Feasibility of an impact evaluation for detached and outreach youth work

Feasibility study report

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Centre for Evidence and Implementation

YMCA GEORGE WILLIAMS COLLEGE

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Contents

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- Understand the evidence base

- Develop methods and processes to put the evidence into practice

- Trial, test and evaluate policies and programmes to drive more effective decisions and deliver better outcomes.

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Bryson Purdon Social Research

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Executive summary

The project

Detached youth work aims to engage with young people in the locations 'where they are at', providing youth work in 'non-institutional' settings, such as on the street and in parks, shopping centres, fast-food outlets or other community spaces. Rather than serving children in a youth club, school or college, detached youth work meets children out in the community. The frequency and duration of detached youth work can vary, and activities may include building relationships with young people, providing guidance and information, arranging sport and cultural activities, and signposting to other support. It is a flexible and youth-centred approach, adapting to the needs of specific children.

Detached youth work is delivered by youth organisations of many types, such as local authority youth services, charities and social enterprises, faith groups, health agencies and youth justice services. It also has a variety of different aims, including building the relationships between young people and their local communities, safeguarding vulnerable children from abuse and exploitation, supporting young people's wellbeing and helping them to make positive choices. Detached youth work is also often commissioned in response to concerns about antisocial behaviour or perceptions of criminal activity.

Although several studies have explored children's experiences of detached youth work and described the work involved, there is not yet robust quantitative evidence regarding its impact. In part, this is likely to reflect the flexible and youth-centred nature of detached youth work, which presents challenges for robust, causal evaluation. For instance, the lack of clear eligibility criteria and the non-programmatic approach may pose challenges in assessing dosage and intensity and establishing a comparison group. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) therefore funded a feasibility study to explore what models of detached youth work exist, how widely they are used and whether and how detached youth work could be rigorously evaluated in an impact evaluation. The study also explored the nature and purposes of detached youth work, whether it is distinct enough from other activities to be able to detect an impact and what research questions a robust evaluation of detached youth work could answer. The feasibility study aimed to ascertain what methods could be used to robustly evaluate detached youth work and the risks (and mitigations) to such an evaluation. The study used semi-structured qualitative interviews with 21 representatives from organisations that deliver, fund or commission detached youth work; an online survey completed by 93 professionals engaged in detached youth work; and four online workshops with professionals to develop a shared model of practice and a theory of change and discuss the proposed evaluation approach. The study ran from April 2023 to January 2024.

Key conclusions
Detached youth work is delivered across all regions of England by a range of organisations. There is sufficient consistency across key elements to establish a shared model of practice for evaluation. Detached youth work is sufficiently distinct from other provision to allow for evaluation.
Delivery organisations recognise the value of evidencing the impact of detached youth work. They also want to ensure that any evaluation reflects and does not distort its values, aims and practices.
Subject to initial piloting, an impact evaluation could assess the effectiveness of detached youth work at the local-area level, measuring outcomes relating to antisocial behaviour and crime, community safety and community cohesion. An implementation and process evaluation (IPE) could test the mechanisms of change for individuals and the community, as set out in the theory of change, and explore factors including individuals' experiences and accounts of detached youth work as well as implementation aspects such as reach, fidelity and adaptation, acceptability and feasibility, business as usual and costs.
The evaluation team proposes the design for a randomised control trial (RCT) based on hyper-local areas, or 'patches', appropriate for detached youth work, with randomisation at the patch level. Detached youth work would take place in the intervention patches, while control patches would receive usual services (e.g. other youth work or policing). The data required would come from administrative data, observation and community-level surveys. Approximately 150 patches would be required.

The key risks to an RCT would be detached youth work taking place in control areas, groups of young people moving out of the patch (so that detached youth work continues but not in the patch), insufficient patches being identified and challenges when collecting administrative data. These could be mitigated by the careful selection of consortia, an initial analysis of police data, a co-design phase and an internal pilot.

