to become involved, leading to an additional layer of complexity.

Because our programme is quite long, that meant that we would be dealing with a situation where the referral partner would no longer be a point of contact, which actually presents loads of logistical problems for us. (Volunteers Manager)

This meant that the two primary routes of recruitment of young people were through schools and youth settings (for example, youth centres) that YES Outdoors had pre-existing relationships with (for example, the youth centre where the bicycle maintenance component had previously taken place). This approach was the most fruitful and reliable means of securing young people.

Beyond that, YES Outdoors indicated that they struggled to get access to the right contacts within schools with which they did not have an existing relationship and so needed to resort to ‘*more cold calling through... behaviour managers*’ (Volunteers Manager). The importance of having contact with more senior staff members (e.g. the head, deputy head and head of year) in the schools in order to get buy-in was noted. YES Outdoors had been reluctant to formally approach schools prior to summer holidays because of a concern about levels of staff turnover and a lack of bandwidth to fully engage. There was also understandable concern about sharing the ‘offer’ too widely when there was only a comparatively small number of spaces available. However, in doing so, YES Outdoors appeared to be over-reliant on a comparatively narrow range

of options. This meant that, when circumstances changed, particularly in schools, YES Outdoors were unable to recruit as hoped from these settings. Ultimately, this meant that the intended programme start date had to be put back, with YES Outdoors needing to reach out to other youth settings and/or re-approach initial centres to up their initial allocations. This created the additional issue that some young people then started the programme after it had already begun, missing initial sessions and/or resulting in a shorter climbing component for that individual/group.

In general, relationship-building and ease of communication were felt by YES to be far easier with youth centres than with schools. This was especially the case where the schools involved were undergoing accountability challenges linked to Ofsted, which appeared to especially affect staff capacity to become meaningfully involved.

The other two schools have got 'Requires Improvement'. It's so chaotic in those schools, that you can feel that it's not going to work almost as soon as you step in. There is goodwill, but... It's a bit sad because actually a lot of the young people who'd be suffering most in terms of having a positive experience of education would be in those schools, and they're the ones we really want to target. But the structures are so broken that it's really hard for anything to be consistent, isn't it. We've had things cancelled last minute, or there's no one there... (Volunteers Manager)

Youth centres were perceived by YES Outdoors to have flatter structures with fewer staff, with greater agency to take recruitment forward and more experience in partnership working compared to schools. YES Outdoors staff indicated that youth centres were more responsive than schools and were able to 'select' young people that they thought would engage with the project and would form a cohesive group for the programme. Youth workers were also keen to 'vet' the CLIMB programme to ensure that it was suitable for the young people that they were referring. Youth workers acted as 'brokers' between the project and young people/their families in terms of recruitment and the required administrative tasks involved in the project. YES Outdoors suspected that youth workers were also able to give much greater consideration to the referral criteria.

I think, going back to the earlier point with the youth clubs, they know the young people better, so they'll make more astute choices about who is relevant anyway. But with the schools I'm not sure if the threshold criteria ended up being as painstakingly considered as when we built it. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator).

One area that appeared universally difficult to achieve was the consistent administration of the baseline testing. There had been a clear protocol sent by SHU about the conditions for which the SDQ was expected to be undertaken. This included emailed (and verbal) correspondence with SBLs to ensure the MoU was signed and information sheets circulated to parents and young people prior to them signing consent forms and making sure the SDQ was undertaken in a quiet environment, independent of YES Outdoors. However, baseline responses from the young people were difficult to achieve due to their reluctance to complete the surveys and poor attendance. As the programme could not begin before the baseline measure was undertaken, YES Outdoors became highly reactive and, in certain instances, negotiated access to schools/youth centres immediately prior to their first session of the CLIMB programme for the completion of the SDQ by young people.

The organisation of the OBT trip in May 2023 was especially resource-heavy in terms of paperwork completion. The YES Outdoors team had to get absences approved by schools, as well as get permissions from parents/carers and the online paperwork required by OBT completed (including monitoring, safeguarding and medical details). The latter had to be completed in a relatively short time frame, and confirmation of OBT dates had not been secured at the start of the programme, thus requiring an additional round of parental/carer chasing around the spring 2023. Authorised absence requests to schools were sent as letters in March 2023 but had to be followed up with in-person visits from YES Outdoors staff or affiliated staff (e.g. Community Liaison police officers) in April 2023. In addition, OBT’s personal information forms had to be completed online for each attendee, which added to delays. On these occasions, the YES staff waited in the schools until the requests were signed off. This situation was further complicated by some of the young people sitting their SATs the week after the residential trip to Aberdovey. This meant that some schools were initially reluctant to release the young people from school. At least one young person was unable to attend the OBT trip, as the school refused to authorise their absence. This may be indicative of a lack of school buy-in to the project.

For the young people, discussions and information given relating to the OBT residential started during the bicycle maintenance sessions, in the hope of getting buy-in. As parents/carers had been difficult to reach during the referral process, the YES Outdoors team started a process early via email and invited parents/carers to Youth Centre B to fill in the forms on a laptop in a face-to-face environment. Others were supported to complete the forms over the phone. Two remote online sessions were organised by YES staff for parents/carers in order to give information about the trip, such as sleeping arrangements. For some young people, multiple contacts had to be followed up to facilitate filling out the necessary paperwork. Barriers to this process for parents/carers included not having a computer at home, it being difficult to complete the forms on a mobile phone screen and not having the necessary mobile data. Parents/carers were also required to create accounts with passwords before being able to complete the forms, which required some detailed information such as the height and weight of the young person. In some cases, youth workers went to the young person’s home in order to complete the forms.

Six YES Outdoors staff or affiliated staff took part in the OBT trip, as shown in Table 9. With 19 young people (16 of whom were part of the feasibility study cohort that took part in the baseline and endpoint evaluation activity), the staff–young person ratio was ~1:3. The four OBT staff further increased this ratio. It was notable that no volunteer mentors were invited to attend the residential.

Table 9 Outward Bound Trust trip attendance

	Employer
YES Outdoors CEO	Metropolitan Police/YES Outdoors
Project coordinator	YES Outdoors
Youth centre lead	Youth centre B
Affiliated staff 1	Metropolitan Police engagement officer

Affiliated staff 2	Metropolitan Police engagement officer
Affiliated staff 3	Metropolitan Police engagement officer
Outward Bound Trust (OBT) leader	Outward Bound Trust
OBT leader	Outward Bound Trust
OBT leader	Outward Bound Trust
OBT leader	Outward Bound Trust

In terms of organisational capacity moving forward, the continued involvement of the Metropolitan Police engagement officers⁴ would be required; they played a significant role during the residential itself and also throughout in terms of providing wider support, including transportation. Appropriate reassurances would be needed to ensure that arrangements agreed between YES Outdoors and Metropolitan Police engagement officers to be involved in the pilot running of the CLIMB programme could be relied upon again.

Overall reflections on organisational capacity

It is not uncommon for a recruitment and evaluation activity to be challenging during a feasibility stage that requires adherence to funder deadlines and to concurrently recruit and train mentors, secure dates/venues for other components of the programme, organise setting sign-up and encouraging young people to join the programme. However, for a scale-up to successfully take place, learning would need to be done from the feasibility stage to ensure that a smoother recruitment process and a stronger commitment to ensuring trial protocols are even more closely adhered to.

Core YES Outdoors staff are very dedicated and enthusiastic; they are relatable to the young people and impressively hands-on with all aspects of their programme. As a relatively small, grassroots charity, their instinct is to be adaptable and respond reactively to best meet the needs of the young people in question. Although a key strength in ordinary circumstances, in the context of both this feasibility study and the possibility of a trial-based evaluation, some of this tendency to respond in a bespoke way needs to be tempered to allow for scalability and ensure that the quality and integrity of the evaluation is met.

Should the CLIMB programme be scaled up and have schools as referral partners, it will be crucial for YES Outdoors to allow greater lead-in time for recruitment to the programme and evaluation. We would advise that an early scoping/networking phase is costed into any scaling-up. This would enable YES Outdoors to work in collaboration with other partners, including the YEF, to proactively seek meetings with north London senior leaders and/or executives in multi academy trusts (MATs), as well as attempting to gain access to events/networks that they are part of, in order to promote the programme and the opportunities that it can provide for schools well in advance of commencement. Furthermore, YES Outdoors should seek to be even more transparent and explicit about the processes and expectations of the young people, referral settings

⁴ Metropolitan Police officer engagement was not funded directly through the YEF funding or YES Outdoors.

and guardians signing up to the programme (e.g. a residential within school time that needs school sanction even if through a youth centre, the timely completion of baseline measures well in advance of the programme beginning and the need for certain settings – for example, Youth Centre B – to source their own transportation to the climbing facilities). By doing so, there will be much greater potential for delegation to and partnership with referral partners, which should hopefully reduce the workload on YES Outdoors' relatively small core team. There should also be transparency about the fact that there is only a limited number of spaces on the programme and that the offer should be promoted widely but with the guidance that only those who fulfil the criteria and who process the necessary paperwork first will be included.

Although the required number of young people was secured, it was clearly a challenging, labour-intensive and, at times, stressful process to undertake. A review of the ToC and study plan will be necessary to reflect on the referral mechanisms and settings YES Outdoors ought to work with to maximise outcomes. This will need to be fully agreed in conjunction with the evaluator and YEF, significantly in advance of both informal and formal scoping and the recruitment of young people. Once agreed upon, it will not be possible to alter the referral mechanisms midway through recruitment, so it will be crucial that YES Outdoors approach a far wider range of settings significantly in advance to minimise risks to timely recruitment and standardised baseline testing.

RQ2 Can the eligibility criteria used by referral pathways be developed to achieve consistency and objectivity before the pilot trial?

YES Outdoors developed a mentoring programme threshold document (see Appendix 2), which was expected to be the basis on which referral partners approached 'eligible' young people and their guardians to join the CLIMB programme. Specifically, decision making as to the suitability of the young people, aged 10–14,⁵ to be referred was intended to be based on whether they fell into a Level 3 category of need on an outlined spectrum of four levels (see Appendix 2). The overarching summary categorisations of the YES Outdoors referral framework, containing the four levels of need,² are outlined below.

There was reference from youth workers,² in particular, about some parental sensitivities (regarding the language potentially being perceived as negative) to the MoU accompanying the programme (Appendix 5).⁶ To some extent, it was said to have been incumbent on the youth workers to 'smooth things over'. It is a difficult balancing act between transparency and avoiding offensive and defensiveness from earmarked participants and their guardians. This tension is highlighted in the following quotation from a youth centre SBL.

I think, as you almost make that threshold publicly on display, then yes, you have to deal with the sensitivities around that and brokering with the parents. (Youth Centre SBL A)

Having considered which young people to refer, referral partners had initially been expected to follow this up by completing a detailed mentoring referral form (see Appendix 1), but we have limited data to verify the extent to which this happened in reality. Reflecting back, YES Outdoors staff and referrers were, for the most part, confident that the young people selected for the CLIMB programme were those best placed to gain from their involvement in it. What was less clear from the data collected was how consistently those

⁵ Please note that the mentoring programme threshold document (Appendix 2) makes reference to an age range of 10–17, but this document was used for wider purposes than just the YES Outdoors–evaluated CLIMB programme. For the avoidance of doubt, the intended age range for the CLIMB programme was 10–14.

⁶ There is no reference to the specific criteria outlined in the eligibility criteria; however, some parents/guardians questioned what made their child eligible.

judgements were arrived at and the extent to which the referral document was meaningfully engaged with. Open-text responses to the SBL survey by two youth centres and one school provided further insight into how young people were identified for the CLIMB programme. Previous experience working with the young people in a youth work setting was cited as a key mechanism by which the young people were chosen by youth centre referrers.

As staff have been working with the young people and their families for some sometime, we are familiar with some of the issues surrounding... their home, school and behavioural needs. (Open-text response, youth centre SBL survey)

In the case of schools, perhaps because they had fewer intensive interactions with the young people (and their families), the criteria provided by YES Outdoors in their threshold document was used more extensively, alongside the expertise of the pastoral team.

The wider qualitative data collected broadly aligns with evidence to suggest referrers employed a fair degree of discretion as to how they arrived at the specific young people who became selected. Referrers' approaches seemed driven more by their professional instinct and by consideration of the top-level requirement to identify young people who were 'at risk' of violent crime, as opposed to a finer level of engagement with the referral document (Appendix 1). Below, we unpick some of the responses to the eligibility criteria in more detail.

Age range

Age was an example of an objective and transparent criteria that was universally adhered to, with all participants being within the 10–14 age range. There was wide agreement that the age range being focused upon was logical; the young people were old enough to be confident and open to getting involved in unfamiliar and challenging activities (including a week-long residential) but not too old as to have become entrenched in negative mindsets/pathways. However, one YES Outdoors lead did reflect that, with the benefit of hindsight, 14 might even have been a little too old.

And once a young person gets to 14, especially in inner city London, they can already be quite hardened to things, and you're not going to win them over with a positive role model, because they're already quite set in their ideas. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator)

However, it should be noted that this was the only comment of this nature.

Levels of need

Over the course of the programme, it should be noted that at least two young people were deemed by YES Outdoors to have displayed levels of need and behaviour that were incompatible with the basic requirements to attend the OBT residential and to be able to ensure their own safety and the safety of others. However, it is, of course, necessary to acknowledge the tension between trying to access young people genuinely 'at risk' of involvement in crime and guaranteeing consistent involvement in all aspects of the programme. Overall, YES Outdoors and the referrers managed to navigate these sometimes-conflicting priorities well, arriving at a final cohort that was both 'challenging' and in 'need' of support but that at the same time was able to respond in a largely positive way to the programme. This was summarised by a youth worker.

You asked for young people who have got challenging behaviour who are likely to get involved in violence or antisocial behaviour. That's what you guys asked for; that's what you got. Therefore, if you're going to put all those young people in one pot together, there's bound to be problems, and actually, this is a lot better than what I thought.

(Youth Centre Lead A)

However, YES Outdoors staff also made reference to the unexpectedly high numbers of referred young people who presented with SEND behaviours. In some instances, these had been formally diagnosed (for example, ADHD and autism), while in others, they had not. In the case of one young person selected, the concerns about their presentation of SEND behaviours during CLIMB sessions, alongside significant waiting times to access Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS), were such that the trustees of YES Outdoors (in consultation with the young person involved and their guardian) agreed to fund a private assessment. It should be noted that the presentation of a special educational or behavioural need (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) was not an exclusion criterion for Level 3 (see Appendix 2); however, it was something that YES Outdoors sought clarity upon within their referral document (Appendix 1).

I think the one issue is this undiagnosed situation that's got really out of control with Covid, so the number of undiagnosed people with some sort of learning or behavioural disorder is quite alarming. In terms of the referral, it's not so much that our levels are wrong, it's more that you're not quite sure, when the referral is made, because of lack of information and there's no diagnosis, whether they're actually within the tier or whether they're slightly out of the tier. (Volunteers Manager)

The problem is that we don't necessarily get the information that could then allow us to say, hmmm, can we delve into this a little bit more, because possibly this isn't the right programme for that young person? That would be helpful. I think once they're on the programme, it's almost like... I found out in these conversations that some of these have got autism, loads of them have got ADHD, and they're medicated for it, that we didn't actually know at the beginning. But I don't think it would have made that much difference. What we're trying to do is provide a supportive environment for them to engage. And, as I say, we're not specialists. We're not pretending to be a special needs school. (Volunteers Manager)

In addition, it needs to be acknowledged that special educational or behavioural needs are not uniform in their levels of severity nor in how they present. However, given the breadth of the perceived occurrences encountered during the feasibility phase, this might be something that YES Outdoors wish to give more detailed guidance on moving forwards to help inform judgements regarding the suitability of referral and/or to ensure that YES Outdoors are provided with a fuller overview of individual needs ahead of the programme beginning.

Further reflections on the eligibility criteria and possible refinement for scale-up

One of the youth centre referrers indicated that they would have preferred to have more information on the types of young people they should have been selecting and greater lead-in time to more thoroughly consider this.

More time to recruit would be appreciated and a clearer understanding of the young people being requested. (Open-text response, youth centre SBL survey)

As a general point, the threshold document (Appendix 2) would benefit from some streamlining and further specificity. For Level 3, the referrer needed to interpret and make judgements based on three overarching headings: 'Developmental', 'Family and environmental factors' and 'Parents and carers'. These were then broken down into 10 sub-categorisations, ranging from 'Social, emotional, behavioural and identity' through to 'Housing, employment and finance', before being broken down to a further 33 descriptors.

Given there was such a wide range of descriptors to take into consideration, it is difficult to understand how the referrers could logistically be fully consistent in how they went about selecting their young people. For example, there was no wider guidance about whether each of the sub-categories should attract equivalent weight and/or whether to refer a young person who met only a third or half of the outlined criteria. Most of the statements within the criteria were also quite subjective and open to interpretation.

It would, therefore, be beneficial for YES Outdoors to consider streamlining and prioritising a smaller number of criteria that could be more objectively and consistently interpreted. For example, 'persistent absence' from school could be interpreted to be any young person with less than 80% school attendance over the past academic year. A smaller number of evidence-based key criteria, framed in a more objective manner, could support the accessibility and consistency of referrals. As alluded to in RQ1, YES Outdoors valued what they perceived to be youth workers' more diligent and informed considerations about which young people were selected for the CLIMB programme. However, there was no explicit guidance within the threshold document nor any other written materials requesting that referrers consider factors that went beyond an individual's characteristics for example, issues relating to home life.

I think, going back to the earlier point with the youth clubs, they know the young people better, so they'll make more astute choices about who is relevant anyway. But with the schools, I'm not sure if the threshold criteria ended up being as painstakingly considered as when we built it. (Yes Outdoors, Project Coordinator)

We also looked at the relationships between the peers and how this would impact on engagement. (Open-text response, youth centre SBL survey)

Therefore, having gone through feasibility, YES Outdoors may wish to reflect on the extent to which a consideration of group dynamics should or should not be part of referrers' selection criteria.

A further consideration that needs to be more prominent when working with referral partners to select 'eligible' young people is ensuring that agreed evaluation inclusion and exclusion criteria are adhered to. For example, through the course of the qualitative data collection, it became apparent that at least one young person had undertaken the bicycle maintenance course previously and that another had attended the OBT residential in Aberdovey and had disliked it so much that they refused to countenance the idea of attending again as part of the CLIMB programme.

I think that one of the girls was really good. She actually had gone through the bicycle training thing before, and she knew how to do most of the stuff. (CLIMB Mentor A)

There are several reasons why prior involvement in any key components of the YES Outdoors programme should be avoided for any future scaling-up, not least because this would diminish the likelihood of being able to identify any positive impacts of the programme in a distance-travelled sense. Should the programme be scaled up, greater attention will also need to be given to inclusion and exclusion criteria from the perspective of the evaluation. For example, we would highly recommend making it a condition of

involvement, prior to recruitment, that the young people agree to attend all parts of the programme and that their school setting agrees, in principle at least, to allow them to attend the residential should it occur within term time.

RQ3 Is the YES Outdoors intervention seen as worthwhile from the perspectives of the young people recruited (and other key stakeholders)?

The two focus groups carried out with the young people indicated that they had all enjoyed the sessions experienced at that point (the bicycle maintenance stage). Some noted that they had been apprehensive about the climbing.

I thought I wouldn't be able to do it. And I thought I'd be embarrassed. (Young Person Focus Group A)

I didn't want to fail. I thought, yeah, everyone is just watching me and going to laugh at me. (Young Person Focus Group A)

However, one young person noted that they had found the climbing very helpful in terms of expending energy and dealing with stress caused by school.

I'm not really good at school, but my grades are good... Since I started climbing, I think that it's really helped me a lot, because after, I get tired... I'm really energetic too, so I can't really... I feel like I have to do something every day. And it really helps me because now I get tired... It really helps me. (Young Person Focus Group A)

Overall, the climbing sessions seem to have been valued by the young people, with statements around it being a new experience, active, fun and helping them to overcome their fear of heights. The focus group that took place during the bicycle maintenance stage also indicated that the young people were enjoying the activities but that they had enjoyed the climbing more than the bicycle maintenance sessions. However, it was noted that the bicycle maintenance sessions gave them practical skills, for example, *'I see the point to it. It's very important. It's more important than rock climbing. But... I don't like it'* (Young Person Focus Group A). The young people were still able to identify the parts of the bicycle sessions they had enjoyed and were positive about the mentors.

Formal data collection was not possible during the OBT trip, as it was not thought to be appropriate given the setting and because the young peoples' time was scheduled in full. However, our informal observations and conversations with the young people indicated that they were generally very engaged in the activities and felt a sense of accomplishment upon completion. This was particularly evident on the hike, when the young people reached the cabin and when discussing the previous day's rock climbing activities and the young people's time on the beach.