Interpretation

Detached youth work is delivered across all regions of England by a range of organisations. There is sufficient consistency across key elements to establish a shared model of practice for evaluation. In addition to being delivered in a public space, key principles of the shared practice model include that delivery is young people-centred (addressing the needs and experiences of young people), is relational (aiming to build trust and respectful relationships with children) and aims to aid community integration (requiring youth workers to have local knowledge and connect with local stakeholders). The shared practice model proposes that detached youth workers should have, or be working towards, the completion of a level 2 certificate in youth work, be led by youth workers with a minimum of two years' experience in the area they are working; and be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their practice, at least monthly, with supervision.

Supporting children's well-being, confidence and mental health, reducing antisocial behaviour and preventing children's involvement in gang exploitation and violence are common aims of detached youth work. The work takes place on the street and in parks and skate parks, housing estates, cafes and food outlets, shopping centres, and other public locations. According to detached youth work professionals, ideally, relationships would be developed and maintained for more than a year (although detached youth work is often funded for shorter durations). Professionals explain that the 'essence' of detached youth work makes it distinct from other youth services. Delivery in a public, non-institutional space is a key distinguishing feature.

Detached youth work professionals agree that a high-quality evaluation would be of value to the sector and that it would help to identify and encourage what is involved in high-quality, effective practice. Study participants also want to ensure that any evaluation reflects and does not distort the values, aims and practices of detached youth work. For instance, young people's voices and a youth-centred approach should run throughout any evaluation.

Subject to initial piloting, an impact evaluation is challenging but potentially feasible. It could assess the effectiveness of detached youth work on local areas, with priority outcomes relating to area-level antisocial behaviour and crime, community safety and community cohesion. An implementation and process evaluation could test the mechanisms of change for individuals and the community, as set out in the theory of change, and explore factors including individuals' experiences of detached youth work as well as implementation issues, such as reach, fidelity and adaptation, acceptability and feasibility, business as usual, and costs.

The evaluation team proposes the design for an RCT based on patches appropriate for detached youth work, with detached youth work taking place in the intervention patches and control patches receiving usual services. The data required would come from administrative data, observation and community-level surveys. Approximately 150 hyper-local areas, or patches, would be required. This trial design is similar to RCTs of hot-spot policing that have been conducted, in which a police force identifies local areas where crime is most likely to take place and then focuses resources in those areas. Methods that were considered but discounted by the evaluation team include retrospective and prospective quasi-experimental designs and an RCT in which individual children are randomised to take part in detached youth work or receive usual services.

The key risks to the proposed design are detached youth work being carried out in control areas, groups of young people moving out of the patch, insufficient patches being identified and administrative data collection challenges. These could be mitigated by the careful selection of consortia, an initial analysis of police data, a co-design phase and an internal pilot. Given the promising findings in this feasibility study, the YEF is intending to proceed with a pilot trial of detached youth work.

Introduction

This report sets out findings from a feasibility study designed to assess whether it would be feasible to undertake an impact evaluation of detached youth work. It was undertaken by a team of evaluators from the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI), YMCA George Williams College and Bryson Purdon Social Research (BPSR), henceforth referred to collectively as 'the evaluation team'.

Background and intervention

The intervention

The term 'detached youth work' covers a potentially broad range of practice and provision with and for young people with strong unifying features. In common with all youth work, interaction between youth workers and young people is voluntary and negotiable, but in detached provision, it also takes place in young people's territory: a public space which may be outside, such as the park or the street, or in a non-institutional setting, such as a shopping centre, fast-food outlet or barber shop. This radically alters the 'boundaries' in provision, both in terms of the physical space (as young people are able to remove themselves at any moment) and authority (as the youth workers are effectively seeking consent to move into the young people's spaces and conversations).
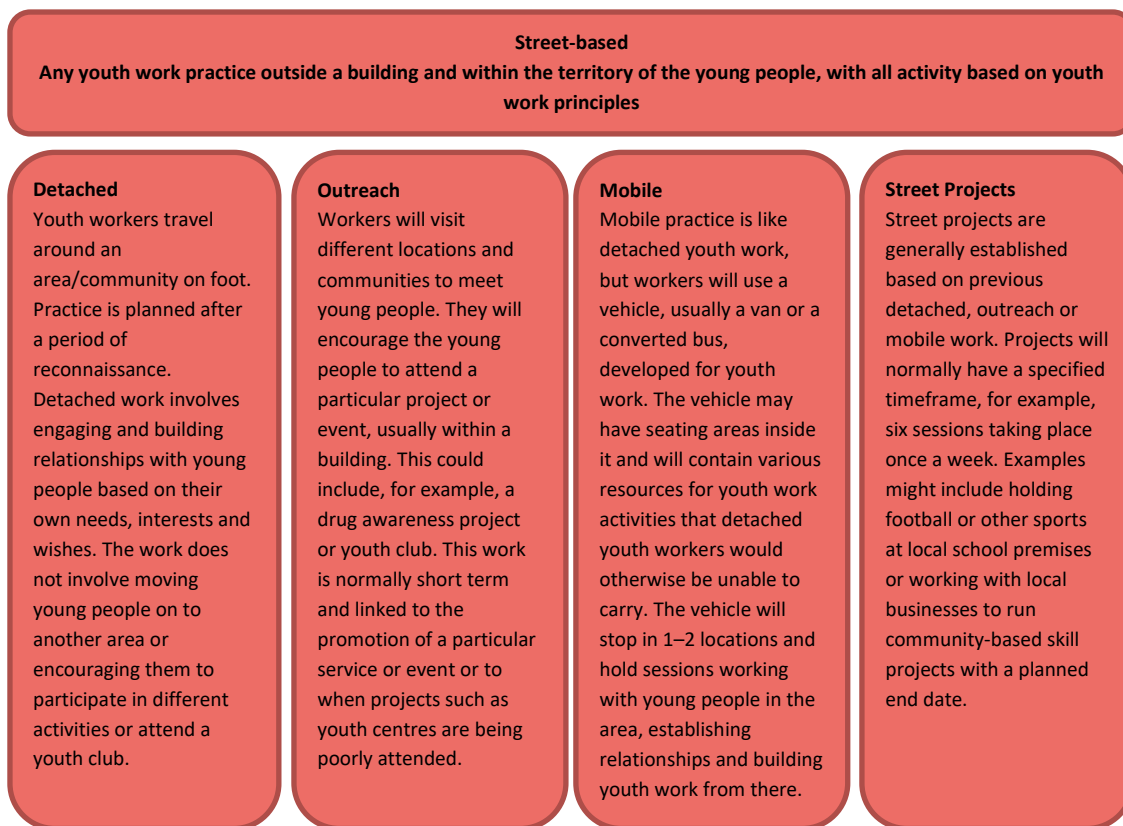
Detached youth work practice tends to be structured around conversation: engaging young people in dialogue that might explore and reframe issues that are affecting them; modelling positive relationships to support young people to build other relationships (e.g. with family, peers, school and in the community); highlighting or signposting other services or support available to the young people; or surfacing and addressing specific risks to young people's physical or psychological safety. Detached youth work can also take the form of street-based projects or activities (like street art) or sports/outdoor games. Through these activities, detached youth work practitioners intend to achieve a variety of outcomes, depending on the issues affecting each individual or group; these outcomes may include improved life changes for young people through improved positive relationships, better social capital and access to services, and a reduced risk of exploitation or of being a victim or perpetrator of criminal acts. Detached youth work can also address community-level issues, making young people and other community members feel safer and more connected.

There is some diversity in terms of the intention, activity, frequency and intensity of delivery and the nature of the relationship between young people and youth workers. Dowling's (2020) typology of street-based youth work, shown in Figure 1, provides a useful starting point to understand where detached youth work fits and how it can be distinguished from other street-based youth work.

While detached youth work can take place in a variety of locations, what is common between detached services is that they take place in the young people's territory. This places the emphasis on the quality of the relationship with young people. Given the lack of boundaries and 'sanctions' available to the youth worker, the only tools they can draw on to build meaningful relationships with young people, who are free to walk away at any time, are their skills and experience. Often, youth workers will look to make use of similarities and shared backgrounds, predicated on an asset-based model of working with young people (Sonneveld et al., 2021). In effect, this is a practice foundation common to all detached youth work models.