Part of the young people questionnaire aimed to understand how the CLIMB programme impacted on the social and emotional skills/well-being of the young people taking part. From the responses received, it is clear that the young people found the programme worthwhile (Table 10). The majority of the young people either agreed or strongly agreed that the programme had a positive impact on their confidence, ability to cope with challenging things, communication skills, group work, relationship with adults, level of motivation, the likelihood of trying new things, effort at school and relationships with other young people. However, a number of the young people either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed that the programme had a positive impact on their social and emotional skills.

Table 10 Young persons' perspectives on the impact of the programme

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I don't know	Missing
How confident I feel	0	1	2	8	8	0	3
How I cope with challenging things	0	1	1	9	6	1	4
My communication skills	0	1	4	9	4	1	3
How I work in a group	0	0	2	13	3	1	3
My relationship with adults	0	1	2	10	5	1	3
How much effort I put into things	0	1	2	10	5	1	3
How likely I am to try new things	0	1	1	10	5	2	3
How much effort I put in at school	0	0	6	10	0	3	3
How I get on with other young people	0	1	2	10	6	0	3

Finally, the young people were asked to indicate whether they would recommend the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme to their friends and peers and why. Seventy per cent (n = 16) of the young people indicated they would recommend the programme, 13% (n = 3) indicated they might do and 4% (n = 1) indicated they wouldn't recommend the programme to their friends and peers. A number of the young people provided an open-text response to indicate why they would (or wouldn't) recommend the programme to their peers.

I definitely would want people to go. At first, you might think it's not good, it's not all that, but after the first day, it's really fun. You get to leave the house and make new friends, and if I got the option to do it again, I would. (Open-text response, young person survey)

Because I learnt lots of new things and would like young people to enjoy and learn more too. (Open-text comment, young person survey)

Moving on from the perceptions of the young people, other stakeholders, such as youth workers, SBLs and mentors, saw the benefits of the programme. For example, the mentors noted that the young people were gaining confidence during sessions, in their abilities and in being in an unfamiliar context. They also felt more confident in working with new people and building relationships, gaining skills, pride in their achievements and resilience. One mentor noted:

I could see the young people coming out of their shell a lot more and being pleased with themselves and taking a lot of joy and pride in the fact that they had achieved something. Whether that be climbing a climb that they didn't think was possible or fixing an intricate problem on a bicycle that they couldn't do... I kind of got the impression... that they were quick to give up, but that certainly that kind of giving up diminished a lot all the way through and then they would – even if it took them a little bit longer – they would get there, and they were pleased with that fact. (CLIMB Mentor B)

Furthermore, from the responses to the mentor survey, mentors also indicated how likely they felt it was that several components of the programme would have had a positive effect on the young people. The mentors that responded (n = 17) were almost all in agreement that learning how to climb, learning to fix a bicycle, the experience of having a mentor and getting to experience new things would have all had a positive effect on the young people they worked with. In their open-text responses, mentors felt that the programme had given young people many opportunities they might not have already had.

Gave [mentee] more confidence. More access to a fun outdoor activity. And someone to talk to that wasn't a family member. (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

Newer activities, settings and people tend to challenge young people and develop their soft skills. Combine this with learning new skills in a physical setting has put them more at ease to be themselves and sharing their challenges in a different context. (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

SBLs also commented positively about the young people being afforded opportunities to experience new (often costly) activities and new environments and to interact with adults they might otherwise have had limited exposure to. The quotation below outlines how, aside from involvement in the CLIMB activities, being surrounded by caring, trusted adults that exhibited a positive mindset was a powerful learning experience offering the potential to be inspired by positive role models.

I mentioned the challenges of the wall, but again what they're seeing – it's not even too far from here [where they live], and they all just think these places that exist that I can access... When you're exposing young people to things that are beyond their periphery, then they're going to see the world. A young person might go to rock climbing and look around and he or she may think, you know what, no one here looks like me. Or I'm used to people being a lot more kind of aggressive, and now I'm coming here and everyone is so friendly. And I've maybe spoken to people and they're not saying that they've been excluded. Just a general dialogue that peers might have. Oh, this person is telling me that they want to – I don't know – be a nurse when she's older, or some kind of occupation that they've never heard of. (Youth Centre SBL A)

While some of the young people were anxious about the OBT trip, the youth worker that went on the OBT trip was extremely positive about the young peoples’ engagement and experience on the residential, particularly regarding the level of challenge and the support that the young people experienced.

RQ4 Explore the range of mentor characteristics and the extent to which any of these affect their commitment to the programme

To answer RQ4, we reported on data collected from both the qualitative interviews with mentors and the responses mentors provided to the mentor survey. Twenty responses (100% response rate) to the mentor survey were achieved; 17 were complete responses, and three were partial responses. All responses (regardless of their completeness) have been reported below. As such, the number reported may differ across response categories, due to varying levels of completeness. Semi-structured interviews or focus groups were conducted with a total of eight mentors.

The vast majority of the mentors were recruited through an advertisement at a local climbing centre, although a minority of the mentors had more established links and experience of working with YES Outdoors.

I know that the result was that, in the end, the vast majority (if not all) of our volunteer referrals came through the Castle. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator)

As a result of their recruitment via the climbing centre, the mentors were typically extremely passionate about climbing and at ease in a climbing centre, which aided their confidence in being able to offer their expertise and experience to the young people involved in the CLIMB programme.

They’re very, very enthusiastic. They just love climbing. So, it’s like they can’t wait to share it, and [they like] the idea of sharing it with someone who might not have been able to do it. (Volunteers Manager)

Mentor demographics

Over half of the mentors that completed the survey were male (n = 12; 60%), with 35% identifying as female and 5% (n = 1) preferring to self-identify (Table 11). The ethnicity of the mentors was diverse, but 75% of them reported being White–English/British (Table 12). Eighty-five per cent of mentors at the time of completing the survey were full-time employed, with 15% (n = 3) either retired or choosing the ‘other’ category.

Table 11 Mentor gender

	N	%
Male	12	60
Female	7	35
Prefer to self-identify	1	5

Table 12 Mentor ethnicity

	N	%
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Asian–Chinese or Chinese British	2	10
Asian–Indian or Indian British	1	5
White–English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British	9	45
Any other White background	8	40

Mentors were asked to detail what their current job role was (Table 13); a diverse number of job categories were represented in the data. Most of the mentors reported being in higher-level jobs, beyond entry level, from healthcare, academia and industry. For example, mentors reported being in senior managerial or engineering roles. This indicates that the mentors were disproportionately weighted towards higher levels of education, as most of the roles identified would have required a degree-level education at least.

Table 13 Mentor employment status

	N	%
Employed full time	13	65
Self-employed full time	4	20
Retired	1	5
Other	2	10

From the YES Outdoors ToC and study plan, the background of the mentor and how relatable to the young people they were was an important component. Alongside the demographic information presented above, mentors were asked to indicate how aware of the challenges faced by young people living in these areas they were (Table 14).

Table 14 Mentor awareness of the challenges faced by young people

	N	%
Slightly aware	1	6
Somewhat aware	6	35
Moderately aware	7	41
Extremely aware	3	18

A follow-up question collected information on how mentors had acquired this knowledge. From these responses, it was clear that the mentors had a diverse range of experiences, some from employment and others from life events.

My awareness of the young people’s experience stems from research I’ve conducted in the area of social policy and criminology. I have also spent time doing empirical research with the police in East London which has shed light on some of the risks for your people in this area. I also live in the area where the YES Outdoors activities were delivered.

(Volunteer mentor, from anonymous survey)

Grew up in the same area. (Volunteer mentor, from anonymous survey)

YES Outdoors aimed to recruit mentors who would be from backgrounds that the young people could relate to. However, this was always going to be dependent on the pool of people who volunteered. In reality, analysis of the IPE data indicates that the profiles of the mentors were not representative of the young people they were mentoring.

To understand what motivated the mentors to undertake volunteering on the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme, we asked the mentors to indicate why they had wanted to be involved in the programme (Table 15). Mentors were given the option to choose all the statements that applied to them; as such, n exceeds 20. ‘Giving back to the community’, ‘Passionate about rock climbing’ and ‘Help and support young people’ were the top three reasons why mentors became involved in the programme. Being passionate about rock climbing was a motivation that came up throughout the mentors’ responses to the survey.

The qualitative interviews with mentors largely reaffirmed the findings about the mentors’ motivation for the mentors, with philanthropic emphasis and familiarity with/the enjoyment of working with young people consistently featuring highly.

I work in quite a corporate job, a corporate role, and so I sort of wanted something for me to feel like I was doing something that wasn’t just like greed, money, all of that stuff.

So yeah, a little bit of moral cleansing, I guess. Ultimately for selfish reasons. (CLIMB

Mentor B)

Table 15 Motivations for becoming a mentor

	N	%
Give back to the community	17	85
Passionate about rock climbing	16	80
Help and support young people	14	70
Passionate about Adventure Learning	9	45
Gain experience as a volunteer	8	40
Prior experience of being a mentor	7	35
Passionate about bicycles	6	30

Prior experience of being a volunteer	6	30
Gain experience working with young people	5	25
Opportunities to socialise with others	5	25
To gain experience of being a mentor	5	25
Learn new skills	2	10
Further develop your career	0	0

Mentors were asked to detail what qualities, knowledge and experiences they felt they brought to the role of a mentor on the CLIMB programme. The qualities self-identified by mentors were grouped around some key themes. Having experience in climbing was a key quality that several members provided, as was enthusiasm and knowledge of nature.

Barriers to participation

To aid an understanding of how the programme was working for mentors, we collected information on some of the barriers they faced to either becoming or staying involved in the programme. Table 16 details all these barriers, with the top four being 'Having availability during the YES Outdoors programme delivery times', 'Being able to commit to being a mentor for the full length of the programme', 'Concerns about the level of need of the young people' and 'Having relevant experience'.

Table 16 Barriers to participation

	N	%
Being able to commit to being a mentor for the full length of the programme	7	35
Having availability during YES Outdoors programme delivery times	7	35
Concerns about the level of need of young people	6	30
Having enough time to commit to the role during the week	5	25
Having relevant experience	5	25
Lack of experience working with this age group	4	20
Having a relevant skillset	2	10
Concerns about the behaviour level of the young people	1	5

Mentors were then asked to indicate if there were any other barriers in addition to the ones listed. Only a small number of respondents provided other examples of barriers they had faced. Concerns around language barriers and lack of diversity (for example, in terms of ethnicity) were raised.

One mentor interviewed acknowledged that they had limited previous engagement with the profiles of young (Level 3) people selected for the programme. This was something that they felt impacted on the extent to which they could relate and left them feeling hesitant as to how best to interact and advise the young people at times.

I think that one of the problems for me is because I'm not native to the UK and so I didn't grow up in the UK and I have been living in different countries, so different, for several years, so I don't understand the dynamics of the disadvantaged young people in the UK, as in like why are they there... Because the students I used to coach used to be part of the school and, yeah, so I am not really understanding of the backgrounds and homes that the girls come from... I mean, yes, I can look around where I live and they are my neighbours and all that. Some of them have issues, some of them don't, and I think that I can make some guesses, but I don't know if well enough to know how it is [Mentor perceptions], and how to deal with it, or even how to advise (CLIMB Mentor A).

Previous experience as a mentor

Twelve mentors indicated that they had previous experience in mentoring prior to taking up the CLIMB programme. The previous experience that mentors had was quite varied, and in some instances, the examples provided did not align with definitions of mentoring (i.e. teaching assistant [TA], tutoring, coaching). From those whose examples did align with definitions of mentoring, some were in formal settings, such as mentoring in outdoor learning or academic mentoring for youth organisations in a school setting.

Sixty per cent (n = 12) of the mentors indicated that they had previous experience working with young people with behavioural difficulties, with 30% (n = 6) indicating they had no prior experience and 10% (n = 2) not responding. The experience mentors had working with young people with behavioural difficulties came from teaching experiences, a role as a TA, volunteering in a community group and/or working with young people with ADHD/autism.

Fifty-five per cent (n = 11) of the mentors indicated that they had previous experience working with young people from diverse backgrounds, with 35% (n = 7) indicating they did not have any previous experience and 10% (n = 2) not responding. The previous experience of working with young people from diverse backgrounds was gained from working with young people in job roles such as a TA or teacher or in volunteering roles such as working in a community group.

Of the 20 respondents, 65% (n = 13) indicated they had a lot of climbing experience, with none of the mentors indicating they had no climbing experience at all (Table 17). The climbing element of the programme was a motivating factor for the mentors.

Table 17 Mentor climbing experience

	1 = No experience of climbing at all	2	3	4	5 = A lot of experience climbing	Missing
N	0	1	2	1	13	3

%	0	5%	10%	5%	65%	15%
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Mentor training

The core training received was focused on safeguarding and GDPR, supplemented with some insights into the background of YES Outdoors as a charity. The training was very clear about the boundaries of mentoring and young people, for example, the inappropriateness of meeting up outside of formal sessions and that all contact needed to be through YES Outdoors.

The training also sought to provide mentors with further contextual information about YES Outdoors and the profiles and likely circumstances of the young people attending (for example, being at risk of crime or having 'social issues').

Emphasis was placed on giving young people autonomy and the 'general approach that we would take to mentoring'.

So, it wasn't just volunteer to work with some young people and help them climb. We wanted to say this is a mentoring relationship, these young people will have various issues
(YES outdoors project lead)

The majority of mentors were either very satisfied or satisfied with the training they received (n = 15), with one mentor indicating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and one mentor stating they were very unsatisfied with the training they had received from YES Outdoors. Mentors were asked to indicate, in their own words, how the training had prepared them for their roles. In the majority of incidences, the training was positively received.

Well. In fact, due to the group activities/session structures, there was less one-to-one interaction with young people than I had anticipated. So, the experience was slightly different than I expected, but still very interesting. (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

The training was great. It was important to hear past experiences of other mentor[s] that have done the course before, learning what to expect, etc. (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

Enjoyed the sessions, which were well run with case studies and scenarios. (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

In one instance, it was stated that 'no training [was] received'. This contrasted with one qualitative mentor interview that stated they had received 'a series of two-hour training sessions' and another that noted they had been sent a 'whole pack of information'. Therefore, it does appear that there was at least some variation in the amount of training individuals received (perhaps depending on their availability and/or the stage at which they signed up).

Whilst most of the open-text responses were positive, it is worth considering what may have contributed to some of the less positive feedback. Mentors provided feedback as to how they felt the training could be improved. The feedback was predominantly around needing:

- More about mentoring techniques
- More about how to approach young people from diverse and difficult backgrounds
- More sessions

[B]ut it might have been useful to discuss teaching/mentoring . (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

Could have benefitted from more advice on best practice approach with the young people from diverse and potentially difficult backgrounds. (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey)

One mentor interviewed also felt that, given that the one-to-one mentoring did not play out as originally intended and that there was a much greater emphasis on the group mentoring dynamic, it would have been beneficial to have incorporated some more opportunities to get to know other mentors and get a sense of each other's strengths and personalities.

I think that I also put this on the form that having a little bit more time or maybe one session before as an opportunity for the mentors to bond with each other a little bit more before we go in and go out to do the volunteering, that could have been good because it was quite a relatively big group and we needed to really work together with the others and we were forming our own team of volunteers at the same time as forming the connections with young people. So, that was somewhat challenging. (CLIMB Mentor C)

Seventeen of the mentors reported feeling supported by YES Outdoors during the sessions, with 15 feeling that they were also supported enough outside of sessions. Two mentors did feel that they did not receive enough support in between sessions.

From the mentor survey, there was evidence from mentor recall of a shift in how confident the mentors felt in their roles across the course of the programme. When reflecting back to the start of the programme, 18% (n = 3) of mentors reported they felt very confident as a mentor, with 65% (n = 11) stating they were confident, 12% (n = 2) neither confident nor unconfident and one unconfident. At the end of the programme, 10 (63%) reported that they were very confident and 37% reported that they were confident, with no mentors feeling unconfident. This indicates that the mentors may have gained confidence through the training provided by YES Outdoors and the experience of mentoring the young people in the CLIMB programme.

RQ4a Do any of these characteristics appear to influence the mentor's relative effectiveness in mentoring young people

This research question was written based on the information given at the start of the programme that indicated that there would be one-to-one relationships developed between the young people and the mentors. From the study plan, we then intended to match the mentor characteristics to the young people's characteristics and outcomes to explore this. However, as these one-to-one matched relationships did not systematically occur as intended, with mentors instead working more interchangeably with the young people, this line of exploration and analysis was not possible. Furthermore, from the mentor characteristics section, the diversity among mentors was less than initially anticipated from the ToC.

However, there was evidence of different mentors being 'favoured' by different young people, depending on their frame of mind on a given day. Inevitably, some mentors did emerge as being relatively more

relatable to the young people. One mentor noted that the young people engaged better with some mentors than with others. It was clear that the mentors interviewed had very much enjoyed and valued the experience. A number acknowledged their learning.

I have definitely learnt a lot about how to engage, like in terms of engage kids with an activity. It is very tricky... you have to think much more tactically about sort of the end goal that you want to achieve for a session, and in my head, it would be like 'Oh I want a specific boy I'm working with to tie the knot perfectly and belay someone, with me having little input'. (CLIMB Mentor D)

YES Outdoors staff emphasised that mentors were to be very cautious about coming across as 'working on' the young people – a message that featured prominently in their training (see the RQ2 findings). It was recognised that the young people involved often had had very negative relationships with any adults viewed as authority figures. As a result, the relationships between the mentors and the young people were very much led by the young people, allowing the young people to gravitate towards the mentors with whom they felt most comfortable. There was no expectation that the young people address the mentors as 'sir' or 'miss'; instead, the mentors, young people and YES staff were on first-name terms. Over the course of the programme, it was evident that there were plenty of close one-to-one relationships that developed but that these had not developed in a way characteristic of formal one-to-one mentoring, instead being more on a friendship basis.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the mentoring on the young people, partly because of the way in which it developed during the programme – i.e. as activity-based, rather than following a more formal programme. In addition, there was no formal measure of mentoring effectiveness included in the study. However, as noted above, the young people engaged well with the mentors and formed strong relationships, indicating that this activity-based model might provide a basis for a more formal and sustained mentoring programme.

RQ5 Is the YES Outdoors intervention deliverable within a nine-month timescale?

Youth workers expressed some doubts over the initially proposed lengths of the respective parts of the programme. For example, while 17 weeks of climbing was felt to be too long, 14 weeks was latterly thought to be around the correct amount of time, despite some youth workers believing that it may have been too long. One youth worker stated that they now realised that it had taken a reasonable amount of time for the mentors and young people to build up the necessary relationships. However, a second youth worker thought that a maximum of 12 weeks would have been preferable and that the activities within the climbing programme stage needed to be more varied, as the group were getting a bit bored, which made encouraging attendance more challenging. This led one SBL to speculate whether there was space for one further activity beyond the climbing itself. Although they were not specific about what this 'element' should be, from the perspective of the evaluator, it does perhaps open up the possibility that the timings of the programme could potentially be adapted to incorporate more one-to-one mentoring activities, which would be in line with the original study plan.

I almost felt it needed one additional element of development rather than just the climbing. (Youth Centre B, SBL)

This difference of opinion is likely to have been a result of differing levels of engagement from their respective referred groups. Overall, as noted in detail in the RQ6 section, the young people were less

engaged by the bicycle maintenance sessions than by the climbing. As such, the six sessions were felt to have been sufficient, and the young people were seen to have been highly motivated by the possibility of receiving a bicycle.

The length of the climbing component of the CLIMB programme differed between groups and between the individuals within a group. At the group level, the climbing phase lasted between nine and 14 sessions. The length of the bicycle maintenance component was the same across groups, lasting six sessions.

Each of the groups received the climbing, bicycle maintenance and OBT components of the programme over the nine months. Due to the difficulties with recruitment, for some groups, the climbing component lasted less than 14 weeks. However, as noted above, the reduced length may have been conducive to keeping the young people more engaged. Although the duration of the programme was sometimes described as being excessively long, others felt this length was necessary to facilitate bonds, especially given the spiky attendance profiles of several of the young people.

If we only had five sessions, it would have been impossible to really form those bonds and connections, and I think that we really needed all the time just because of how, yeah, it was difficult to have a super consistency of the young people turning up every single session. I think that it's probably quite expected for next time, as well, that they would be on and off, so I think that being prepared for that next time or being better prepared for this next time could be helpful so that we go into it knowing and not expecting that everybody is going to turn up. (CLIMB Mentor C)

One dimension, as noted earlier, was a potential issue with the OBT residential happening within term time and being able to get appropriate school-level sign-off for this. This led some to consider the possibility of the residential occurring within a school holiday instead. However, YES Outdoors leads noted that any move in this direction would need to be balanced against the increased costs and to ensure that overall scheduling did not leave a big gap between the end of bicycle maintenance and the residential, thereby risking diminishing momentum.

If you have like a two-week gap, you've lost it. It's like they've never been. They don't know who you are. They wouldn't say hello in the street, sort of thing. So, like, keeping it going was vital, I think. (Volunteers Manager)

Given the evidence, the programme is deliverable within the nine-month timescale, or perhaps a shorter time frame, with consideration being given to the length of the components of the programme in terms of young people becoming bored, alongside the need for relationships to develop. There is also a need to keep the young people engaged consistently with ongoing activities, as there is a high likelihood of attrition if that is not the case.