Literature on detached youth work informed by work with young people involved in gangs in New York began to emerge in the late 1950s (Smith, 1996, 2005), although detached youth work remains an under-researched and under-evaluated type of provision for young people.

Figure 1. Dowling's typology of street-based youth work

Street-based
Any youth work practice outside a building and within the territory of the young people, with all activity based on youth work principles

Detached	Outreach	Mobile	Street Projects
Youth workers travel around an area/community on foot. Practice is planned after a period of reconnaissance. Detached work involves engaging and building relationships with young people based on their own needs, interests and wishes. The work does not involve moving young people on to another area or encouraging them to participate in different activities or attend a youth club.	Workers will visit different locations and communities to meet young people. They will encourage the young people to attend a particular project or event, usually within a building. This could include, for example, a drug awareness project or youth club. This work is normally short term and linked to the promotion of a particular service or event or to when projects such as youth centres are being poorly attended.	Mobile practice is like detached youth work, but workers will use a vehicle, usually a van or a converted bus, developed for youth work. The vehicle may have seating areas inside it and will contain various resources for youth work activities that detached youth workers would otherwise be unable to carry. The vehicle will stop in 1–2 locations and hold sessions working with young people in the area, establishing relationships and building youth work from there.	Street projects are generally established based on previous detached, outreach or mobile work. Projects will normally have a specified timeframe, for example, six sessions taking place once a week. Examples might include holding football or other sports at local school premises or working with local businesses to run community-based skill projects with a planned end date.

More recently, since the inception of targeted youth services (i.e. provision that aims to meet the needs of a particular youth cohort) in the late 20th century, detached youth work, as a model of youth work practice, has been the focus of ongoing debate as to its purpose and function. A traditional perspective on detached youth work holds that it ought to be a fluid, open-ended relational model which centres on the experiences of young people and focuses on process over outcomes. This is in contrast to targeted 'clinical' outcome-based interventions that lack youth work 'purity' (Crimmens et al., 2004, 2010; Tiffany, 2007). Meanwhile, the breadth of practice that sits under the detached youth work banner has actually increased over the last 50 years to include street-based community safety and criminal justice interventions, which place a much greater focus on pre-defined outcomes and 'intended impact'.

Challenges of evaluation

The fluid and youth-centred nature of the approach presents significant challenges to the evaluation of detached youth work. Although a number of studies have explored young people's experiences of detached youth work and described the work involved, the absence of robust quantitative evidence about its impact means decision-makers are not able to make well-evidenced decisions about (relative) investment or about the effectiveness of different approaches or models (e.g. the role of duration of delivery in a local area and the relationship with certain outcomes).

This study aims to assess whether and how a robust evaluation of the impacts of detached youth work could be taken forward. It was anticipated that focusing such an evaluation on the young people involved would be challenging for a number of reasons.

- Access to young people: By the very nature of detached youth work, the young people involved may be disengaged from other services or may only be involved in provision that is mandatory in nature (this could include formal education and/or training but also welfare and criminal justice interventions). It, therefore, takes time to build a trusting relationship in which the needs and experiences of young people are understood (Golden et al., 2002). Attempts to engage young people in evaluation activities may jeopardise relationships between young people and youth workers and, therefore, make it hard to access the young people involved.

- The variance in the contexts and backgrounds of young people, when coupled with a lack of background data about young people's circumstances and needs (since detached youth work is unlikely to be offered on the basis of established eligibility criteria), makes it hard to establish a baseline from which to measure impact.

- The non-programmatic (i.e. there is unlikely to be a start, middle and end or a standardised 'user journey') and highly youth-centred nature of detached youth work means that it is very difficult to predict or measure characteristics of the work, such as dosage, intensity and the activities undertaken.

- It is difficult to determine what constitutes 'business as usual' in relation to the support or provision that young people access in the absence of detached youth work. Because detached youth work is not a specific programme offered to young people who are receiving other known services, it is challenging to identify a comparison group and clearly assess what is additional for young people involved in detached youth work.