RQ6 To what extent are young people engaged with each section of the programme (climbing, bicycle maintenance, the OBT residential, the celebration event and ongoing mentoring)?

From solely a young person's perspective, both the qualitative data and the self-report questionnaire collected from the young people showed that they were largely enthusiastic about the programme overall.

As soon as I heard a trip to Wales and I would get a bicycle out of it, I immediately said yes. (Young Person Focus Group B)

It's really exciting – we're going to do swimming too. Rock climbing too! [sharp intake of breath]... We can go by the seaside too. (Young Person Focus Group A)

However, YES Outdoors staff, mentors and youth workers noted that they had had to be quite persistent with some of the young people in terms of encouraging their engagement in sessions, having to 'prove' to the young people that staff were committed and prepared to discuss any issues that they might be experiencing. Consistency and continued support, despite difficulties in terms of attendance at sessions, were identified as being important in connecting with the young people and in supporting engagement. It was also identified that several of the young people had SEND, including autism and ADHD, with some being medicated, which may have impacted upon their focus (See RQ2 for more detail).

YES Outdoors staff were present at all the climbing and bicycle maintenance activities. In addition, YES Outdoors-affiliated staff transported several of the groups from either their school or the Rose Bowl Youth Centre to the climbing centre and returned them. Two youth workers from Youth Centre B transported their group to the climbing centre and stayed while they climbed in order to take them back. This was an unanticipated burden for the youth centre.

It's not like going to a school when they're in a school setting and just picking people up people at their own school. We have to physically go to the estate and chase them. We have to phone them on the day, we've got a WhatsApp group with them and we WhatsApp them just throughout the day and then we still have to go to North Road and physically pick them up there or they won't [go]. We had a few sessions where they came in, but most of the time we had to go and get them. (Youth Centre B, SBL).

The deliverers kept a clear and complete record of attendance at sessions for each component of the programme (climbing, bicycle maintenance and the OBT residential). These records included the attendance of the young people and the mentors' attendance. Attendance data, questionnaire data and qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups have been drawn on to answer this research question. Attendance appeared to be variable between groups, but it was noted that attendance at sessions was variable, particularly by the young people recruited from schools.

It's just truly unpredictable. Each time you think you've clocked a student's participation level – OK, this kid's not interested – then suddenly, two weeks later, they're back, and they're back for five weeks in a row. And then someone else will fluctuate in attendance. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator)

From the perspective of the delivery staff, attendance was more consistent for those young people who were referred by the youth centres and were accompanied by youth workers. For some sessions, there were more mentors than young people.

Overall, though, engagement in the CLIMB programme (even if, in some cases, this was not always fully consistent in terms of attendance) was said to have been a very powerful and important experience for the young people involved. To have been provided with the opportunity to be involved in a programme with engaging activities (that other young people had not), accompanied by high ratios of trusted and supportive adults, helped the young people journey through something meaningful and with challenges to its conclusion.

I think, for the most part, many of these young people, their attendance at school isn't particularly high. Committing to something and seeing it through to the end is something that they've never done in their lives before, so the CLIMB programme in itself was quite a commitment. So, yes... over the period [of the programme], that's not the easiest. [It took] encouragement. It's taken a lot of encouragement, and I wouldn't necessarily say that's down to the young people not liking the programme; it's simply something that they're just not used to committing a [to] and having a level of commitment to anything.

(Youth Centre A, SBL)

Below, we draw attention to the attendance and engagement in the core three components of the YES Outdoors programme (climbing, bicycle maintenance and the OBT residential), first from the MI data and then supplemented with key qualitative findings, before reflecting on the celebration and overarching mentoring support that accompanied the programme throughout.

Climbing attendance and engagement

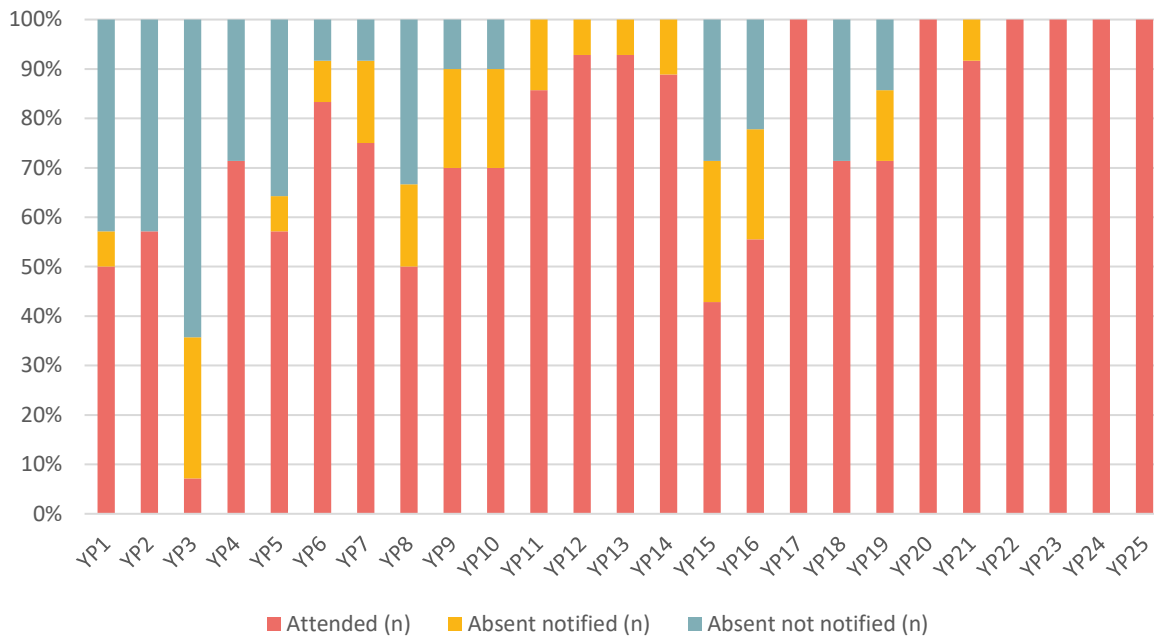
The hard MI data demonstrates that attendance at the climbing sessions was mixed, with one of the schools struggling particularly with attendance (Table 18 and Figure 1). However, there is evidence to suggest that attendance was also a struggle for the youth centres. Certain youth workers noted that they felt the climbing component was too long and that it was hard to keep the young people motivated to keep attending. This aligns with the attendance data in that, with the exception of one group, there was a trend towards a negative relationship between attendance and the total number of sessions.

Table 18 Climbing attendance by referrer

	Attended		Absent – notified		Absent – not notified		Total no. of sessions
	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	
School 1	6.8 (49%)	3.42	1.2	1.64	6	1.87	14
School 2	10.4 (74%)	3.21	1.8	1.30	0.8	1.79	14
Youth Centre A	7.8 (65%)	1.64	1.8	0.45	1.6	1.34	12
Youth centre B (Group 1)	6.2 (69%)	1.79	0.6	0.89	1	1	9
Youth centre B (Group 2)	11 (92%)	0	0.2	0.45	0	0	12

2)							
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Figure 1 Climbing session attendance for each young person



Engagement in the climbing sessions was reported to be high by both the mentors and young people, with climbing being regarded as a fun activity where much of the learning was indirect. This was also clear in the observations. Mentors spoke about the young people being reticent at first, with some being scared of heights, but said that they continued to enjoy the activity, particularly when their skills and abilities improved over the course of the sessions. It was also perceived that it took a while for the young people to build up trust in the mentors. There was also evidence of young people setting themselves goals for future climbing sessions.

I would say [that] 90% of the time they were setting themselves a goal at the end: ‘Right, I’m going to get that one next time’, and then they would come back, and they would remember ‘I didn’t get this one last time, so I want to try that again’. (CLIMB Mentor B)

This was also observed by the researchers. When the young people got discouraged, the mentors were generally able to help them reset after a short break or being given some tips as to what they might try. However, one mentor mentioned that sometimes, because the young people were enjoying and so invested in the climbing activity, it could be tempting not to want to break this enthusiasm by explicitly setting progression goals.

They loved the climbing. Yeah, they really loved it. Yeah. I think sometimes maybe they struggled to set practical goals and work towards them because they just loved it, so you would have to press them to be more like – you know, rigorous with their goal setting and be like, ‘Oh, I want you to climb this now/this next week’ or, ‘Over the next five weeks you should climb this amount’ and that [it] was easier to let it slip, but they always really loved it. I found. Because it was fun. (CLIMB Mentor D)

The size of the climbing facility also made it possible to move between locations and activities (roped climbing to bouldering, for example) easily, which helped to keep the young people focused. However, a lack of focus or ability to follow instructions while at the climbing centre was noted by some mentors.

They were more like Energizer Bunnies, so they were bouncing off of everything – ‘I want to do that, I want to do that, I want to do that’ kind of thing... Before they even finished the first exercise, they wanted to go to the next one. (CLIMB Mentor A)

However, it was felt that this settled down as the climbing sessions progressed. Climbing sessions that took place later in the day were felt to be more challenging, as the centre was busier, which limited access in some areas of the walls and meant that the young people were sometimes intimidated by the other people climbing. This consideration needed to be balanced against the occasional difficulties certain of the young people ran into when they received detention at school, which made timely attendance at the 4 pm starting sessions less likely.

It’s been difficult for us, particularly with the girls, because at 4 o’clock when they’re going, these children may have detention, and then there’s that argument about schools phoning and saying... (Youth Centre A, Lead)

There was the perception that the girls generally liked climbing more than the boys within the young people participating in the programme. YES Outdoors staff attributed this to low self-esteem, a lack of physical fitness and issues with coping with failure among the boys. Some of the girls who took part in the programme identified this fear of failure, alongside being intimidated by the climbing centre, as being a reason why they found the climbing difficult at first.

I was a bit embarrassed, yes. I didn’t want to fail. I thought, yeah, everyone is just watching me and going to laugh at me. (Young Person Focus Group A)

Despite this, however, the girls spoke about how much they enjoyed the climbing after a few sessions.

it calms me down, after like a tiring day – it just makes me more, like, happy. (Young Person Focus Group A)

When we can’t do it, and we’re just like giving up and stuff, they tell us not to give up, and carry on, because they tell us that if we try our best we can do it... And now we actually are good at it. We’re trying our best. (Young Person Focus Group A)

The group also discussed how different their interactions with the mentors were in comparison to some of those that they had experienced with adults in school. Mutual respect was a key factor in the interactions with the mentors, with one young person noting, ‘They’re just so respectful to us’ (Young Person Focus Group A). This provided the basis on which their personal relationships with the mentors/instructors flourished, enabling them to act in a trusting and responsible manner and supporting their engagement in the activities.

But obviously, when they’re doing that, we want them to focus on being the belay and being responsible for him or her that’s up the wall, because that’s the deal. That responsibility is, I think, absolutely key. You’ve giving them agency, control, and there’s no argument about it. They’re actually in control, they’re telling their climber what to do. Slow down, you’re OK, you’re safe. And they’re physically doing it – obviously it’s rope out

or taking it in, whatever they happen to be doing – they're the ones doing it. I think it's just fantastic for them. (CLIMB Mentor E)

Overall, the climbing sessions seem to have been valued by the young people, with statements around them being a new experience, active, fun and helping them to overcome their fear of heights.

One boy in particular was really frightened of heights and quite anxious about the whole thing. I went to the last CLIMB session as such, and he was just persistently going for it again. Even though he was failing, he was going for it again and again and again. I watched him for that session, and I could actually say I'm really proud of you, well done. I could talk to him about his journey, about how scared he was at the beginning and how brave he is now. And he kept challenging himself at height as well. It wasn't just me that saw that. (Youth Centre A, Lead)

The climbing component was felt by young people to be the most enjoyable, and therefore engaging, aspect of the programme. In order to understand which aspects of the climbing component the young people enjoyed the most, they were asked to rate key components of the climbing programme in terms of their enjoyment. Table 19 demonstrates that the young people mostly enjoyed the act of learning how to climb and getting to spend time with their friends and other young people. Open-text responses were also provided by some of the young people to give more detail on what they enjoyed. These responses were grouped around five main themes:

- Being with friends
- Experiencing climbing for the first time
- Supportiveness of staff and mentors
- Being good at climbing and this being recognised

For example:

I was good at climbing, and they said I had a natural skill for it. (Open-text response, young person survey)

I like being with my friends and doing new things with them. (Open-text response, young person survey)

It was fun to spend some time away from family (family reasons) which I really need, it was nice to be with different people trying new things and having fun. (Open-text response, young person survey)

Table 19 Young persons' enjoyment of climbing components

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Missing
Learning how to climb on the climbing wall	9	4	1	0	2	2
Spending time with the other young people/friends	3	4	5	4	0	2
Having a mentor to talk to	2	2	5	2	5	2
Getting some exercise	0	3	3	4	6	2
Getting the opportunity to try new things	2	3	2	6	3	2
Missing n = 4						

Bicycle maintenance attendance and engagement

The transition between the climbing and bicycle maintenance sessions was highlighted by YES Outdoors staff as a time when the young people needed both reassurance and reminders about the next part of the programme, for example, reassurance that the mentors would continue to work with them. The maintenance sessions were held at the Rose Bowl Youth Centre, so those who were unfamiliar with it may have felt this was more difficult. To help with this, the YES Outdoors staff put together a video about the bicycle maintenance sessions at the Rose Bowl Youth Centre and went to one school to guide the young people to the centre.

We did put quite a bit in – as silly as it was, doing a video – this is the adults, this is the building, this is where you get in, you need this [ID]. And having a coffee machine in the corner so they're feeling welcomed and reinforcing all of that. Because they talk as well in their friendship groups. (YES Outdoors CEO)

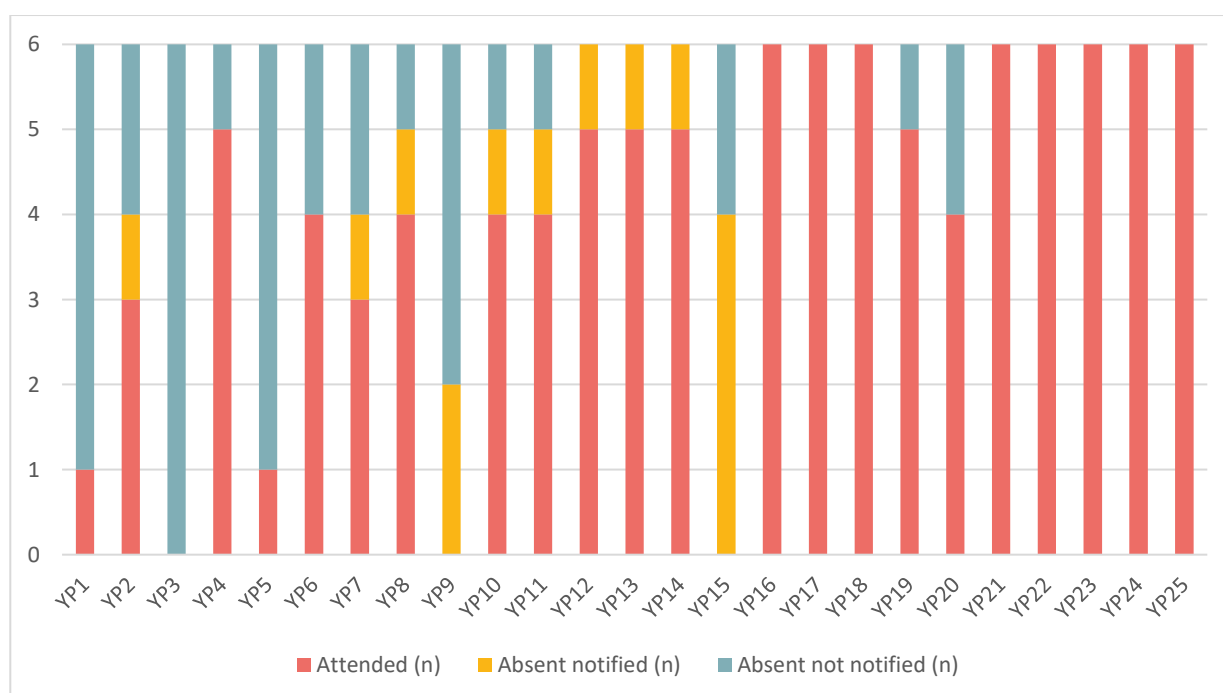
Sessions followed a similar format each week, with the chief mechanic (a volunteer member of the YES Outdoors team) introducing the session and demonstrating the key activities and repairs required. Thereafter, each young person would work with their mentor collaboratively to recreate this. The chief mechanic would move around and be available throughout, should the challenge become too much or to answer specific questions from either mentors or young people .

As with the climbing component of the CLIMB programme, attendance at the bicycle maintenance sessions varied (Table 20 and Figure 2). Again, a group from one of the schools struggled specifically with attendance, as did a group from one of the youth centres. The young people and the mentors reported that the bicycle maintenance component was not as engaging or appealing as the climbing component.

Table 20 Bicycle maintenance attendance by referrer

	Attended		Absent – notified		Absent – not notified		Total no. of sessions
	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	
School 1	2 (33%)	2	0.2	0.44	3.8	2.17	6
School 2	3.8 (63%)	2.17	1.6	1.34	0.4	0.55	6
Youth Centre A	3 (50%)	1.73	1	0.70	2	1.22	6
Youth centre B (Group 1)	5.4 (90%)	0.89	0	0	0.2	0.45	6
Youth centre B (Group 2)	6 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	6

Figure 2 Bicycle maintenance session attendance for each young person



As the attendance data demonstrates, attendance across the course of the programme was variable, both between and within groups. In addition, there was some evidence to suggest that the bicycle maintenance

component suffered more from attendance issues. Despite these attendance issues, the young people were reported to be engaged with the programme when they did attend.

As with the climbing component of the programme, the young people were then asked to put some of the key aspects of the bicycle maintenance programme in order of enjoyment. Table 21 highlights that learning skills to fix a bicycle, spending time with friends and getting the bicycle at the end were the most enjoyable aspects of the bicycle maintenance.

Open-text responses were also provided by some of the young people to allow them to give more detail on their responses, and these were grouped around four main themes as below:

- Learning new skills
- Having a bicycle
- Spending time with friends
- Having something to do each week

For example:

I liked my friends by my side to help me with this and make it more . (Open-text response, young person survey)

I like my bicycle, I use it for school ... [I] like knowing I can fix my bicycle when it breaks. (Open-text response, young person survey)

I enjoyed doing this activity because it taught me new skills that could be useful. (Open-text response, young person survey)

Table 21 Young persons’ enjoyment of bicycle maintenance components

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Missing
Learning skills to fix a bicycle	5	5	4	2	5	1
Working with your mentor	2	4	3	6	6	1
Having an activity to do each week	0	4	2	5	10	1
Spending time with other young people/friends	5	0	6	3	7	1
Getting the bicycle at the end	6	4	2	1	9	1

Both focus groups indicated that the young people were more motivated by the climbing than the bicycle maintenance. One of the participants stated, ‘I don’t want to do bicycling. I want to carry on climbing’ (Young People Focus Group A). The active nature of the climbing was seen as a positive by the young people. In the second focus group, the young people discussed the climbing versus the bicycle maintenance sessions.

Young person A: *I like riding a bicycle, but I don’t like fixing a bicycle.*

Young person B: *Well, remember, if you’re going to ride a bicycle...*

Young person C: *You are eventually going to have to learn to fix it.* (Young People Focus Group B)

I see the point to it. It's very important. It's more important than rock climbing. But... I don't like it. (Young Person Focus Group B)

The young people acknowledged the importance of the maintenance sessions to owning a bicycle and were able to identify the parts of the bicycle sessions they enjoyed, as well as being positive about the mentors; however, they still enjoyed the climbing more. There was a particular tailing-off in enthusiasm for the maintenance compared to the climbing, especially for the girls.

So yeah, and the rest were a little bit hit and miss. They found it more work-like, rather than fun-like, and sometimes they were more moody about it, and so yeah. Not as enthusiastic. (CLIMB Mentor A)

The responses to the questionnaire provided hard data from the majority of young people (n = 21), echoing that the climbing element of the programme was the most popular (n = 13; 59%), followed by the residential (n = 5; 23%) and then lastly bicycle maintenance (n = 3; 14%).

Irrespective of whether the young people enjoyed climbing to the same extent, the majority remained engaged and persisted in their attendance (coming to at least some of the sessions). There were also wider benefits to the sessions that were noted by YES Outdoors staff and mentors. For example, being able to introduce some basic-level science (physics) to the young people and making them think a little about the different scenarios they were asked to undertake.

One will never ever be a bicycle mechanic, but you can see she's engaged. Oh, that's how that bit works. Yeah. And we've used things like gears – like levers spreading the loads. Very, very basic science. You've got 50 kilos – do you move that 10 metres or do you split it into two bags and move it 20 metres? Or five bags, and so on. And it's nice to introduce a bit of science. (CLIMB Mentor E)

Furthermore, the format of the bicycle maintenance activity afforded greater opportunities to have one-to-one conversations between the young person and mentor. Although this still fell short of what would typically be recognised as mentoring within the academic literature, it did lend itself to more purposeful and meaningful discussions than those possible during the climbing, which was often too stimulating an environment.

Again, the whole point of the bicycle maintenance is that you've got two people together doing an activity and as close as me and Lucy are now. And they've got some tools and an opportunity to talk. (YES Outdoors CEO)

The bicycle maintenance sessions, alongside the offer of bicycle ownership, provided a powerful 'effort and reward' incentive to engage in the activity itself as well as to interact in more respectful ways with each other – something that seemed symbolically important for the values the programme was trying to promote in the young people.

And I say to them, which is true, I've got about 250 bicycles back in the storeroom, so I can furnish you with any bicycle I choose to. So, it's down to the feedback that we're recording about how helpful you are with each other, your attendance, just everything

really. It's all like that, so they clearly know. In my mind, I've said this millions of times – you very rarely get rewarded in London for being kind, for [stepping back], for sharing. (YES Outdoors CEO)

Finally, it was noted that enthusiasm in some groups changed from week to week. It should also be noted that at least one of the young people had already attended a bicycle maintenance course. It was also perceived that the more formal teaching part of the bicycle maintenance class was difficult in terms of engagement, but once the young people were actually doing the hands-on part of the sessions, they were much more enthusiastic and engaged. Despite feelings of lesser engagement, it was clear that receiving a bicycle was a strong motivation for attending the course. Overall, the mentors thought that the course was useful to the young people, particularly given that they received a bicycle at the end of it.

Outward Bound Trust residential

Sixteen out of the original 25 young people who signed up to the CLIMB programme/evaluation activities attended the OBT residential in Aberdovey for one week. Of those who did not attend, seven were notified absences and one was classed as a non-notified absence. These 16 young people represented 64% of the young people engaging with the OBT residential. There was an impressive core team that was able to meet the needs of a 'challenging' group of young people and ensure everyone's safety and that the residential became a welcomed experience. There was a lot of expertise needed there; it did not feel that it would have been suitable for less qualified mentors to have attended, at least not in any safeguarding capacity. Please refer to RQ1 for further details about which staff were selected to accompany the young people on the residential.

You have the team around them that can manage that [levels of challenge commensurate with the referral criteria]... So, the combination of the team supporting these young people in order for them to have some positive outcome – I think it helped; it supported their learning. (Youth Centre Lead A)

The OBT residential represented an opportunity to put some of the learning, both in terms of practical skills (e.g. outdoor bouldering) and wider values (e.g. teamwork and resilience), accumulated throughout the CLIMB programme into practice.

They can be quite discriminatory. If they don't like you, they don't like you. They can be quite bullish in their behaviour. All of a sudden, they've had to rely on each other and apologise for each other. All those sorts of things came out. (Youth Centre A, Lead)

As noted previously, formal data collection was not possible during the OBT trip. However, our informal observations and conversations with the young people indicated that they were generally very engaged in the activities and felt a sense of accomplishment upon completion. Table 22 below outlines some of the key observations noted throughout the one-and-a-half days the two evaluators spent at the residential.

Table 22 Key observations from residential

Key observations	Examples
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<p>The young people were praised throughout by all staff</p>	<p>For example, praising of organisational and leadership skills when dividing up food for packing and when coming up with a strategy for wall lifts.</p>
<p>Staff encouraged the development of trusted relationships with adults</p>	<p>For example, listening to young people and their concerns throughout.</p> <p><i>'I'll never lie to you'</i> (Outward Bound Trust [OBT] instructor).</p> <p>Lifting YES Outdoors and OBT staff over the walls.</p>
<p>Young people were given opportunities to lead activities and take responsibility</p>	<p>For example, in the games, while packing, in terms of looking after their storage 'cage'. These roles were rotated where appropriate.</p>
<p>Instructors spoke to the young people about the natural environment during activities</p>	<p>For example, deforestation and forestry were discussed in the context of natural resource management, looking for and holding tadpoles and the formation of and uses for quartz.</p> <p>The young people were also encouraged to look for and try wild foods, for example, tasting and smelling wild garlic and wood sorrel, eating nettles, peeling and eating the inner parts of grass.</p>
<p>Young people were encouraged to achieve</p>	<p><i>'Everyone can do these roles. It's not about strength'</i> (YES Outdoors staff, about a wall lift).</p> <p><i>'Give it a go, be true to yourself'</i> (YES Outdoors staff, about a wall lift).</p> <p><i>'I'm seeing so much resilience; I know you don't want to do it, but it's great to see'</i> (OBT staff, towards the end of the hike).</p>
<p>Young people were encouraged to be responsible, resilient and focus on goals</p>	<p>Emphasised the need to manage their own food stores.</p> <p>Constantly reinforced positive messages, values and behaviour.</p> <p><i>'We've no option; if it takes until midnight, think about effort in and reward out'</i>. (OBT instructor)</p> <p>Gave them a chance to prove themselves with the lower wall.</p>
<p>Young people were encouraged to think of themselves as a team</p>	<p>For example, thinking about the rest of the group when hiking and supporting those who were finding it harder.</p>

	<p>Keeping the group together to keep everyone safe.</p> <p>Setting expectations before they entered the accommodation and pointing out that they would be cleaning any mess that they made.</p>
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The OBT residential afforded the young people many opportunities to put into practice the principles being promoted throughout the course of the CLIMB programme. Key aspects of the week that the young people were especially engaged in/enthusiastic about were reaching their cabin after the long hike, rock-climbing activities and their time on the beach. Below, we illustrate a particularly powerful example of a young person displaying an excellent, resilient attitude.

She ended up getting one of her legs into a load of mud. White trousers, poor girl. But then we ended up doing a night walk with the group, and she was just like – the best way I can describe it is the way you would see a marathon runner trying to do their last mile. Like, her whole gait had gone. She was really struggling on that night walk, but she kept up with everyone and she was like, I don't want to miss out. (YES Outdoors CEO)

The youth worker who went on the OBT trip was extremely positive about the young people's engagement in and experience on the residential, in particular over the level of challenge and the support that the young people experienced. The young people were asked to indicate on a sliding scale how much they enjoyed different aspects of the OBT residential (0 = really didn't enjoy this activity; 100 = really enjoyed this activity). The young people's responses to these questions indicated that climbing, water-based activities, spending time with other people/their friends and experiencing the residential were the highest-rated elements of the OBT experience. However, most of the young people reported enjoying the majority of the elements.

Celebration event

The celebration event was hosted early in the evening at the youth centre where the bicycle maintenance sessions ran and that referred 10 of the young people, so there was familiarity with the setting. The event was extremely well attended – by the young people, their guardians, and mentors – and acted as an opportunity to recognise the achievements of the young people and to thank the mentors.

We made a point of telling them how extraordinary their children had been on this residential but was honest with them – they weren't saints; however, this is what they achieved, and this is what they did. So, when [the YES volunteers manager] invited all the parents and the mentors, I think they looked a bit surprised at the numbers that turned up, but I wasn't, because each child, with the exception of one, brought somebody to support them that way. (Youth Centre A, Lead)

The young people appeared engaged throughout the event, which included PowerPoints and videos charting the young people's experiences of the OBT residential, personalised certificates and a speech by the CEO of YES Outdoors recognising the young people's achievements. Their sense of pride in their achievements and the public recognition of this was especially poignantly illustrated by one individual, who excitedly exclaimed to their parent, 'Look. Look. They said I'm a leader!' (observation notes from celebration event).

[W]e weren't sure how the celebration would go, but what was important was trying to individually... not making it generic, making it actually quite a unique recognition of each young person so that they would realise in that moment that actually, yeah, this is

something I've done and this isn't just like a school report with a grade. This is actually recognising one or two of my personality traits and some of my strengths. And just trying to really embed all of that extra confidence that they've built up over the course and Outward Bound [residential] and leaving on some sort of small certificate which they can remember. [The young people thought] Adults have observed me and actually came up with some unique points about me. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator)

[The YES project coordinator] did a great job of the [certificate artwork] to make it really official. And again, when you realise that, a lot of the time, these kids are getting a piece of paper to take home to say they're getting suspended from school or they're struggling, it's really nice for them to have something that looks good, good quality. (Yes Outdoors CEO)

In addition, there was input from a young person who had previously attended and benefitted from YES Outdoors and who currently heads the organisation's YAB. This person encouraged the young people to also consider getting involved in the YAB and to continue to look out for future opportunities to be involved with YES Outdoors throughout the summer holidays and beyond (the CEO provided each young person and their guardians with information on how to sign up and keep abreast of news via the organisation's Instagram page). The young people appeared engaged in this short presentation.

The celebration event culminated with the gifting of a bicycle to each young person. As was outlined in earlier sections, the programme leads had made a point of incentivising good behaviours and engagement by stating there was a hierarchy to which of the young people would get the first pick of a range of bicycles. It had also been made clear that getting any bicycle at all was not guaranteed but contingent on sufficient levels of engagement and attendance. From the observation, there was no sense of any young person being disappointed about the bicycle they received.

The point to what we do is to try to be supportive of the kids. And it is about effort and reward, but it's also about trying to be kind as well. (YES Outdoors CEO)

Reflecting on the celebration event and the CLIMB programme overall, one youth worker noted that it was a rare opportunity for the young people involved to engage in and achieve something challenging and to get positive attention from adults.

It's an opportunity, it's a small window, but by engaging and doing activities where they're enjoying themselves and gaining all this pleasure, these positives – they can choose whether to get involved in positive activities or they can choose to get involved in negative activities. So, you still get the same amount of attention, but the really negative [consequence is that] you could end up being excluded, being arrested. (Youth Centre A, Lead)

Engagement with mentoring throughout the CLIMB programme

There was clear evidence of positive and engaged relationships between the young people and their mentors/instructors, with the mentors being highly committed to their roles. However, these relationships took time and effort to nurture, with there being some initial evidence that the mentors were viewed with some suspicion and, in some cases, even a degree of hostility.

I think the girls were, for the first two or three weeks, testing us to make sure we were cool enough or... Stare outs, fake punches. Just general challenging of respect and boundaries and guidelines. I would say they were quite a feisty group to start with... I genuinely find it quite amusing. By the third week, when she [had] lost her third stare out to me, and she was just like – alright [Miss], we've finished now, you're my favourite.

(Climbing instructor A)

This appears to justify the need for the programme's time frame and the reticence by YES Outdoors to push too quickly towards formal one-to-one mentoring in order to support relationship building and, therefore, engagement with the mentors and programme aims.

However, while the feasibility study plan anticipated the mentor–mentee relationship as being one-to-one in nature, the observations and conversations with YES Outdoors staff and mentors found that the young people had chosen to engage in sessions with different mentors depending upon their needs, whether personal or related to the activity. This allowed the young people to form relationships with several trusted adults but may have led to some of the key elements of one-to-one mentoring being missed.

YES Outdoors noted that they avoided sharing the wider aims of the mentoring with the young people, with the intention that these aims would result from the young people's learning and forming of relationships with positive adult role models. However, this means that there was a lack of clarity as to what the mentoring role was on the parts of both the mentors and the young people. The study plan outlines several tasks the mentors were encouraged to do with their mentees.

The evaluation evidence found that less than half of the mentors said they had undertaken formal mentoring tasks, with the majority of the conversation and goal setting being around the activities themselves (e.g. climbing). There was reluctance to focus on conversations about personal issues or goals and a concern that the young people might shut down. As a result, the goals discussed were related to the climbing activities, with some of the mentors measuring programme success against climbing improvement. This may suggest that the links between climbing and improvement in social and emotional skills (related to a reduction in offending) needed to be more explicitly talked about with the mentors.

We did often discuss [the] climbing goals that the children would try to achieve, either over the course of an individual session, or [as] a more long-term goal... a target grade that we would agree was within reach (CLIMB mentor, from anonymous survey).

There was evidence from a small number of mentors that the goal setting moved on from just climbing to relating to other areas in the young people's lives. However, when considering the ToC and study plan documents, there is evidence to suggest that the mentoring activities that took place were not fully in line with what was expected. In terms of engagement, it was clear that the young people were engaged with the mentors but that the mentoring that took place was more informal in nature and focused on the activities rather than on wider contexts such as school, home life or personal goal setting.

The mentors mentioned that engagement was more difficult if the young people had had a bad day or were feeling unsettled or tired; in such instances, they were harder to engage and sometimes needed some coaxing or persuasion to join in with activities. It was also noted that some of the young people were fasting due to Ramadan during some sessions, while another was impacted by changes to their medication, which may have impacted on engagement with the sessions and the mentors.

RQ7 Can business as usual at schools or pupil referral units be determined?

The aim of RQ7 was to understand what provision (known as Business as usual or BAU), in the absence of the CLIMB programme, was to be provided for the young people at each of the referral pathways (schools and youth centres) when a young person was identified as being at risk. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data available to answer this research question fully; this would need to be a focus of further evaluation work. We did, however, gain insight into the delivery team's views on whether BAU would be significantly different if the young people were referred from a school versus a youth centre.

The delivery team felt that future recruitment from either schools or youth centres was not problematic, with young people in the feasibility study being recruited via both routes. It was noted by YES Outdoors staff that the young people recruited via youth centres also attended referring schools and that that other issues were seen as more important.

Are they in care? Have they got two parents? Have they been abused? I could think of so many things that are going to affect this so much more than whether they've been in a youth centre (YES volunteer manager).

However, there are two issues to address here.

1. In the current programme, the young people recruited from a youth centre were also receiving intensive support from youth workers, in some cases over several years. As a result, it would be difficult to separate out which provision might be having an impact.
2. The young people who were recruited from a school but allocated to the control group were likely to experience a different BAU than that experienced by the young people who were recruited from a youth centre and allocated to the same control group. This was due to a variety of reasons including differing staffing, work hours, local context, and available resources. This has implications for a future RCT, as ideally BAU should not be significantly different by referral route.

In the context of the current evaluation, the evaluation team's view is that the input of youth centres and youth workers on the young people referred via this route has the potential to impact upon the outcomes of the programme. Specifically, the young people recruited from a youth centre were receiving the same provision in terms of the CLIMB programme but were also getting additional support from youth workers to stay engaged with the programme, together with support at climbing sessions and outside the context of the programme. As such, if the young people recruited from a school setting were not at a youth centre, there was an element of provision they were missing out on. While it may not be possible to know whether the young people attending a particular school also attended a youth centre, as it is a statutory requirement for young people to attend school, attending a youth centre could be regarded as an additional, voluntary input for young people aiming to '*build resilience, aid social skills, and improve physical and mental health*' (text from [Rose Bowl Youth Centre](#) website) For example, as noted in early sections of this report, the youth workers had often been working with the young people they referred to the programme for some time (in some cases, years) and were very aware of their living situations, families and potential issues that might be encountered. The youth workers considered the make-up of the groups they referred, chased attendance at sessions and attended the climbing.

As noted in other sections, the role of the youth centres and their associated staff was central to the CLIMB programme. With this in mind, particularly if an enhanced BAU provision is considered as part of a future trial, (i.e. where a school or youth centre is given funds to support activities with young people assigned to

a control group), we would recommend that youth centres be brought into the programme in a more formal role. This would involve associated financial compensation in line with and in recognition of both their time and expertise.

In terms of the second issue (whether BAU from a school versus a youth centre referral would be the same), unless the young people were all in contact with a youth centre, then those coming from a school might not receive anything as BAU, with those from a youth centre receiving youth centre provision. This would be extremely problematic from an ethical standpoint and would need close consideration, should an RCT design be employed in the future.

The evaluation team feels that an RCT approach would be possible, should adequate provision be provided for control groups. This is discussed further in the recommendations section.

RQ8 Are the outcome measures and the IPE methods suitable for the young people engaged with the YES Outdoors programme?

Data from the young people’s self-report questionnaires and from the qualitative fieldwork are used to answer this research question.

Strengths and difficulties questionnaire

At baseline and endpoint, the young people were asked to complete an SDQ. Table 23 details the descriptive statistics for the total SDQ score, the prosocial score and each of the subscales at baseline and endpoint, indicating that, throughout the programme, there has been a shift in the self-report SDQ scores for questionnaires completed by the young people. The mean score at baseline for the total SDQ score was 15.53, whereas at endpoint, the mean SDQ total score was 12.80. Furthermore, the standard deviations had also narrowed from baseline to endpoint. These findings suggest that, across the course of the programme, there had been improvements in problematic behaviour in the YES Outdoors cohort.

Conversely, when looking at the descriptive statistics for the prosocial scale of the SDQ, there was a slight decrease in scores. The mean at baseline was 7.05, and at endpoint, 6.30. Higher scores for the prosocial scale are indicative of higher levels of prosocial behaviour; however, given the small sample size, we cannot explore the statistical significance of this change.

Table 23 Strengths and difficulties scores at baseline and endpoint for the complete case sample

Complete case sample [cases with data at both baseline and endpoint; n = 23]	Baseline mean (std dev)	Endpoint mean (std dev)	Mean difference	Cohen’s d effect size*
Total strengths and difficulties questionnaire score	14.8 (7.25)	12.8 (6.18)	-1.95	-0.29 SDs
Emotional problems	3.6 (2.76)	2.7 (2.02)	-0.92	-0.38 SDs
Conduct problems	3.9 (2.50)	3.5 (1.97)	-0.43	-0.19 SDs

Complete case sample [cases with data at both baseline and endpoint; n = 23]	Baseline mean (std dev)	Endpoint mean (std dev)	Mean difference	Cohen's d effect size*
Hyperactivity	5.1 (2.48)	4.3 (2.39)	-0.72	-0.29 SDs
Peer problems	2.1 (1.99)	2.2 (1.78)	0.13	0.07 SDs
Prosocial	7.0 (1.96)	6.3 (2.72)	-0.67	-0.28 SDs

*The Cohen's d effect sizes were calculated by dividing the mean difference by the pooled standard deviations for baseline and endpoint.

Looking at the normative data provided by the questionnaire developers for the total and prosocial scores, Tables 24 and 25 illustrate the number of young people from the YES Outdoors cohort that fall within each of the categories. Thirty-nine per cent of the young people were classed as having high or very high scores on the SDQ at baseline; this dropped to 13% at endpoint. For the prosocial scale, 38% of young people were classed as having low or very low scores on prosocial behaviour at baseline and 43% at endpoint, which represents a slight increase over the course of the programme.

Table 24 Baseline and endpoint scores by strengths and difficulties questionnaire norm categories

Complete case sample [cases with data at both baseline and endpoint; n = 23]	Close to average [0–14]	Slightly raised [15–17]	High [18–19]	Very high [20–40]
Baseline	12 (52%)	4 (17%)	2 (9%)	5 (22%)
Endpoint	14 (61%)	6 (26%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)

Table 25 Baseline and endpoint scores by strengths and difficulties questionnaire prosocial norm categories

Complete case sample [cases with data at both baseline and endpoint; n = 23]	Close to average [8–10]	Slightly Low [7]	Low [6]	Very Low [0–5]
Baseline	11 (48%)	2 (9%)	5 (22%)	5 (22%)
Endpoint	9 (39%)	4 (17%)	4 (17%)	6 (26%)

The findings suggest that the SDQ is a suitable measure in terms of being sensitive to change in the CLIMB cohort.

Potential for a differential impact between schools and youth centres

To understand whether the impact of the CLIMB programme might be different depending upon where the young people were referred from, we have looked at the number of young people in the school group and in the youth centre group that saw improvements in their behaviour across the course of the programme. One young person from the school group showed an improvement in their total SDQ score from baseline to endpoint. However, for the youth centre group, 10 young people showed an improvement from baseline to endpoint.

When considering why more young people demonstrated improved behaviour in the youth centre group, we need to consider what aspects of the programme may be different for the two groups. From our data, while the programme was the same, regardless of the referral pathway, one key difference was that the youth workers had a key supporting role in the young people's experiences, whereas this additional support was absent from the school setting.

Reliability and validity of responses

From scoring the SDQs (paper and online responses), it became apparent that, for some of the young people, inconsistent item responses, or poor effort responses were submitted. This is something that could be anticipated in the current sample and was one of the reasons for collecting the SDQ responses during the feasibility year: to explore patterns in responses.

Inconsistent or poor effort responses were characterised by the same response being ticked for all questions or a lack of consistency in groups of questions where you would expect to see consistency. This evidence alone does not suggest that the SDQ is inappropriate for use with the young people, as these patterns in responses could be expected with another self-report questionnaire. However, what it does suggest is that measures need to be in place when these types of outcome questionnaires are being used with young people.

The findings from fieldwork with deliverers and youth workers contextualised some of the reasons as to why these patterns in responses may have been observed. The SDQ was familiar to youth workers, who noted that many of the young people were also likely to have had to complete it on other occasions. This was due to the likelihood that a number of the young people within the YES Outdoors CLIMB cohort may have been in contact with multiple services. The SDQ is commonly used within social work and CAMHS settings, for example. This poses a potential issue around the reliability of responses, as the young people may have already had a negative association with the SDQ and multiple exposures to the same measurement tool is not encouraged.