These four challenges were considered a priori and are explored further in this study through data collection and interpretation. These are key reasons why we recommend a trial based on area-level outcomes rather than on individual, young person–level outcomes.

Detached youth work has been hit particularly hard by reductions in central and local government investment in youth services, although the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in anecdotal reports of increases whilst indoor mixing was prohibited. An analysis of local authority spending on youth services shows a near 75% reduction in real terms over the last ten years – a total of a £1.1bn decrease in expenditure (YMCA, 2022, 2024). The difficulty in evidencing the impact of detached provision, including its cost-effectiveness and value for money, made it an easy target when services were dramatically scaled back. With most local authorities no longer having an in-house youth service (National Youth Agency [NYA], 2021), the provision of detached youth work is now fragmented, patchy, disparate and funded through a variety of mechanisms.

Research questions

The overall aim of this study is to assess whether an impact evaluation of detached youth work would be feasible. Given the fragmented nature of detached youth work, the study began with an exploratory phase that aimed to determine whether detached youth work is sufficiently consistent to enable the development of a widely applicable approach to its evaluation. Specifically, the study sought to identify one or more models of the practice that could form the basis for an evaluation.

The first stage of feasibility work focused on the following research questions:

1. What models of detached youth work exist, how widely are they used, and which are most likely to be relevant for this study?

2. What interventions or practices could detached youth work be compared with? Is it distinct enough from other activities to be able to detect an impact?

3. What are delivery organisations' views on evaluating the impact of detached youth work? What are the motivations and concerns of leaders in the field?

At the end of this stage, a shared practice model and an initial design for an impact evaluation were produced, and an interim report (not published) was provided to the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). The second stage then addressed three further research questions:

4. What research questions could a robust evaluation answer, including the consideration of priority outcomes, mechanisms to be tested, sub-group effects and implementation factors?

5. What methods could be used? This includes:

   - Is there scope for a cluster randomised control trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental design (QED), and, if a QED, with what comparison group/s?

   - How could data feasibly be collected?

   - What effect sizes are likely, and what sample size will be needed to detect those effects?

6. What are the risks, and how could they be mitigated?

Stage 1 involved a survey, semi-structured interviews and three workshops with representatives of organisations involved in detached youth work. Stage 2 involved further interviews and a fourth workshop.

Ethical review

The evaluation team conducted an internal assessment of the ethical implications of this study and assessed it as low risk, as all participants are service professionals and the study involves describing detached youth work rather than collecting information about individual young people. The study was undertaken in adherence with the Social Research Association's (SRA's) ethical guidelines (SRA, n.d.). In agreement with the YEF, no application for ethical approval or appraisal was considered necessary.

Participants for interviews, the survey and workshops were approached by email, either directly by the evaluation team or via other organisations or networks. All interviewees were sent an information sheet and consent form in advance. Participants were asked for their consent to participate and their consent to record their survey responses, interview responses and discourse during the workshops. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the survey, interview or workshops as well as their right to withdraw their data should they wish to do so. Participants were also informed of how their data would be stored, reminded of the anonymous and voluntary nature of their participation, and asked for permission to record at the start of each interview.

Data protection

Data protection was overseen by CEI's independent Data Protection Officer. The Data Privacy Notice for the Detached Youth Worker Feasibility Study is attached in Appendix 1.

Participants were informed prior to data collection that data would be stored by the CEI and YMCA George Williams College until one year after the end of the project (for audit purposes), whereupon it would be securely destroyed. Participants were also informed of how their data would be stored and anonymised and that their data would only be used and analysed by researchers from YMCA George Williams College and the CEI for the purposes of the feasibility study.

Survey data

Survey participants were invited to give their contact details so that we could invite them to take part in subsequent interviews or workshops. Participants' data was securely stored by the CEI and pseudonymised. Each participant was given a unique identifier which could only be linked to them by a key that was stored separately from the data.