The youth workers also outlined potential issues around literacy levels and issues with the young people having sufficient focus and concentration to complete the survey truthfully, denoting that, while some young people seemed to be reading the SDQ thoroughly, others were rushing through it.

Oh, they hated it. Absolutely hated it. It's paperwork, and it's lots of questions and they are not really wanting to answer or not even sure that you necessarily get an honest answer with a lot of those questions (Youth Centre SBL B).

It was noted that some of the young people had refused to engage with the survey and that the youth workers had to provide quite extensive support to those completing it, including asking them to reconsider their answers, hoping that the young people would answer honestly and think about their answers. The youth workers also thought that the young people might be trying to answer the questions in the most positive way possible.

Who wants to say that they're terrible at something? Who wants to do that? Would you say I'm bad, I'm bad, I'm bad? Would you say I'm not helpful or unkind to somebody? You wouldn't say that (Youth Centre Lead A).

However, it was also suggested that the process of going through the survey had helped the young people to think about themselves.

Reading it together was interesting. And it allowed them to think about who they are and what they're like (Youth Centre Lead A).

From an evaluation perspective, the potential overinvolvement of the youth workers when the young people were completing the SDQ is an issue that would need to be addressed in future evaluation work. This needs to be considered alongside the appropriateness of a self-report measurement tool for young people with potential issues with focus and literacy.

In addition, the issue noted by the youth worker of young people answering in the most positive way would be considered socially desirable responding (SDR), which is a valid concern when using self-report questionnaires. Evidence from the young people's responses does not overtly suggest that the young people were responding in the most positive way possible.

It was noted that completing the survey may have been easier in a school setting rather than in a context with voluntary attendance, with the SBLs noting that they felt under pressure to collect the data.

If you're in a school setting, it's a lot, lot easier. So that pressure that I feel like I've let you down by not managing to secure that yet (Youth Centre SBL A).

A further issue was the lack of standardisation in how/when the measures were undertaken. There was evidence that the youth worker needed to proactively attend the young people's houses, and in other instances, the measure was undertaken just prior to taking part in the first event. Without the necessary space and consistency, there is a concern about the consistency of the approach.

Some of the issues raised in this section are not related to the SDQ specifically; rather, this section outlines the challenges faced when trying to collect self-report outcome data with a hard-to-reach cohort. At this point, there is nothing to suggest that this level of proactive behaviour from youth workers would need to be any less, should a different measure be used.

There was no evidence from the qualitative data collected from the young people that they found the SDQ triggering or distressing in any way, nor that they had experienced it previously.

I found it... nothing too much. Just a survey really (Young Person Focus Group B).

However, qualitative data collection was only conducted with a small sample of the overall cohort and, because of the nature of the SDQ, the young people may not have wanted to identify themselves as having come across the measure before. However, there were wider adult concerns about the extent to which the measure was accessible and the degree to which the young people had fully considered their responses.

There was a consensus from SBLs that the final survey should have been collected on the final day, as there was a reluctance to engage with the survey post-experience. However, from an evaluation perspective, collecting data at the end of the last session would be problematic, as this approach is evidenced to result in overly positive responses.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that while the youth workers and SBL suggested that it would have been easier to get the young people to complete the survey directly after the intervention had ended, it was also indicated that it took quite a prolonged period for the young people to process the experience. This casts doubt on the accuracy/validity of the data being collected immediately after the intervention.

[I]t's interesting, because I haven't been able to do the young people's feedback because trying to sit them down to do that is really, really hard, and I actually feel that that feedback should have been done whilst you had them captured at the end of resi [residential] or something like that. But, for [young person's name], last night was the first time that she actually would talk to me and show me photos of the resi. It's taken that time to go 'This was an experience that I had, and I've now processed, I am now prepared to share that with [you]' (Youth Centre B, SBL).

Considering the data presented above, there are some concerns around the collection of self-report outcome data with these young people and some scepticism about the suitability of the SDQ. The SDQ is a well-validated outcome questionnaire used frequently as an outcome measure in a range of interventions. It is age-appropriate for the cohort in question and relatively short in comparison to some outcome measures. However, the concerns around the young people's comprehension of the questions are valid, being an issue that could jeopardise the findings of an evaluation. The quantitative findings suggest some issues with a small number of young people in their patterns in responding; importantly, they also present evidence that reassures concerns around SDR.

There was a disconnect between some of the concerns that were being raised by the youth workers/delivery team and the perceptions of the young people and the findings from the data analysis. The original design for the second year of the YES Outdoors CLIMB evaluation was to include teacher/youth workers/parent SDQ responses alongside the young people's self-report and a number of other questionnaire measures that fit the outcomes of the CLIMB programme. These plans are supported by the findings from the current evaluation, as they still place importance on the view of the young people themselves while allowing a systematic assessment of the young people's behaviour from the perception of adults.

Collecting outcome data from young people who have been identified as hard to reach or at risk of becoming involved in crime, with the potential for a lower level of reading ability and comprehension, is always going to present challenges. However, the evaluation team feel it is still important to try and work with and around these difficulties to ensure that data is collected systematically from the young people themselves, without relying on the perceptions of others.

RQ9 How is the prospect of randomisation perceived by key stakeholders (the young people, mentors and setting-based leads)?

The prospect of randomisation was raised during the qualitative fieldwork with the YES Outdoors staff and youth workers. Due to the difficulty in data collection with the young people and the issues with their understanding, on balance, it was decided that it was better not to focus on randomisation in the young people focus groups.

YES Outdoors staff

Programme leads were initially wary of the prospect of randomisation, feeling it ran contrary to the key tenets of the programme. This was particularly due to the high-risk nature of the young people and the possibility that they would feel singled out when being referred for the intervention. In addition, the leads felt that, due to the volatile nature of the target population and how things can rapidly adversely escalate, undertaking randomisation could place the young people and those around them at risk.

The issues raised by key delivery staff are summarised below:

- The belief that randomisation was not ethical and could be seen as divisive if young people were not given the same opportunities, even if the programme was ultimately found to be ineffective.
- Concerns related to attrition, resentful demoralisation and negative group dynamics from both control and intervention groups. These concerns stemmed from the possibility of those within and outside of friendship groups being randomised differently.
- The feeling that randomisation would be perceived as *'an unconditional offer of support [that] now becomes a conditional offer of support'* (YES Outdoors CEO).
- The fear that referral partners would respond negatively to the idea of randomisation and not engage with the programme or withdraw as a result of randomisation taking place.
- Concerns around reputational risk to YES Outdoors and the programme because of randomisation.
- A risk to already-established relationships as a result of the randomisation process.
- Further alienation of 'hard to engage' young people as a result of the randomisation process.
- The feeling that randomisation was contrary to the ethos of the programme.

There were also doubts expressed as to whether RCTs are a suitable approach to assessing the efficacy of interventions for the target group of young people. There was, however, some easing of this position towards the end of the programme. YES staff had spoken to another project that was running an RCT, albeit within a school, and had found that useful in terms of understanding in the approach and management of implementation with the young people.

In addition, having had a conversation with a possible new referral school that said it was open to randomisation, YES Outdoors staff seemed to be focusing on the idea that clear communication around what the programme could offer and the need for randomisation early on in the referral were key to onboarding referral partners. YES Outdoors staff also seemed interested in the possibility of an enhanced BAU model and thought this would be more acceptable to the youth centres as a referral model.

If you go to [youth worker] and say 'Look, there's activity A and activity B and, ultimately, they're going to be split randomly, and one will get to do this fun thing and the other one will get to do this fun thing' instead of saying 'We've got a project and you might get randomised and have to do this thing' – obviously that doesn't sound as appealing. But I think it's all about how we approach it with people. (YES Outdoors Project Coordinator)

As noted above, the possibility of randomisation was not well received by YES Outdoors staff, who initially seemed reluctant to engage in a discussion on the topic when it was raised by the evaluation team. Early engagement in a discussion around what might be possible, including an enhanced BAU offer, might have addressed and alleviated the concerns raised above.

Youth workers

The youth workers were quite positive about the idea of randomisation with an enhanced BAU. It was noted by youth centre staff that youth centres do provide activities already and that the young people would have to buy into whatever they provided as enhanced BAU. The positives of working in partnership with organisations like YES Outdoors were noted by the youth workers.

it's a lot of work, what you guys are asking [about an enhanced BAU programme]. And it's whether we have the capacity and the time to do it. We have our own programmes that we run. (Youth Centre Lead A)

Scalability

Another challenge posed by randomisation would be the need for the CLIMB programme, as it is currently delivered, to be scaled up. Scaling-up would mean that a much larger sample of young people would need to be recruited and, therefore, that the programme would need to be delivered to a larger number of young people. There is evidence from the youth workers that scalability within the youth centre model would be possible, as they indicated that they would be able to work across youth centres to refer young people living in the borough. This is important for future decisions on study designs.

Additional findings

The following sections relate to findings that do not fit with the nine specified research questions for the feasibility study but still draw on the evidence and data collected to raise questions about the CLIMB programme, its delivery and possible ways forwards for the programme. In some cases, this data fits with the progression criteria.

Programme delivery

The CLIMB programme was not delivered as per the original study plan. Table 26 sets out the changes made and the reasons for these changes.

Table 26 CLIMB programme delivery as per study plan and actual delivery

Stage	As per study plan	Changes made and explanation
Stage 1 Climbing	16 sessions delivered to each group	Between nine and 14 sessions delivered to each group. This was due to different start dates as a result of recruitment difficulties. In addition, 16 sessions were considered to be too much by youth workers.
Stage 2 Bicycle maintenance	12 sessions delivered to each group	Due to delays with the recruitment of the young people and getting their

		baseline measures completed, some of the groups were delayed had at delayed start to Stage, therefore, the judgement was made to shorten the bicycle maintenance phase to just six sessions to allow the groups to start together after Christmas.
Stage 3 Outward Bound trip		One youth worker attended the residential with the young people as they were seen as a key partner to the programme and knew the young people well. No mentors took part due to their work commitments.

Working with youth centres

The two youth centres (A and B) and their youth workers played a central role in the CLIMB project. They referred young people to the project, brokered their participation with parents and carers, encouraged engagement with the programme, accompanied/transported young people to climbing sessions and, in the case of Youth Centre A, hosted the bicycle maintenance sessions, drop-in sessions for parents/carers about the OBT trip and the celebration event. Youth Centre B's SBL noted that he knew all the young people and their families and that youth workers had visited the young people at home to explain about the project. Knowing the young people well was a key part of this process.

The hosting of the bicycle maintenance sessions allowed the youth workers at Youth Centre A to become familiar with all the young people taking part in the CLIMB project.

I met and talked to every single young person every week. I made a point of having a conversation with them. And so, I was able to get to know them. (Youth Centre A, Lead)

When referring young people to the project, the youth centre workers commented that they had taken care in selecting the groups, choosing young people that they knew had an appropriate level of need, would get on together, would engage and not be disruptive and who they had an established relationship with that had been built over a sustained period.

The youth workers recognised that the project had challenged some of the young people – particularly the OBT component, which was described as ‘daunting’ and ‘frightening’ – but were motivated to support the young people through the project. Youth workers also noted the difference in the relationships that they had with the young people, describing them as ‘voluntary relationships’ (Youth Centre A, Lead) where the young people (and often their parents) had to be respectful, and which may have contrasted with the relationships experienced in school.

The roles played by and value of the youth centres and of one youth worker, in particular, were acknowledged by the YES Outdoors staff, with the acknowledgement that the programme had relied heavily on the youth workers and their relationships with the young people. This led to one of the youth centre leads taking part in the OBT trip, as what the CEO of YES Outdoors called a ‘reward’, recognising the partnership that had developed.

It was also noted by the YES Outdoors staff that the referral route was very important and that the youth centres represented a route that did not feel forced or punitive. Those young people coming from youth centres were more used to relationships with adults that the project wanted to promote (i.e. on a first-name basis, where the young people had some autonomy). The youth centre also questioned YES staff about the project, including its aims and outcomes, in order to develop a full understanding of the programme.

Youth workers from both centres also attended the climbing sessions, waiting in the climbing centre cafe. A mentor noted that one young person who got upset went back to the cafe for a short while to talk to the youth worker, calmed down and then returned to climbing. Two Youth Centre B youth workers transported the young people by minibus to both the climbing and bicycle sessions and stayed. This level of staffing was necessary due to the possibility of the young people becoming aggressive with one another – which did happen on one occasion. However, the youth worker noted that this, and the paperwork involved in the project and the use of the minibus, had been an unanticipated cost of the project in terms of staff time and that the young people would have been unable to attend the sessions without this. The roles of the youth centre and youth workers in the CLIMB programme were unanticipated by YES Outdoors. Future iterations of the programme should consider including the youth centres and staff as formal delivery partners, which would allow their input and for compensation to be paid for their expertise, time and the resources needed.

Working with schools

As noted earlier, we were unable to speak with any SBLs in schools. In total, 10 young people were recruited directly from two schools. Overall, YES Outdoors noted that working with schools was not easy because of difficulty in engaging with and gaining permission from the right people in the schools and a lack of response and take up.

The young people were clearly disillusioned with and disengaged from their schools, which may account for some of the recruitment issues experienced.

She's [teacher] a monster... She's just rude. She has no respect for us. She just talks down to us all the time. (Young Person Focus Group A)

[S]omething they made very very, very clear from the beginning – none of the adults in their current education system likes them, in fact actively hated them... that was quite hard to hear. They all felt like they couldn't do anything, they were all a bit rubbish.

(Instructor A)

Future programme iterations should take into account the difficulties in recruiting from schools and the relationships that need to be in place before this can take place. Schools may be reluctant to engage with programmes for several reasons, including a lack of time and resources, not having staff that are responsible for non-academic or out-of-school activities and outcomes and a lack of positive relationships with the young people, meaning a lack of uptake for any activities suggested by school staff.

Programme mentoring

The study plan states that the programme mentoring would consist of both activity-based and formal mentoring, highlighting what this will look like at each stage of the programme.

[A] combination of running the content of the sessions through doing, and the mentoring happening around the activity, to help remove barriers or inhibitions (creating a more

authentic exchange). This will be accompanied by more formal mentor–mentee conversations, for example, in the Castle café or in the Rose Bowl. It is a combination of these two methods that makes up the mentoring process throughout the CLIMB programme. (Study plan)

However, there was little evidence of formal mentor–mentee interaction. Several mentors noted that they did not feel that they had engaged in formal conversations with the young people, stating that the opportunities for this were limited, particularly when climbing.

Overall, particularly for mentors that had previously had experience engaging in more prototypical mentoring activity with the young people, the CLIMB programme was interpreted as being excellent and valuable but not one that drew as much on traditional forms of mentoring.

I don't think of it as so much of the mentoring side of it, as more of providing a space for the kids to be doing an activity that allows them to get out of their natural environment, be with other peers, be with other adults that provide some form of structure and interaction... personally, I don't know if I felt that I've mentored. (CLIMB Mentor F)

This did vary, however, with one mentor stating that they had completed a sheet with a young person about their aspirations and which GCSEs might be chosen. However, there was no evidence of the weekly discussions in the cafe or any regular setting of SMART goals as outlined in the study plan.

SMART challenges were intended to continue to be set by the mentor to the mentee on a once-per-month basis. Mentees were expected to have completed the task set within four weeks of having it set. During the entire length of the programme, at least six SMART challenges would have been set for each young person. (Study plan)

However, this lack of formal mentoring did not mean that the young people did not benefit from or did not engage with the mentors. The mentors became trusted adults, and the young people clearly appreciated them and spoke of them in positive terms. The majority of the mentors indicated that they had engaged in more activity-based mentoring, during which they had provided a positive, safe environment, set appropriate boundaries and supported the young people to do their best, to stretch themselves and to improve on the activity week on week. In addition, the mentors thought that trying to get the young people to engage in more formal conversations would have been off-putting or alienating. One mentor noted that issues such as ADHD also made more formal conversation more challenging.

[T]hese activities are more just these life skills that you get from interacting with other people. (Mentor F)

[I]t's very difficult when you're climbing to have a discussion about – what is the ladder of success? (Volunteer mentor, from anonymous survey)

Trying to mentor them, they're just going to be like, nah man. So, I think it's probably better just to be a positive person... where stuff comes up, chat about it. (CLIMB Mentor G)

There were opportunities to support the young people with wider issues, however; for example, one mentor noted that she had encouraged her all-girl group to climb in an area where they had felt intimidated by other climbing wall users.

Taking up space was one [conversation] that I had to have with [young person name] and [young person name] because they didn't want to go try something because there was a group of young boys – young guys with their tops off – lads – taking up space... We had to have the little chat about 'No, you're entitled to be in this space. It's not a boys' play place. It's everybody's.' (Climbing Instructor A)

This shift in the purpose and model of the mentoring was acknowledged by the YES Outdoors staff, who stated that this was as a result of being '*led by the young people*' (Volunteers Manager). Staff wanted the young people to feel comfortable and to allow relationships and trust with the mentors to develop.

I think, when you start to ask questions, there is an immediate suspicion about what your intention is, because that's their whole experience of life. Adults asking questions, and it's because they're trying to trap them into admitting to something. Why are you doing that? Trying to get them to explain something that's a fault and a shortcoming. So, keeping it around a really positive activity that they've chosen to do – that's the power of it. (Volunteers Manager)

Some mentors wrote up short summaries of the sessions on a WhatsApp group specifically for the mentors. However, there was little evidence that this took place systematically.

Overall, the mentoring element of the CLIMB programme was not delivered as specified in the study plan and ToC. Instead, the mentoring was very light touch and focused on programme activities rather than on, for example, more formal activities such as goal setting beyond the activities or linking succession activities to wider contexts. This appears to have come about for a number of reasons: the young people being perceived as being unreceptive to more formal mentoring structures, relationship building taking longer than anticipated, limited opportunities for formal conversations and struggling to get young people to focus on the activities. This means that opportunities to focus on and draw out the transferable skills and wider learning from activities were missed. Some of the mentors stated that this was because the environments they were in with the young people were not necessarily conducive to more formal mentoring – when climbing, for example, they wanted the young people to concentrate on either climbing or belaying.

It is clear, however, that the young people valued and enjoyed their time with the mentors. Interacting with the mentors, particularly at the climbing centre, gave the young people an opportunity to speak to and be around people who came from different backgrounds, with different interests and outlooks. This experience was highlighted by one of the youth workers.

You're exposing young people to things that are beyond their periphery, then they're going to see the world. A young person might go to rock climbing and look around and he or she may think, you know what, no one here looks like me. Or I'm used to people being a lot more kind of aggressive, and now I'm coming here, and everyone is so friendly. (Youth Centre Lead A)

Consent

We have referred in the sections above to the issues of young people's understanding of the SDQ. However, there is a further issue around consent, particularly within the context of the evaluation activities. It was noticeable that the young people who took part in the focus groups, and who therefore had to read and complete consent forms, did not fully engage with the content of these forms and what they were signing:

'If I'm honest, I didn't really read the slip' (Young Person Focus Group A). While we endeavoured to explain verbally what each of the points on the consent form meant before the young people signed the forms, there are issues here about informed consent and what this should look like. The evaluators are currently working on a different approach to gaining consent from the young people, for example, through a short animation.

Outward Bound Trust trip challenges

The youth worker who took part in the OBT trip noted – and this was also observed – that the young people struggled with the lack of access to technology; for example, the lack of Wi-Fi, poor mobile phone reception and their phones being taken by staff before the activities took place.

The youth worker also commented that some of the young people were very anxious about the activities, with a few being genuinely scared, for example, by the abseiling. In order to mitigate the anxieties experienced in one of the groups, the decision was taken not to fully inform the young people about some elements of the hike and overnight stay in a cabin/outdoors, for example, the lack of toilets and washing facilities.

The shared facilities at the OBT centre were also seen as an issue by the young people.

The boys were really worried. It's really funny. About body image. About showers. They're not sharing a shower. (Youth Centre Lead A)

Our observations on the group hike showed that the young people struggled with resilience around the distance they walked and having to carry rucksacks. However, on arriving at the cabin, their sense of pride in their accomplishment was clear.

Police involvement

The CEO of YES Outdoors is a sergeant in the Metropolitan Police. He and the community support officers who report to him appear to have had substantial involvement in the CLIMB programme. This included attendance at sessions, transporting young people from school to the climbing centre/Rose Bowl Youth Centre and going on the OBT trip to Wales. From observations at the celebration event, it was clear that the participants and their parents/carers may have been unaware of this.

Given the tensions that exist between some communities in London and the Metropolitan Police, this lack of clarity around 'day job' roles presents some ethical and moral issues. While one of the youth workers commented that this was a positive aspect of the programme, there should be transparency in who will be involved in and working with young people on the programme.

I'd say it in front of them as well. It's youth engagement from their point of view, but for us it's also about young people having a positive relationship with the police as well. This whole idea of not snitching, not talking to the police – well, actually, we do work with the police, and actually, if you work with the police, these are some of the outcomes that can happen for you. That's a big thing around here. It's massive. (Youth Centre Lead A)

In addition, there is a lack of clarity as to how the time spent by police officers involved in the CLIMB programme is funded and that the costs of staffing for the programme may have been supplemented by the involvement of police officers. This has obvious implications for the programme looking forward.

Post programme/sustainability

There is evidence that most of the young people had come a long way throughout the course of the CLIMB programme. Many of the short-term outcomes were met, with some early signs of promise in relation to intermediary outcomes such as enhanced engagement (for example, being more receptive to trying new activities such as podcasting), enhanced prosocial behaviour and improved friendship groups.

YES Outdoors staff remained committed to trying to keep connected to the young people who had completed the CLIMB programme. This was evidenced at the celebration event, where the young people were encouraged to follow the YES Outdoors social media platform to keep abreast of future opportunities offered through YES Outdoors, including activities run over the summer holidays. However, concerns remain about the lack of concrete succession plans in place post-completion of the CLIMB programme to allow the young people to capitalise upon achieving many of the short-term outcomes and to realistically influence the longer-term outcomes outlined in the original ToC. These concerns were especially strong for the young people not attached to one of the youth centres that referred onto the programme, where there was strong evidence of established and trusted relationships with core staff that were likely to build on the experiences encountered through CLIMB.

Opportunities for more formal one-to-one mentoring, with a focus on broader SMART goals outside of the CLIMB-specific activities, might have been a mechanism through which the momentum of the programme could have been better maintained and transferred to other settings. This might also include signposting to other appropriate trusted organisations relevant to the young people's interests such as sporting clubs, volunteering organisations or school-run clubs. Particularly during the latter stages, the CLIMB programme could consider further ways to capitalise upon the positive relationships established with certain mentors and key YES Outdoors staff, such as brokering better connections to school staff and co-constructing post-CLIMB plans.

While there are potential positives in the development of relationships between young people and YES Outdoors staff and mentors, future programme iterations should consider the need for better-planned opportunities for mentoring and longer-term follow-ups in order to avoid the young people feeling unsupported moving forwards.

Intervention feasibility

Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility

The CLIMB programme has undoubtedly made a difference to the young people who have taken part, as indicated by both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for the evaluation. For the most part, the young people were engaged with the sessions, although levels of attendance varied for all aspects of the programme. In addition, levels of engagement were lower in the bicycle maintenance sessions than in the climbing component. The OBT trip was clearly a high point for the young people who were able to attend.

Table 27 gives an overview of the progression criteria.

Table 27 Progression criteria review at the end of the programme

	Progression criteria	Evidence	Outcome rating
Progression criteria (PC) 1	Recruit 25 young people, with five reserves (between June and September 2022).	25 young people were recruited to the programme, together with two reserves.	Green*
PC2	A school/pupil referral unit-based lead is recruited.	Setting-based lead recruitment and communication were challenging.	Green
PC3	Baseline assessment.	100% baseline data collection complete.*	Green
PC4	YES Outdoors secure dates for the OBT residential that are within a three-week period of completing Stage 2 of the programme (bicycle maintenance).	Trip was booked for the week commencing 1 May 2023.	Green
PC5	The young people take part in an acceptable amount of the programme.	Between 50–100% for climbing (average 75%) and 16–100% for bicycle maintenance (average 70%).	Amber
PC6	A 70–80% response rate is achieved for the primary outcome measure.	Twenty-two endpoint strengths and difficulties (SDQ) questionnaire responses were achieved.	Green
PC7	Feasibility of individual or school/PRU-level randomisation is explored, and a decision can be reached between Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), YES Outdoors and the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) about which is the most appropriate.	A full discussion on randomisation can be found in the RQ9. This is marked as amber because of the work that would need to be undertaken to ensure an appropriate business as usual was available to the young people.	Amber
PC8	Appropriateness of the measurement tool(s). Data collected during the feasibility stage will be analysed.	There was concern from the delivery team about the outcome measure and confusion about its purpose in the feasibility study. The data collected shows that some of	Amber

	Progression criteria	Evidence	Outcome rating
		the young people did not approach completion of the SDQ seriously, providing inconsistent responses. While it is something that would no doubt occur in some young people regardless of the measure, ways to mitigate this need to be considered.	
PC9	Dosage. YES Outdoors deliver the number of sessions as intended (16 rock climbing sessions, 12 bicycle maintenance sessions, the OBT residential and celebration event).	The maximum number of climbing sessions delivered was 14, with the lowest number being nine. The bicycle maintenance sessions were reduced down to six weeks.	Red
PC10	Working relationships between YEF, SHU, YES continue to develop. YES, YEF and SHU are responsive to communications made and advice and adaptations are considered.	SHU communicated regularly with YES Outdoors throughout the feasibility study, including weekly and fortnightly meetings during the data collection period and throughout the first part of the feasibility study. However, there were tensions at times throughout the evaluation when was felt that the delivery team were challenging the evaluation.	Amber
PC11	Fidelity to programme as outlined. The session content will be recorded and compared to lesson plans that have been given by YES prior to the feasibility year starting.	The programme was not, in all instances, delivered with fidelity. The number of climbing sessions delivered varied between groups, depending upon their start date. The number of climbing sessions was also reduced at the start of the programme. The intended role of the mentor and the mentors' specific tasks (as outlined in the study plan) were very different in practice, with very little evidence of formal mentoring taking place.	Amber

*Please note: where the progression criteria have not been met (i.e. amber or red), this is not necessarily the fault of YES Outdoors.

Recommendations from evaluators

The evaluation team feel that, at this stage, the programme is *not ready to move onto a pilot trial (including the randomisation phase)*. Our recommendation is that the most appropriate next step for the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme would be to run an enhanced feasibility pilot with a larger sample size and with a clear focus on improving the following points.

Recruit from youth centres but gaining early buy-in from schools: There is evidence from the evaluation data that the experiences of the young people recruited from schools versus the youth centres were, at times, different. While the delivery of the CLIMB programme appears consistent across participants, those recruited by youth centres had additional support from, and contact with, youth workers before, during and after the intervention. Youth workers, while not directly involved in the delivery of the YES Outdoors programme, accompanied (and, for some groups, transported) the young people to the climbing sessions. This level of involvement with the young people cannot be discounted. Buy-in from schools is necessary in order to facilitate authorised absences for attendance at the OBT week and to raise awareness of the intervention and its aims and objectives. A further way the CLIMB programme could be made more appealing to schools is by having the OBT residential dates confirmed by the time of the recruitment and to ensure that the date did not clash with key SATs testing (which might make involvement less appealing). Another recommendation that YES Outdoors should consider is mandating that each young person has an agreement in principle from their school (irrespective of how they are referred) to be allowed to attend the OBT week.

Develop clear guidance for referrers: One of the youth centres made the independent decision, when choosing which young people to refer, to consider how the young people would work together as a group. While this may have been beneficial to group cohesion, there was no evidence that a similar process took place in other youth centres or in schools. Referral processes should be consistent across referrers. In addition, at least one young person recruited from within their own friendship group; this is not an appropriate means of referral and demonstrates the need for clearer guidance for referrers. Lastly, from the evaluation data, there was at least one young person who had experienced the bicycle maintenance programme previously; multiple instances of this would have the potential to dilute any programme effects. Guidance against this should be provided to referrers.

Allow a longer lead-in time for recruitment: This would ensure that recruitment could be carried out systematically, with targeted routes and the time to publicise the offer widely. It would give time to build relationships with referrers. The programme needs a clear recruitment process and policy. It would be to the programme's advantage to approach multiple referrers simultaneously rather than wait for assent from individual schools/youth centres before contacting alternatives.

Wherever possible, it would be advantageous, from a workload and ethical perspective, to have all the timings/dates of the programme established prior to formal recruitment. This would have the added benefit of being able to collect the required data for YES Outdoors, the evaluator and the OBT at a single timepoint. It would also make it more transparent to schools when the OBT residential was scheduled to take place. Irrespective of whether a scaled-up programme is run through schools or youth centres, this data collection point would be an opportunity for youth centres to connect with schools, and it should be a requirement for sign-up that permission is provided (at least in principle) for the young people to attend the residential.

YES Outdoors could then consider more systematically implementing, at the earliest stage, what was outlined in the study plan: *'Once a referral has been made, YES Outdoors meet with the young person, the*

referrer and the young person's parent/carer'. This approach could be flexibly employed at the parental home, school or youth centre; it could be used to help ensure more consistent messaging about the different features of the CLIMB programme and that all the paperwork is secured upfront as early as possible.

Consider programme length: The length of the climbing component differed between groups. A decision needs to be made by YES Outdoors as to what the most appropriate length of the climbing component is and that this needs to be adhered to.

Consider how to sustain the programme's impact beyond the intervention: The ToC outlines the immediate, medium- and long-term outcomes that were expected from participation in the CLIMB programme. In order to move on from meeting the immediate outcomes, progressing through to some of the medium- and longer-term outcomes, consideration as to how sustained positive impact from the programme. The CLIMB programme has clear benefits to young people in terms of bringing about change, but this could be more impactful with a strategic plan in place beyond the programme. This could possibly be brokered with the youth centres.

Be clear about police involvement: For ethical purposes, the role of the police should be made more transparent to the young people and families – both in terms of the core YES Outdoors leads and the police engagement officers that played an integral supportive role throughout.

Consider the need for greater capacity: Scaling the project up would require YES Outdoors to have substantial extra capacity. If the programme were to be scaled up further, there would need to be clearer processes, more delegation and a far longer and more intensive scoping and lead-in phase. Reflection on the key misunderstandings and obstacles to recruitment for the feasibility stage should be reflected upon in partnership with the evaluator, allowing the production of a FAQ-type document. YES Outdoors should seek to secure a bigger pool of potential referrers; they should not rely on existing contacts and should be cautious about working with schools currently with a 'requires improvement' or below Ofsted rating, as these are unlikely to have the capacity for engagement with the programme.

Formalise the role of youth centres and youth workers: Should young people continue to be referred by youth centres, the role of the youth centres and the youth workers should be formalised in the project's ToC. Youth centre workers were a key support for YES Outdoors, aiding with recruitment, retention and attendance (including transportation to and their presence at or near the climbing venue). Often, they selected the young people to attend the programme based on their existing relationships and work with them. These relationships and the associated support were important before, during and potentially after the programme.

A youth worker went on the OBT trip as a result of her relationships with the young people. The youth workers noted that supporting the young people in terms of transport to the climbing centre– which required two youth workers – and the associated waiting time had been difficult to resource. Both youth centres sent staff members to the climbing sessions.

Recognising youth centres as partners would bring them into the project on a formal basis and allow them to be paid for the capacity and expertise they provide. In addition, doing so would expand the project's existing capacity for the next stage. The youth centres also signalled a willingness to work in partnership with schools, which could be an extra lever to brokering more productive relationships.

Refine eligibility criteria for the programme to ensure an inclusive approach: Every young person who is offered a place should be able to take part in all the programme activities. Two young people were unable to attend the OBT trip over concerns with their ability to follow instructions due to SEND.

In addition, the current eligibility criteria mean there is a risk of moral and value judgements being made when referring young people onto the programme, for example, mentions of involvement with social services and young people being categorised as promiscuous.

Reframe the concept of mentoring for the CLIMB programme: The mentoring delivered by the programme saw substantial differences to that defined in the study plan. This appears to have come about as a result of both YES staff and the mentors realising that the proposed model was not suitable for the young people that had been referred nor for the activities in the CLIMB programme. As a result, the mentoring on offer was very much based on the activities and did not explicitly link the learning with the young people's wider lives and experiences, with any goals set being activity based. In addition, the befriending stage was perceived to have taken longer than anticipated.

This conceptualisation of mentoring requires decisions as to whether to alter the ToC and emphasis of the programme title. For example, whether to prioritise more mentor-specific activity; or to ensure that the mentoring activities in the programme are reframed and contextualised to be more in line with what is possible with the targeted young people, the programme timeframe, referral routes and activities in the CLIMB programme. Alternatively, the programme's longer-term goals and the mechanism for behavioural change would need to be modified.

Start to consider what an enhanced BAU might look like: Should the programme move towards an RCT, YES Outdoors need to consider what would be acceptable and ethical for those young people referred to the programme but randomised into a control group. An enhanced BAU would also need to be acceptable to referrers and parents/carers. Waitlist control groups are not an option with the YEF as funder.

Further develop the programme logic model

At the start of the programme, a ToC was developed with the YES Outdoors staff that all parties at that time felt represented the YES Outdoors programme.

From both the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis, the immediate intended outcomes were largely met. Questionnaire data from and the perceptions of mentors, youth workers and the young people themselves identified that the young people had seen improvements in their confidence, increased trust in an adult or adults, feelings of agency and, specifically, the realisation of new skills and overcoming of a number of challenges.

From a qualitative perspective, in particular, there was evidence to support the idea that the young people involved had progressed in relation to the key metrics identified in the logic model as 'short-term outcomes'. Examples of this are given below.

Establishing positive role models (reliable, caring; modelled and provided continuity): The core YES Outdoors staff established demonstrably positive and consistent relationships with the young people. Based on our observations and the data collected from stakeholders, including the young people, the mentors were also viewed as positive role models but were less influential. This may have been due to the YES Outdoors core staff being the most consistent presence.

Establishing trusted adults within the programme: Direct data collection from the young people (for example, from the focus group groups) and, more indirectly, through the perceptions of SBLs/mentors/youth centre leads revealed that a number of the young people had quite negative perceptions of adults, especially school-based authority figures. Through the course of the CLIMB programme, as noted above, immersion, with a variety of staff consistently acting as positive role models, helped to establish more trusted bonds. The activities run through the CLIMB programme (for example, rock climbing) lend themselves to encouraging inter-peer trust and teamwork. Furthermore, the receipt of the bicycle was symbolically important, cementing the positive relationships the young people had made with trusted adults connected with the CLIMB programme and rewarding their efforts on the programme. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the CLIMB activity provided does not operate in a vacuum but instead works alongside other and consistent sources of support for certain young people, particularly those regularly attending youth centres. For example, the youth centre leads representing two of the youth centres involved in the programme referenced having painstakingly cultivated relationships with the young people through their outreach programme over a two- to three-year period.

Developing higher levels of agency: Through involvement in the various activities associated with the CLIMB programme (for example, rock climbing, bicycle maintenance and a variety of new experiences throughout the week-long residential), the young people were, to varying extents, empowered to use their agency in a positive manner.

Feeling empowered to change/increasing self confidence: A combination of consistent and positive role models and a supportive, non-judgemental environment emboldened many of the young people to try things (sometimes for the first time) and showcase a more resilient attitude.

Realising new skills: There were concrete examples of the assimilation of quite activity-specific practical skills throughout the course of the programme, ranging from harnessing safely for rock-climbing through to repairing a punctured tyre on a bicycle. Furthermore, there were several other examples of enhanced psycho-social skills. Throughout the course of the programme, the young people observed YES Outdoors and wider staff, such as Youth Centre Lead A, skilfully and calmly helping them to deal with conflict resolution in more productive ways. This appeared to be translating into how they interacted with others outside of the programme itself.

They're more confident about handling tools. And maybe even more confident about talking to new people. That was out of their comfort zone – it's no longer out of their comfort zone because they've learnt a new skill to communicate with someone who probably talks differently to them. (Youth Centre Lead A)

The short-term findings are impressive, given the cohort that the YES Outdoors programme is aimed at and the challenges anticipated with key barriers such as attendance. However, inevitably, when considering the intermediate and longer-term outcomes, there is much less certainty. The quantitative data suggests that, for some of the young people, a reduction in problematic behaviours was observed, but the data on improved prosocial behaviour is less clear. Due to the study design, we cannot make causal claims about this. However, the qualitative data provides some proxy evidence to suggest initial positive movement towards some of the intermediary outcomes noted in the logic model. These are given below.

Increasing levels of prosocial behaviour: Interviews conducted with lead staff connected to the two youth centres revealed some enduring positive outcomes related to prosocial behaviour. Clearly, the timings of

the evaluation dictated that any intermediary effects observed need to be treated cautiously, but at the same time, the levels of effect in certain individuals appeared to have been significant, as is showcased in the example below.

She came back, and I'm praying it lasts, but she came back [from the residential] a different child in the sense of, all of a sudden, she can follow direction and instruction. That might not sound like much, but for that person, that has an answer [for] or actually pushes against any sort of authority... her attitude... she [is] still sort of, 'Oh shut up [Youth Centre Lead A]' and whatever, but it's softer, and she follows instructions, and she listens, and she thinks about now what she's going to say before she says it. I don't know how long that will last... (Youth Centre A, Lead)

Changes in friendship groups: A key finding picked up was that the CLIMB programme enabled the young people's friendship circle to expand. This was particularly important for many of the young people targeted for the CLIMB programme, who were said to be negatively impacted by 'G-checking'⁷ and an abiding culture that either directly or indirectly imposes boundaries on them. The following example is a powerful instance where a girl who was typically very suspicious of others and inward-looking voluntarily continued a positive new friendship established through the CLIMB programme.

I was going 'Who's that then?' [another girl that attended the programme], and she was telling me, and clearly, they are still talking. So that is really, really positive, and that sounds like a small thing, but for young people that are a bit postcode-locked it's massive because you're breaking down those barriers between areas, because suddenly they know people and suddenly they're not so threatening and suddenly they've got friends – their world has been bigger, and so they've got friends in another estate that they can go and see, meet, or talk to. Or they know someone else at school. Do you know what I mean? It widens their world. [Young person's name] is moving up a year, so Year 8, but her confidence, she was really unsure about it. And... she was really excited about it yesterday. (Youth Centre B, SBL)

Engaging with youth centres and associated positive activities: Largely detected through interviews with youth centre leads (engagement with the evaluation from school sources was less forthcoming), there were powerful examples of young people attending youth centres more frequently and taking up the wider opportunities offered.

The boys have got a podcast today about football. They did a historical one the other day, and now they're doing one today. And they've got a four-week podcasting in their established group. (Youth Centre A, Lead)

Throughout the programme and from the evaluation data, it was clear that the mentoring element had deviated from what was detailed in the study plan and was much more activity based and less formal. The evaluation team recommends that if activity-based mentoring is going to be the focus of the programme, there needs to be further consideration of how some of the medium-term and all of the long-term goals that are currently in the ToC are going to be achieved. There seems to be a disconnect between how the

⁷ G-checking is an informal term used when a gang member approaches someone to check whether they are a member of the same gang.

programme was delivered and the current ToC, with a lack of theoretical underpinning of how longer-term outcomes will be met.

This means that either the mentoring aspect of the programme needs to be progressed as detailed in the study plan, alongside sustained work that helps the young people apply the skills they have learnt back into a school setting and in other aspects of their lives while they continue to work on these skills. Alternatively, the ToC needs to be reworked to include more achievable medium- and longer-term outcomes.