Interview data

Participants' recordings and transcriptions were pseudonymised and securely stored on CEI and YMCA George Williams College's secure servers. Participants' pseudonymised interview transcripts were analysed by CEI and YMCA George Williams College's research team. Only researchers from CEI and YMCA George Williams College who were involved in analysing interview and survey responses had access to the pseudonymised survey responses and interview transcripts.

Workshop data

Workshop data, in the form of notes taken by the evaluation team, commentary in the chat function of online meetings, and audio recordings and transcripts of workshop discussions, was also held securely and accessible only to researchers from CEI and YMCA George Williams College.

Project team and stakeholders

Jane Lewis and Amy Hall, CEI, led the feasibility study. This included managing day-to-day activity, leading the design and analysis of the survey, co-designing the interview discussion guides, co-leading interviews and workshops, designing the implementation and process evaluation, and contributing to the report.

Dr Lydia Whitaker, Simon Frost, Sarah McCoy and Bethia McNeil, YMCA George Williams College, provided expertise and knowledge of detached youth work, led the survey distribution and recruitment of interview and workshop participants in Stage 1, co-designed the Stage 1 interview discussion guide, co-led interviews and workshops, led on the Shared Practice Model and theory of change, and contributed to the report.

Caroline Bryson and Dr Susan Purdon, BPSR, supported the design of the interview discussion guide, survey and workshops; led on the design of the impact evaluation; co-led the fourth workshop; and contributed to the report.

This project was funded by the YEF. The evaluation team does not have any potential interests that would be considered conflicts of interest.

Methods

Data collection

The interviews, survey, and workshops were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of detached youth work in the UK. An overview of these methods is presented in Table 1. In Stage 1, together these research methods explored the following:

- The nature and extent of engagement with detached youth work

- Organisations commissioned

- The number of staff involved in direct delivery

- The number of young people reached

- Models of detached youth work practice

- The targeted young people, including any established criteria and the young people's profiles and characteristics (age, risk factors and vulnerabilities, other services accessed and agencies likely to be in their lives)

- The targeted outcomes or objectives: the explicit and implicit aims of engagement in detached youth work

- The staff involved in detached youth work: their numbers, backgrounds and training

- Where and how young people are reached

- The nature of interactions with young people, including the intensity and frequency of contact, where it takes place, individual or group contexts, how relationships are developed, any specific content in the relationships (e.g. befriending, mentoring, advising, signposting to or liaising with other agencies, and violence disruption)

- Variation in practice within agencies and across the sector

- Hypotheses about the mechanisms of change that lead to positive outcomes as a result of detached youth work

- Race equity issues:

  o Are minoritised ethnic groups (and other minoritised groups, including LGBTQ+ and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities) targeted or catered for through detached youth work?

  o How do race (and other) inequities inform young people's circumstances and needs, and what impact does this have on detached youth work practice?

  o The reach or engagement implications of working with minoritised groups

- Information collected by agencies on detached youth work: what information is collected, by whom and in what form?

- How detached youth work is overseen, evaluated or supported

- Other relevant areas of practice:

  o Services in young people's lives in the absence of detached youth work

- o   Forms of practice that detached youth work could potentially be compared with

- o   Points of distinction between detached youth work and other practices

- Views of an impact evaluation

  - o   The potential value of an evaluation to young people, organisations and the sector

  - o   Concerns (practical, ethical, values-based, etc.) and how they could be addressed

  - o   Organisational interest in taking part and any conditionality.

In Stage 2, the interviews and final workshop focused on reviewing the shared practice model, theory of change and proposed impact evaluation design and approach.

Table 1. Methods overview

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants	Data analysis method	Research questions addressed
Qualitative interviews	Online semi-structured interviews	N = 21. Sector leaders and experts, detached youth workers, team leaders, service managers, organisation leaders, funders, commissioners	Framework thematic analysis	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Survey	Online survey	N = 93. Detached youth work deliverers, team leaders, service managers, organisation leaders, funders, commissioners	Descriptive statistical analyses	1, 2, 3
Workshops	Online workshops (4)	N = 8, N = 4, N = 7, N = 8. Sector leaders and experts, detached youth work deliverers, team leaders, service managers, organisation leaders, funders, commissioners	Review of written notes	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Survey

The survey was designed by CEI with input from BPSR and YMCA George Williams College. The survey was used to provide an overview of the landscape of detached youth work delivered across England and to provide insights into the scale and type of detached youth work being delivered by youth organisations. The survey was operationalised in Qualtrics, an online survey platform. The survey was open over one three-week period and consisted of multiple choice and Likert questions, with text boxes to expand on responses to some questions. The survey was coded to allow participants to skip items that were not relevant to them.