Conclusion

Table 28 Summary of the feasibility study findings

Research question	Finding
<p>RQ1 Is there organisational capacity to reach and recruit young people to the programme and evaluation?</p>	<p>Recruiting young people, maintaining their attendance and preparing for the OBT trip required additional capacity that was supplied by youth workers. In order to move forward, YES Outdoors need to consider how future cohorts would be recruited, put in place clear criteria and processes for this recruitment and extend the timeline for recruitment in order to build relationships with the referral routes. Preparation for the OBT trip, including gaining authorised absences and parent/carer permission, needs to start early.</p>
<p>RQ2 Can the eligibility criteria used by referral pathways for young people’s referral be developed to achieve consistency and objectivity before the pilot trial?</p>	<p>The current eligibility criteria and threshold document require streamlining and further specificity. Parental/carer sensitivities to the criteria should be considered alongside the need for transparency.</p> <p>Referrers appear to have used their expertise in selecting individuals and groups to the programme – YES Outdoors should reflect on this when reconsidering the criteria.</p> <p>Past activities with YES outdoors should also be considered when referring young people.</p> <p>Working with referral routes to refine the criteria would support this work.</p>
<p>RQ3 Is the YES Outdoors intervention seen as worthwhile from the perspectives of the young people recruited (and other key stakeholders)?</p>	<p>Overall, the young people were positive about the programme and its component parts. The focus groups and surveys of young people showed that climbing was more popular than bicycle maintenance. Other stakeholders, such as youth workers, settling-based leads (SBLs) and mentors also indicated that they believed the programme was worthwhile.</p>
<p>RQ4 Explore the range of mentor characteristics and the extent to which any of these affect their commitment to the programme</p>	<p>All mentors showed commitment to the programme, which could be evidenced from their attendance at sessions. The mentors demonstrated passion and enthusiasm for the programme, feeling positive about their involvement. In terms of their characteristics, the diversity in the mentor sample was less than anticipated, and for some of the mentors, their motivation for participation had been the climbing.</p>

Research question	Finding
<p>RQ4a Do any of these characteristics appear to influence the mentor's relative effectiveness in mentoring young people</p>	<p>This RQ was designed based on one-to-one mentor-mentee relationships developing, which did not take place. The mentor responses and characteristics were intended to be matched with the outcomes of the young person they had been mentoring, to explore associations. As such, it is hard to say whether the characteristics of the mentors impacted on their effectiveness in mentoring young people. However, from the data we do have, it is clear that some mentors proved 'more popular' than others and that some mentors were more versed in mentoring-type activities than others.</p>
<p>RQ5 Is the YES Outdoors intervention deliverable within a nine-month timescale?</p>	<p>There were some doubts over the length of the climbing section of the programme for youth workers. However, 12–14 weeks seem to have been considered a good time frame for this activity, giving the young people time to become more confident at climbing and to form relationships with their mentors. The six-week time frame for the bicycle maintenance was thought to be appropriate, given that, although the young people were highly motivated by the possibility of receiving a bicycle, they were still less engaged in this stage of the programme.</p>
<p>RQ6 To what extent are young people engaged with each section of the programme (climbing, bicycle maintenance, the OBT residential, the celebration event and ongoing mentoring)?</p>	<p>The young people were engaged in each aspect of the programme; however, attendance was problematic for some individuals. The evidence suggests that engagement and enjoyment were higher in the climbing component than in the bicycle maintenance and the OBT residential. For those young people that attended the OBT residential, it was a positive and enjoyable experience. Over the course of the programme, the young people developed positive trusted relationships with YES Outdoors staff and mentors. However, there was little evidence that formal mentoring took place in the way that was intended. The activities that took place were more similar to 'coaching' or activity-based mentoring. There was limited focus on the mentoring stages and activities found in the feasibility study plan.</p>
<p>RQ7 Can business as usual (BAU) at schools or pupil referral units (PRUs) be determined?</p>	<p>There is limited data to answer this research question directly. In addition, there is a lack of agreement between the views of the delivery team and the evaluation team. The delivery team feel that the referral route is unimportant; however, the evaluation team feel that the difference in BAU</p>

Research question	Finding
	between schools and youth centres has the potential to impact upon the outcomes of the programme.
RQ8 Are the outcome measures and the IPE methods suitable for the young people engaged with the YES Outdoors programme?	<p>Collecting self-report data from the young people in the YES programme was challenging, due to lack of focus, potential issues around literacy and comprehension levels and patchy attendance. There is some evidence to suggest that the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) might have been problematic for some of the young people. There was also concern from the youth workers that the young people may have been responding in the way they thought was expected of them. The descriptive analysis of the data demonstrates some inconsistent responding from some young people, but generally does not match the concern for socially desirable responding.</p> <p>The SDQ did detect a change in the skills of some of the young people across the course of the programme that seemed to be related to their referral pathway. The issues faced during data collection with the young people felt non-specific to the SDQ and more about the challenge of working with this type of cohort.</p>
RQ9 How is the prospect of randomisation perceived by key stakeholders (the young people, mentors and setting-based leads)?	The young people were not included in our data collection for this research question. While YES Outdoors were initially negative about the prospect of randomisation (as discussed in the relevant section of this report), following discussion, this position eased somewhat over the course of the programme. At the core of this issue is the provision of an enhanced BAU model that would be acceptable to all stakeholders as a reasonable alternative to the CLIMB programme activities. This would support buy-in from referral routes and the necessary attendance levels.

Future research and publications

As suggested above, the evaluation team believe that the most appropriate design for the next piece of research would be an extended feasibility pilot study. Depending upon the findings of the extended feasibility pilot study, an RCT may be possible if an appropriate enhanced BAU model could be agreed. This would have to be both sufficient for an at-risk cohort and different enough from the intervention to truly test the merits of the intervention.

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Appendix 1: YES Outdoors referral form

YES Outdoors | Registered in England: 07834284 | Registered charity number: 1144916



Mentoring Programme Referral Form

Please return the completed form to referrals@yesoutdoors.org.uk

Name of child or young person:				
Date of birth: (DD/MM/YYYY)				
UPN:				
School:			School Tel Number:	
Date form completed:		Gender:	Male	Female
Name of TYS / Behavioural Manager/ Teacher completing the form:				
Attendance % to date:				
Ethnicity code:	WHITE:			
Year group of child:				
	Looked After Child Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Known to Social Care teams/Families First? Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	On CP register <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other agencies already involved? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>

Please note any other agencies involved:	
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Code of practice reference, please tick one:	Statement	Education Health Care Plan
Parental permission for the referral - tick	Name of parent/carer:	Date: (DD/MM/YYYY)

Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Behaviour Difficulties

Outline the strengths of the child or young person and areas where progress have been made:

Outline key areas of concern regarding the child/young person's social, emotional, mental health and/or behavioural difficulties:

What are the strategies currently in place to address the social, emotional, mental health and/or behavioural difficulties listed above?

please answer the following Y/N questions to the best of your knowledge.

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Are they making good progress?	Yes	No	academic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
Are you concerned about their behaviour?	Yes	No	their	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do they integrate well in school?	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are they engaged in learning?	Yes	No	their	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do they have adequate support from parent/carer?	Yes	No		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do they participate in sports / other activities?	Yes	No	sports / other	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are they showing any signs of depression?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are they/their carer struggling financially?	Yes	No		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do they exhibit signs of aggression?	Yes	No	aggression?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are they suspected of affiliation with a gang?	Yes	No	affiliation with a	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Any known close relatives in prison?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Suspected of ever carrying a weapon?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have they bullied or been violent?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are they or have they recently been bullied?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes been	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Any parent/carer views or concerns?					

Has the young person had exclusions (Fixed Term/Managed Move/Permanent) from school? Yes

If Yes, please give details (please give both dates and reasons):

Does the young person have a Pastoral Care Leader or Support Plan in place?

Yes

If Yes, please give details in the Comments section below

Is the pupil a " Fair Access Pupil"?

Yes

Any other comments or information or continuation space for previous answers

YES Outdoors is the Data Controller. Personal data that you provide will be used by us to determine a young person's eligibility for our programme, and to carry out activities in the public interest.
If we need consent to process personal data, we will inform you. To find out more about how we use, store and protect your data visit www.yesoutdoors.org.uk/privacy-policy or email gdpr@yesoutdoors.org.uk

INTERNAL USE: Entered on register	Entered on database - date and initials
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What are your expectations in submitting this information?

Appendix 2: YES Outdoors Threshold document



Mentoring Programme –

Threshold Document

Introduction

We partner work with local agencies to offer additional support via our mentoring scheme. We will work together and collaborate to identify young people with additional needs and provide support if appropriate. Recognising early support is far more effective in promoting the welfare of young people. Keeping them safe and empowering them to make better life choices is preferable than reacting later, when any problems, for example youth violence, may have become more entrenched. The importance of using a young person centred approach in following the youth person's journey is also emphasised. Our service must be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of the individual young person in their family and community context.

This document provides a framework for referring professionals who are working with young people. It aims to help you identify when a young person may need additional support to achieve their full potential. It introduces the four levels of need and gives examples of some of the indicators that a young person may be displaying. By undertaking assessments, it will become clear how best to offer our service. Professionals should be flexible and respond to different levels of need in different young people and be aware of different opportunities in their local area to ensure the correct service users are referred to the appropriate service. Along this continuum, services become increasingly targeted and specialised according to the level of need. Young people's needs are not static, and they may experience different needs – at different points on the continuum – throughout their childhood and teenage years.

This thresholds document provides an overarching framework showing levels of need. Young people who meet the threshold set out at Level 3 will be considered suitable for referral on to this programme. In the event the threshold is exceeded to the higher Level 4, then it is considered the young person is outside the scope of this programme. The referring professional will be instructed to make a referral to the Local Authority Young People's Social Care for assessment and statutory services under S.17, S.47, S.31 and S.20 of the Young People Act 1989.

Remember – where there is an immediate need to protect a young person because they are being harmed or are likely to suffer significant harm, contact the Police or Local Authority Young People's Social Care without delay.

Core Principles when Working with Young people

- Safeguarding young people is everyone's responsibility; everyone who comes into contact with young people has a role to play.
- Services should intervene early to tackle any problems as soon as they emerge. For young people who need additional help, every day matters.
- The young person should be at the centre, their needs are paramount. They must be listened to by professionals and have their voices heard.
- Any services provided to safeguard young people must be clearly focused on the outcomes for the young person.

Working Together to Safeguard Young people requires each local authority area to publish a local assessment protocol which sets out clearly the arrangements for how cases will be managed once a young person is referred into local authority young people's social care. The assessment protocol should ensure that assessments are timely, transparent, and proportionate to the needs of individual young people and their families.

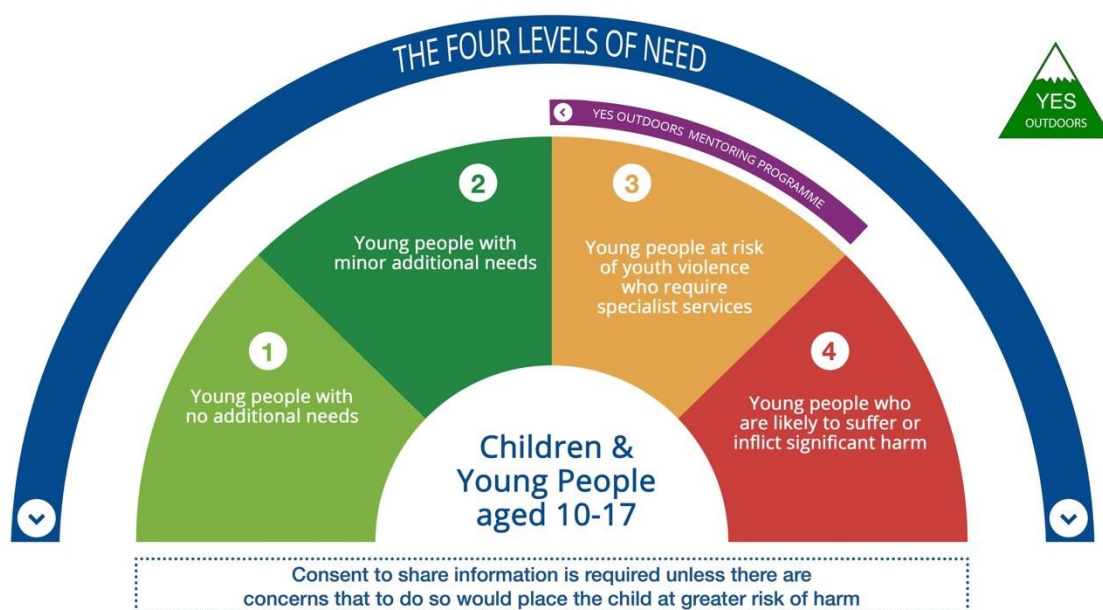
Effective assessment requires all those working with young people, young people and families to:

- Be alert to young people and their needs.
- Remember that the young person's needs are paramount.
- Understand their individual role in keeping young people safe, and the role of others; and
- Be able to identify symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect and share information with other professionals in a timely way.

The Four Levels of Needs

1. **Young people with no additional needs** – these are young people with no additional needs; all their health and developmental needs will be met by universal services. Most young people living in each local authority area require support from universal services alone.
2. **Young people with minor additional needs** – these are young people with additional needs, who may be slightly vulnerable. Their needs are not clear, not known. Low risk of youth violence.
3. **Young people at risk of youth violence who require specialist services** – these are young people who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services. They may require longer term intervention and specialist support. They are likely to be exposed to the risk of perpetrating or being the victim of youth violence.
4. **Young people who are likely to suffer or inflict significant harm** – these young people are suffering or are likely to suffer or inflict significant harm. This is the threshold for an assessment led by young people's social care under s.17 Young people Act 1989. They may require intensive support under s.47 Young people Act 1989. This is the threshold for young person protection.

The Four Levels of Needs – Diagram



Level 1 – Young people with No Additional Needs

Developmental Needs	Family and Environmental Factors	Parents and Carers
Learning / Education Achieving Key Stages. Good attendance. Planned progression beyond statutory school age. No barriers to learning.	Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being Supportive Family Relationships.	Basic Care, Safety and Protection Parents able to provide for young person's needs.
Health Good physical health with age-appropriate developmental milestones; including speech and language.	Housing, Employment and Finance Young person fully supported financially. Good quality stable housing.	Emotional Warmth and Stability Parents provide secure and caring parenting meeting the young person's needs.
Social, Emotional, Behavioural, Identity Good mental health, psychological wellbeing. Good quality early attachments, confident in social situations.	Social and Community Resources Good social and friendship networks exist. Access to positive activities.	Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation Parents provide appropriate guidance and boundaries to help young person develop appropriate boundaries.
Family and Social Relationships Stable families where parents can meet the young person's needs.		
Self-Care and Independence Age-		

appropriate independent living skills.		
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Level 2 – Young people with some Additional Needs

Developmental Needs	Family and Environmental Factors	Parents and Carers
<p>Learning / Education Reduced access to books, or educational materials.</p> <p>Occasional non-attendance at school.</p> <p>Few or no qualifications.</p>	<p>Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being Parental mental ill health.</p> <p>Young person who are acting as young carers.</p> <p>Young person affected by difficult family relationships or bullying.</p>	<p>Basic Care, Safety and Protection Concerns regarding basic care, safety and protection.</p> <p>Early signs of abuse or early patterns of neglect identified in young person.</p>
<p>Health Slow in meeting developmental milestones.</p> <p>Minor health problems which can be managed in a mainstream school.</p> <p>Hospital attendance. Disabilities.</p>	<p>Housing, Employment and Finance Families affected by low income or unemployment.</p>	<p>Emotional Warmth and Stability Inconsistent parenting but young person development not significantly impaired.</p> <p>Lack of response to concerns raised by professionals about young person.</p>
<p>Social, Emotional, Behavioural and Identity. Low-level emotional or mental health issues which require low level intervention.</p> <p>Sexually active young person or young person.</p> <p>Low level substance misuse. Poor self-esteem.</p>	<p>Social and Community Resources Family require advice regarding social exclusion (e.g. hate crime).</p>	<p>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation Inconsistent care e.g. inappropriate young person care arrangements or young inexperienced parents.</p>
<p>Self-care and independence Lack of age-appropriate behaviour and independent living skills.</p>		

Level 3 – Young people at risk of youth violence who require specialist services (Including Our programme)

Developmental Needs	Family and Environmental Factors	Parents and Carers
<p>Learning / Education Short term exclusions or at risk of permanent exclusion, persistent absence.</p> <p>Statement of special educational needs.</p> <p>Not in education, employment or training.</p>	<p>Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being Parents request support to help manage their young person's behaviour.</p> <p>Parents/carers have relationship difficulties which may affect the young person, including domestic violence and abuse.</p> <p>Parents who are known to misuse drugs or alcohol History of domestic violence and abuse; either between parents / carers or young person / young person's own relationship.</p> <p>Risk of relationship breakdown between parents/ carers and the young person.</p> <p>Acrimonious contact arrangements following parental separation.</p> <p>Young person who are privately fostered, young person with parents in prison, young person who have had periods as a Looked After Young person.</p> <p>Young person with attachment issues.</p> <p>Young person with caring responsibilities which are inappropriate and interfere directly with their education / leisure activities.</p>	<p>Basic Care, Safety and Protection Physical care or supervision of the young person is inadequate.</p> <p>Parents have a physical and/or learning disability which impacts on their capacity to meet the needs of their young person.</p> <p>Parents do not engage with professionals.</p> <p>Allegations of periodic neglect including insufficient supervision, poor hygiene, clothing or nutrition.</p> <p>Young carers undertaking intimate personal care.</p>

Developmental Needs (Level 3 - continued)	Family and Environmental Factors (Level 3 - continued)	Parents and Carers (Level 3 - continued)
<p>Health Disability requiring special support to be maintained in mainstream setting.</p> <p>Physical and emotional development raising significant concerns among professionals.</p> <p>Chronic /recurring health problems; parents fail to seek medical treatment.</p> <p>Persistent missed appointments – routine and non-routine.</p>	<p>Housing, Employment and Finance Severe overcrowding, temporary accommodation, homelessness.</p>	<p>Emotional Warmth and Stability Inconsistent parenting impairing emotional or behavioural development.</p> <p>Parents have substance misuse problems (drugs or alcohol) which impacts on their capacity to meet the needs of their young person.</p> <p>Parents have mental health problems which impact on their capacity to meet the needs of their young person.</p>
<p>Social, Emotional, Behavioural and Identity. Early onset of offending behaviour/involvement in the criminal justice system.</p> <p>At risk of gang activity.</p> <p>Evidence of regular, frequent drug use.</p> <p>Mental health issues requiring specialist intervention in the community.</p>	<p>Social and Community Resources Family require support as a result of social exclusion.</p>	<p>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation Parents provide inconsistent boundaries or responses.</p> <p>Carer uses physical chastisement or other harsh methods of discipline.</p> <p>Carer indifferent to smoking, underage drinking, drug misuse and early sexual relationships.</p>
<p>Self Care and Independence Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills, likely to impair development.</p>		

7. Level 4 – Young people who are Suffering or Likely to Suffer

Significant Harm

Developmental Needs	Family and Environmental Factors	Parents and Carers
---------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------

<p>Learning /Education Chronic non-attendance.</p> <p>Permanently excluded, or no education.</p>	<p>Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being</p> <p>Suspicion of serious physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.</p> <p>Suspicion of long term neglect for example; if a young person is hungry and / or home accommodation is in a state of disrepair or the house is dirty and squalid, and / or the young person experiences lots of house moves, and / or the young person has illfitting, dirty clothes, and / or the young person looks dirty and / or carer speaks about the young person harshly / without warmth, and / or the carer does not provide stimulation for the young person.</p> <p>Previous young person removed from parent's care or subject of Young person Protection plan/s.</p> <p>Unborn babies where a parent has mental health issues, violence and anger issues, substance misuse or young person/Care leaver lacking positive parenting experience.</p> <p>High levels of domestic abuse and violence, or serious incident / several incidents of domestic violence when young person is present in the house.</p> <p>Parents lack the capacity to care for the young person.</p>	<p>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</p> <p>Parent lacks the capacity to meet the young person's emotional, educational, social and health needs without support.</p> <p>Any allegation of abuse or neglect or suspicions injury in a pre or non-mobile young person.</p>
--	--	---

Developmental Needs (Level 3 - continued)	Family and Environmental Factors (Level 4 - continued)	Parents and Carers (Level 4 - continued)
<p>Health High level disability.</p> <p>Serious physical and emotional health problems. Suspicion of fabricated or induced illness.</p>	<p>Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being (continued) Young person experiencing or likely to experience significant harm, who need to be looked after outside their own family.</p>	<p>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation Parent does not offer good role model, e.g. they are involved in anti-social behaviour and are unable to restrict access to the home or young person by dangerous adults known or suspected to pose a risk to young person.</p>
<p>Social, Emotional, Behavioural and Identity Challenging behaviours resulting in serious risk to young person and others.</p> <p>Involved in gang activity.</p> <p>Involved in, or at risk of, young person sexual exploitation, including online abuse.</p> <p>Young person at risk of trafficking.</p> <p>Unaccompanied asylum seeing young person.</p> <p>Frequently goes missing from home.</p> <p>Under 13 and pregnant.</p> <p>Young person at risk of FGM (female genital mutilation) or honour-based violence.</p>	<p>Social and Community Resources Young person or family need immediate protection and support due to harassment and discrimination.</p>	
<p>Self-Care and Independence Severe lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to result in significant harm.</p>		

Appendix 3: Additional evaluation questions on young person survey

Q17 Your experience on the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme

Q18 Did you enjoy taking part in the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme?

- Yes (1)
 - Sometimes (2)
 - No (3)
-

Q19 Which part of the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme did you enjoy the most? (Please choose one)

- Climbing (1)
 - Bicycle maintenance (2)
 - Outward Bound residential (3)
-

Page Break

Q20 Thinking about everything you did as part of the **climbing** part of the programme, please put the following **in the order of which you enjoyed the most (by dragging the options)**

- _____ Learning how to climb on the climbing wall (1)
 - _____ Spending time with the other young people/friends (2)
 - _____ Having a mentor to talk to (3)
 - _____ Getting some exercise (4)
 - _____ Getting the opportunity to try new things (5)
-

Q25 Please explain a little more about why you enjoyed these activities the most

Page Break














Q21 Thinking about everything you did as part of the **bicycle maintenance** part of the programme, please put the following **in the order of which you enjoyed the most**

- _____ Learning skills to fix a bicycle (1)
 - _____ Working with your mentor (2)
 - _____ Having an activity to do each week (3)
 - _____ Spending time with other young people/friends (4)
 - _____ Getting the bicycle at the end (5)
-

Q26 Please explain a little more about why you enjoyed these activities the most

Q22 Thinking about the **Outward Bound residential**, let us know using the sliding scale below how much you enjoyed each of the activities.
0 = I really didn't enjoy this activity 100=I really enjoyed this activity.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Water based activities ()	
All day Hike ()	
Climbing based activities ()	
Staying over night in the cabin ()	
Connecting with nature (e.g. seeing lambs, butterflies, learning about plants/environment) ()	
Spending time outdoors ()	
Spending time with the OBT staff ()	
Spending time with the other young people/friends ()	
Getting to spend more informal time with YES Outdoors staff and volunteers ()	
Experiencing a residential (staying away from home) ()	
Activities in the evenings ()	
Learning new skills ()	
Exercising ()	

Q28 Please let us know how much you agree with the following statements...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	I don't know (6)
I enjoyed the celebration event (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was happy to get to keep a bicycle (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoyed sharing what I've done during the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme with trusted adults/parents/teachers (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q24 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I feel like the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme has had a positive impact on...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (5)	I don't know (10)
How confident I feel (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How I cope with challenging things (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My communication skills (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How I work in a group (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with adults (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much effort I put in to things (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How likely I am to try new things (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much effort I put in at school (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How I get on with other young people (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

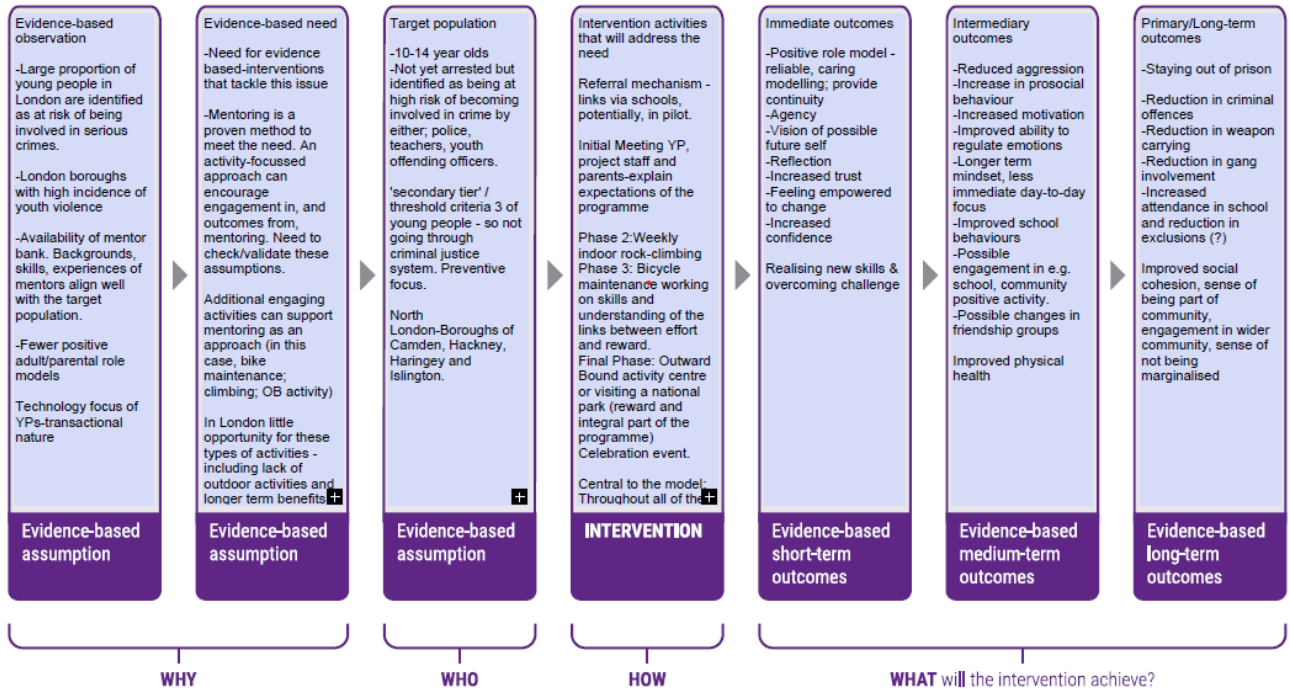
Q23 Would you recommend the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme to your friends and peers?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Maybe (3)
-

Q27 Please can you let us know why you **would or wouldn't** recommend the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme to your friends/peers?

Appendix 4: Theory of Change

TEMPLATE: THEORY OF CHANGE



Appendix 5: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)- CLIMB: Feasibility Study

This document has three sections:

Section A: **Project Overview**

Section B: **Responsibilities**

Section C: **Agreement**

If you have any questions relating to this document, please contact:

Yoni Gal (yonigal@yesoutdoors.org.uk) for queries relating to the delivery of the CLIMB programme.

Ben Willis (b.willis@shu.ac.uk) or Sarah Reaney-Wood (s.j.reaney-wood@shu.ac.uk) for any queries relating to the evaluation.

[Section A: Project Overview](#)

What is CLIMB (Climbing, Mentoring and Bicycle maintenance)?

CLIMB is an out of school programme delivered by YES Outdoors and aimed at 11–14-year-olds and will be delivered in a variety of community settings across North London. Specifically, within the boroughs of Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Islington. The Children/young people (CYP) identified as suitable to take part in the intervention will be those classed as ‘at risk’ of becoming involved in crime, by either educational setting staff or alternative referrers such as youth workers/youth offending officers. The CLIMB programme has been designed to help improve behaviour and wellbeing in CYP ‘at risk’ of becoming involved in crime, by developing their skills, engaging in adventure learning activities and allowing them to experience a positive mentoring experience.

The **CLIMB** programme takes place in three key stages:

Stage one: October 2022 – February 2023, 16 weekly rock-climbing sessions: During these sessions the CYP are paired with a mentor (this takes place holistically with CYP having 4 weeks working with all mentors to allow a natural relationship to develop with one mentor) and will learn some of the basics around climbing, whilst working with their mentor on personalised Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Timebound (SMART) objectives.

Stage two: February 2023 – April 2023, 12 weekly bicycle maintenance sessions: During these sessions CYP learn how to repair and maintain a bicycle, whilst also working with their mentor on their personal SMART objectives. At the end of the sessions the CYP will get to keep the bicycle they have been working on – subject to sufficient engagement.

Stage three: Mid-May 2023 Outward Bound Trust (OBT) Trip: The residential trip lasts for 5 full days and sees CYP travel in groups of up to 15, accompanied by YES Outdoors staff and volunteers. During these five

days, OBT, accompanied by YES Outdoors staff, will run an intense schedule of outdoor activities and challenges in a rural, outdoor setting. For many of the CYP this will represent a rare trip outside of the city, and mentors encourage them to embrace the difference in pace of life and to try new experiences. The staff and CYP travel and stay together, even eating breakfast and dinner together as a group. This is usually a period of significant bonding and sees the cementing of ideas and transitions into improved pro-social behaviours.

Aims of the Feasibility Study

The aim of this feasibility study is to evaluate how the CLIMB programme works to help improve prosocial behaviour and wellbeing in CYP and reduce the risk of their future involvement in violent crime. The findings from this feasibility study will also help us determine if it is possible to evaluate the CLIMB programme through a pilot trial due to take place in September 2023. The pilot trial is NOT part of the feasibility study and therefore there is no expectation feasibility study schools engage in activities beyond June/July 2023. The study is being funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF).

How does my school benefit?

All participating schools have the opportunity to be part of a high-quality research feasibility study, working with experienced researchers from SHU that will provide insight into if, how and why adventure learning and mentoring leads to improvements in behaviour, mental wellbeing, and character development in CYP at risk of being involved in crime. It is also hoped that the CYP will get to experience positive out of school experiences, improved trusting relationships with peers and adults and a new set of goals to work on – which might have a positive effect upon their attendance and behaviour within school.

Benefits for the young person?

Opportunity to:

- Learn to climb with a qualified climbing instructor at the Castle Climbing Centre
- Learn new bicycle maintenance skills
- Be gifted the bicycle you help to repair, subject to appropriate engagement in the programme
- Go on a 5-day Adventure based residential run by OBT
- Work with an appropriate mentor to set SMART objectives for during the programme and beyond it
- Meet with other CYP from a similar area.

Benefits for the parents/guardians

- Access to free reputable youth provision for your child
- Access to information on other youth services/activities that are available to your child for when the CLIMB programme ends
- Opportunity to attend a celebration event to recognise the effort, engagement, and achievement of your child.

School and CYP eligibility

Any North London based secondary schools, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or reintegration provision, with CYPs aged 11-14, that are considered to be at risk of involvement in crime and that are aligned with YES Outdoors Threshold Criteria.

The CYP taking part must be willing to regularly attend all the activities and be willing to take part in a weeklong residential that will take place in May/June 2023.

Schools must be willing to identify and gain signed agreement from a nominated setting-based lead (SBL) who will be the main point of contact for YES Outdoors and SIOE. The role of the SBL is crucially important to the evaluation and they must be willing to track and monitor CYPs and disseminate questionnaires.

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) will also be conducting a survey/interview with a sample of SBLs to understand how they selected the CYPs to take part in the CLIMB feasibility study and how they found the programme. Schools must be willing to be contacted to see if they would be available to take part in a survey/interview.

The research team and evaluation

The evaluation is being independently carried out by a team at Sheffield Hallam University’s Institute of Education - SIOE (the Research Team), led by Dr Sarah Reaney-Wood and Ben Willis.

The evaluation team will measure the following outcomes during the feasibility study:

- CYP behaviour and wellbeing using an online version of the self-report Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) for 11–17-year-olds (Goodman, 2001). The SDQ is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire containing 25 questions some positive and others negative, to assess behaviour and mental wellbeing. In addition, CYP will be asked a series of additional questions about their previous involvement in similar programmes and climbing/mentoring specifically. We will also be asking questions to understand how the CYP have found the YES Outdoors programme and their perceptions on any impact for them.
- CYP experiences of the CLIMB programme. This will also be collected through qualitative data collection techniques such as focus groups/interviews that will take place during four scheduled visits across the course of the programme by researchers from SHU.

The YES Outdoors CLIMB programme will deliver their programme from October 2022 to June 2023. Below, the key requirements of the evaluation and delivery of the programme are outlined along with a timeline.

Timetable of key evaluation and intervention activities throughout the feasibility study

July-September 2022	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed by SBL, YES Outdoors, CYP, Guardian of CYP and SHU. Return signed CYP/guardian consent forms to YES Outdoors.
September- October 2022	Baseline questionnaire to be disseminated to schools by SHU. SBL to administer questionnaire to CYP using guidance provided by SHU
October 2022	Baseline questionnaire to be administered by SHU to mentors

October 2022-February 2023	Rock climbing and mentoring sessions
October 2022-February 2023	SHU to conduct survey/interviews with SBLs to explore referral criteria used to select CYP
November 2022	SHU Observation/CYP data collection visit one-Climbing session
February 2023-April 2023	Bicycle maintenance and mentoring sessions
March 2023	SHU Observation visit/ CYP data collection two-Bicycle maintenance session
May 2023-June 2023	SHU Observation/CYP data collection three – OBT residential (5 days)
June 2023	SHU Observation visit/ CYP data collection four – End of CLIMB Celebration event
May-June 2023	Endpoint questionnaire to be disseminated to schools by SHU. SBL administer questionnaire to CYP using guidance provided by SHU
June 2023	SBL interviews*

- ***Depending on the number of settings involved, Setting based lead interviews may be conducted with a sub sample of schools***

Responsibilities of SHU across the feasibility study

Consent and ethics

- SHU will strictly comply with current legislation in relation to data processing, storage.
- Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Article 6, Paragraph 1e, the legal basis for this project is it being a ‘public task’. However, in keeping with good research ethical practices, CYP and guardian consent will be sought for participation in this programme.
- For any qualitative data, verbal consent will be taken before proceeding.
- SHU will provide an information sheet that makes CYP and guardians aware of the expectations underpinning involvement in the feasibility study.
- The research team have responsibility for ensuring that this study has been assessed and approved by an independent ethics committee at SHU.

Data

- At all points, SHU are responsible for retrieving and processing data as part of this study using password protection and secure transfer methods such as SHU ZendTo.
- We will not use CYP/staff names or school names in any report arising from the research.
- SHU are responsible for the qualitative and quantitative analysis of all the data collected.
- SHU are the data controllers

- A data sharing agreement will detail the personal data to be shared between schools/PRU/reintegration provision and SHU, and a fair processing notice will be sent to all participating schools as per GDPR requirements.
- Full details of our data protection policies and further links can be found at <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research> .

Communications

- SHU will be the point of liaison for schools, CYP and their guardians on anything related to the feasibility study.
- Acting as a point of contact for schools to send signed MoU's, CYP/guardian consent forms and CYP details.
- SHU will frequently liaise with YES Outdoors and YEF throughout the course of the feasibility study.

Fieldwork

- All researchers visiting schools and YES Outdoors activities will hold a current enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) certificate.
- Setting up convenient times to undertake visits to see the YES Outdoors programme in action, speak with the CYP involved and undertake online interviews/survey with wider stakeholders involved e.g. SBL.

Responsibilities of YES Outdoors

Communication

- Communicating with schools about recruitment in line with the stated eligibility criteria (specifying how many CYPs they require from each setting) to the feasibility study.
- Acting as a point of contact for queries about the delivery of the CLIMB programme.
- Collect and share the details of the SBL with SHU, for SHU to then contact them.

Delivery

- Delivering the CLIMB programme as outlined in the MoU
- Transportation to Outward Bound for the 5-day residential
- Safe transportation back to CYP residence as required after any post-session SHU data collection on the designated visit days (please note this transportation service is only for sessions involving SHU where the CYP will be asked to stay slightly later).
- Complying with health and safety, including more detailed medical information from CYPs.

Responsibilities of all schools prior to taking part in the feasibility study

To take part in this study, all schools will need to supply the following information and/or undertake the following tasks in advance of the intervention (CLIMB) starting.

CYP/ school data and administration

- Identify X CYP that meet the CYP eligibility criteria to take part in the feasibility study as directed by YES Outdoors.
- Review and amend (as necessary) a CYP/school details spreadsheet (including specific arrangements for completing the CYP questionnaires) sent by SHU.
- Provide the name/contact details of the nominated SBL to act as an additional key contact throughout the course of the project (we advise a close working relationship with the SBL to assist with efficient data sharing).

Consent, agreement and ethics

- Facilitate the distribution and retrieval of CYP/guardian consent forms.
- Ensure that the MoU is read and signed by all signatories required:

Baseline questionnaires

- Facilitate the completion of the CYP baseline questionnaire
- Ensure questionnaires are undertaken under the appropriate conditions (these will be communicated by SHU ahead of the questionnaire completion).

Responsibilities of all schools once the intervention (CLIMB) has commenced

CYP testing and questionnaire

- Enable/facilitate SHU to administer the **endpoint questionnaire with CYP**. SHU will distribute the questionnaire link to SBLs to administer the questionnaire to CYP following the guidance provided by SHU.
- Encourage CYPs ongoing engagement with CLIMB.

Survey & online interview with SBL

- Complete a short survey towards the start of the programme about how CYPs have been selected
- Online interviews will be undertaken with SBLs to reflect on the process and any perceived impacts the programme has had on the CYP.

CYP/school data monitoring

- Checking the spreadsheet of CYP details and informing SHU of any change in circumstances for the CYP involved (e.g. withdraw from the study, leaving the school) and SBLs (e.g. SBL changes and their replacement's details) ahead of each data collection point.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians

- Read through information sheets and MoU
- Send signed copies of MoU and consent forms to school/PRU/reintegration provision in a timely manner
- Encourage CYP to engage in all aspects of the programme.

Responsibilities of CYP

- Read through information sheets, MoU and consent form.

- Send signed copies of MoU and consent forms to school/PRU/reintegration provision in a timely manner.
- Be committed and willing to attend all aspects of the CLIMB programme.
- Be willing to engage in the evaluation being conducted by SHU.

Section C: Agreement

If the above terms are acceptable, please complete the form below, and sign and date two copies of this document, keeping one copy for your records and returning the other copy to Yoni Gal (contact details above).

Name of School _____

Please ensure that all signatories have all carefully read this MoU document and if unsure of any aspects of the evaluation please don't hesitate to contact Ben Willis or Sarah Reaney-Wood (details on page one).

<p>Setting based lead</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Work email:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>YES Outdoors</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Contact details:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>SHU</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Contact details:</p>	<p>Date</p>

Parent/guardian & Young person	Parent/guardian name: Parent/guardian signature: Young person name: Young person signature:	
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Appendix 6: Evaluation information sheet

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

Sheffield
Institute
of Education



Information sheet: CLIMB programme

Adventure-based learning can be beneficial for the wellbeing and development of young people.

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) have committed to funding work that focuses on improving young peoples' opportunities, in order to reduce the likelihood of involvement in criminal activity and violence in later life. **YES Outdoors** are a London based charity that aim to raise the aspirations of young people. They will be running their Climbing Mentoring and Bike maintenance '**CLIMB**' programme with 25 young people, aged 10-14 in London, helping them to develop their confidence, emotional regulation and skills.

Sheffield Hallam University will be evaluating how the programme works.



CLIMB PROGRAMME

CLIMB is a 9-month intervention focused on harnessing the benefits of mentoring and adventure learning and is comprised of 3 stages:

1. Rock-climbing sessions once a week for 16-weeks
2. Bike Maintenance sessions, once a week for 14-weeks
3. A trip to Outward Bound for a 5 day residential

Throughout each stage you will work with a mentor to work on goals that you set yourself, whilst learning how to climb and how to fix a bike! At the end of the programme, you may get to keep the bike you have fixed!



THE EVALUATION

Sheffield Hallam University are evaluating the CLIMB programme, to understand how it works to help develop young peoples wellbeing and skills such as; confidence, emotional regulation and prosocial behaviour. **The evaluation is not an assessment of the individual young people that are taking part**, but is about understanding how the programme can be effective overall.

As part of the evaluation young people will be asked to:

- Complete a short questionnaire at two time-points (Sep/October 22 & May/June 23)
- Engage with all parts of the programme
- Share their experiences with researchers from SHU in a focus group

What will be expected of me?

- Show up to the sessions and take part
- Work with a mentor to set some goals that are meaningful for you
- Be openminded to learning new things

WHAT WILL MY DATA BE USED FOR?

The data that SHU collect as part of the evaluation will be analysed and written up into an evaluation report. The report will be published on the Youth Endowment Fund's (YEF's) website and publicly available. The data collected may also be used to write for academic journals and/or present at academic conferences. The findings from the evaluation will also be used to inform future evaluation work of the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme. Any data that is used will be reported anonymously, so no individuals can be identified.

THE EVALUATION'S ETHICAL APPROACH

- The data collected from young people as part of the evaluation will be stored confidentially and securely on password protected computers
- The SHU evaluation team will comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR legal basis: public task Article 6 (1e)) and the SHU Data Protection Policy Statement. Please refer to the link for more information: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>
- The evaluation has been approved by Sheffield Hallam University's ethics committee ERXXXXXX
- Any responses young people give in any focus groups will be anonymous and confidential. This means that no individual, school or PRU will be identifiable in any reports or publications
- Any data shared with SHU will be done so using a secure transfer system, such as ZendTo
- All researchers that will be collecting data from SHU are DBS checked and will follow SHU and YES Outdoors safeguarding principles

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:

- you have a query about how your data/your child's data is being used by the University
- you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)
- you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data
DPO@shu.ac.uk

You should contact the University's head of Research Ethics if:

- you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated
ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Taking part in the evaluation of the CLIMB programme is voluntary. However, your participation would really help us in being able to know how and why the YES Outdoors CLIMB programme works and will ensure that we can conduct a good evaluation. If you decide to take part and then change your mind, you can withdraw your data for up to 2-weeks after you have filled in your questionnaire. If you take part in any focus groups, you can decide to only answer the questions you are comfortable with answering. To withdraw you can contact SHU on XXXXXXXXX

Appendix 7: Evaluation Consent form for parents and guardians

Evaluation of the CLIMB (YES Outdoors) programme

Consent Form young person & guardian

This consent form is for both pupils and guardians and is about consenting to take part in the CLIMB programme evaluation. Alongside this consent form you should have also received an information sheet about the research programme and the evaluation. Please ask a member of staff at your school/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) if this is not the case as it is very important that you have read this carefully before signing.

If there is anything you remain unclear about then please contact YES Outdoors for queries relating to delivery and Sheffield Hallam University for queries connected to the evaluation (please refer to the information sheet for contact details).

I understand that by signing this consent form I am consenting to the following:

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

Young person	Yes	No	Guardian	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet and understand what is expected of me			I have read and understood the information sheet and understand what is expected of my child		
I am happy to take part in the evaluation tasks related to the evaluation of the CLIMB programme			I am happy for my child to take part in the evaluation tasks related to the evaluation of the CLIMB programme		
I am happy for my anonymised data (e.g. questionnaire and focus group data) to be collected and used in the evaluation			I am happy for my child's anonymised data (e.g. questionnaire and focus group data) to be collected and used in the evaluation		
I understand and I am happy with how my data is going to be kept			I understand and I am happy with how my child's data is going to be kept		
I understand my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the evaluation			I understand my child's participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the evaluation		

<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Name of participant's guardian</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>