Interviews

Discussion guides were created to include questions appropriate for all participants to gain an understanding of the nature of detached youth work services offered in England, how they are commissioned, the kinds of young people they support and the types of issues they seek to address and to start to explore current data collection practices and perspectives on evaluation. These questions were then used flexibly according to

the expertise and perspective of each interviewee. The semi-structured interviews were conducted online (via Zoom or Teams) by a member of the evaluation team and lasted up to an hour. Interviews were recorded with permission from the interviewees.

Workshops

The aim of the workshops was to dig deeper into our understanding of what detached youth work is and to develop one or more shared practice models, i.e. detailed descriptions of models of detached youth work that could potentially be evaluated. The proposed shared practice model for detached youth work is shown in Appendix 2. All workshops were held online (via Zoom) to facilitate participation by individuals across the country. At least two members of the evaluation team facilitated each workshop. Workshop participants were asked to treat all conversations within the workshop as confidential and were asked for permission to record at the start of the session.

Workshop 1 ran for two hours and was used to share findings from the interviews and survey, discuss the range of models of detached youth work identified and consider the models' alignment with the objectives of this project. Workshop 2 ran for two-and-a-half hours and was used to identify the possible components of one or more shared practice models. Workshop 3 ran for three hours and was used to refine and agree on the shared practice model. We also introduced a structure for a theory of change for detached youth work, although the discussion mainly focused on outcomes and impacts, and it was not possible to develop a full theory of change in Stage 1. Workshop 4 reviewed the shared practice model, the theory of change proposed by the evaluation team (shown in Appendix 3) and the proposed evaluation approach.

Small workshops provided an opportunity to gather data from a diverse group with a shared engagement in detached youth work while encouraging reflection and coverage of the variety of perspectives offered.

The aim of developing a shared practice model was:

- To bring a degree of consistency, incorporating views about quality and effectiveness
- To develop a model that would reflect at least some mainstream and business-as-usual practices
- To allow some flexibility in implementation.

Desk review of evaluation approaches

A final element of the study was a focused, desk-based review of the literature on methods for data collection with marginalised young people, supplemented with interviews with experts. A summary of the review is shown in Appendix 4.

Participant selection and recruitment

There was no existing sample frame for organisations involved in detached youth work, so a sample needed to be generated for the study. This was done in two ways.

- We undertook a desk review. This involved reviewing 50 local authority websites (in England) to identify local authorities undertaking detached youth work themselves and references to commissioned detached youth work organisations. A cross-section of local authorities (50) was selected based on geographical area and whether they were local authorities with youth provision or commissioned youth work known to YMCA George Williams College, we also employed a snowball sampling approach for local authorities known to be commissioning youth

work. We also reviewed the 360Giving data available via GrantNav to identify organisations. Given the aims and our selection approach, the sample deliberately over-represents local authorities that undertake or commission detached youth work.

- We linked with YMCA George Williams College's Regional Impact Networks (which are led by Regional Youth Work Units), the Federation for Detached Youth Work, UK Youth and the NYA Census, asking them to put us in touch with organisations involved in detached youth work.

Survey

The survey was distributed by email to all contacts and organisations identified during the initial scoping work, including local authorities that commission or conduct detached youth work, voluntary sector organisations, other funders and sector lead organisations. The survey was open for nearly three weeks, and weekly reminders were sent to encourage completion. We took a snowballing approach, asking recipients to forward the survey link to other individuals and organisations in the sector in order to reach the widest possible group of organisations involved in detached youth work. The survey was also publicised on the social media platforms of the three organisations in the evaluation team.

We received 122 survey responses, 93 of which were sufficiently complete (meaning answers were provided to more than 50% of questions), to be included in the analysis. A summary of the types of organisations and the roles of survey participants can be found in Tables 2 and 3. We received a very low response rate from commissioners and funders. Possible reasons for this are that 1) commissioners and funders work across a wide variety of provision and did not see detached youth work as their area of expertise, or 2) the sampling and distribution approach was unintentionally weighted towards deliverers. While this posed limitations to reporting a quantitative summary of the commissioning and funding landscape for detached youth work, several commissioners were included in the qualitative work to address this gap.

We received responses from multiple participants from some organisations. Participants from the same organisation were treated as separate individual responses, as there was no clear basis for selecting one or averaging responses within organisations. Multiple responses were relatively rare. The 62 participants who provided the names of their organisations represented 54 organisations in total, with no more than three participants from any single organisation.

Given the survey sampling approach, which was designed to capture the breadth of provision in England and provide an overarching idea of what is being offered and to whom, it is important to note, when interpreting the survey data, that responses may not be representative of all detached youth work practitioners or organisations.

Table 2. Summary of the roles of survey participants

Which of the following best describes your own role? Select the option that best applies.

Job title or role	Percentage of participants
Youth worker	26.0%
Team manager/team leader	27.3%
Service manager	10.4%
Senior manager/chief executive	23.4%
Other	13.0%

Table 3. Summary of the organisation types that survey participants represent

What type of organisation do you work for? Select one option.

Organisation type	Percent of participants
A charity, non-governmental organisation or voluntary or community sector organisation	48.7%
A local authority	37.5%
A faith-based organisation	7.5%
A commissioning/funding body	3.7%
Other	2.5%

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 80 respondents.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewees were purposively sampled from existing contact details and from the survey to represent the sector across England, including a range of organisations and roles, with sampling criteria relating to the role of the organisation and the organisation type, size and regional location. In Stage 1, 18 semi-structured interviews were held. In Stage 2, 12 semi-structured interviews were held, nine with participants who had been involved in the Stage 1 interviews and three with additional participants who were identified through the survey.

The sample included nine managers of detached youth work services, four representatives of commissioning bodies, six detached youth workers and two academics working in detached youth work. Participants were based in Manchester, London, Kent, Bristol, Hull, Brighton, Essex, Newcastle, and the West Midlands. Five of the interviews in Stage 1 were conducted prior to the survey development to ensure that the topics, concepts and language used in the survey reflected those commonly used in the sector, and the remainder of the Stage 1 interviews were conducted after the survey data had been collected.

A breakdown of the interview participants' organisations can be found in Table 4. The individuals worked in several roles, including as funders or commissioners, managers of detached youth work programmes, delivery team managers and detached youth workers.

Table 4. Summary of the organisation types that interview participants represent

Organisation type	Number of participants
Local authority, delivery	7
National body	2
Faith-based, delivery	2
Charity, delivery	6
Commissioner/funder	4
Total	**21**

Workshops

We had intended for 8–10 interviewees to participate in each workshop, but the limited availability of participants over the summer months meant these numbers were slightly lower overall. In total, 20 individuals participated in at least one workshop. Participants represented detached youth work undertaken in Manchester, London, Hull, Brighton, Essex, Kent and Northumbria. Participants represented a range of organisations, including charities, violence reduction units, faith-based organisations, local authorities, commissioning bodies and membership organisations.

We had intended that the same participants would attend all the workshops. However, the workshops took place over a short period of time during the summer months, and most participants were only able to attend one workshop. This meant that we made slightly less progress than anticipated towards finalising the shared practice model, theory of change and evaluation design.

Workshop 1 was attended by eight participants: two managers of detached youth work, two commissioners of detached youth work and four detached youth work workers.

Workshop 2 was attended by four participants: one manager of detached youth work and three representatives of commissioning bodies.

Workshop 3 was attended by seven participants: four managers of detached youth work, two representatives of commissioning bodies and one detached youth worker. Workshop 3 was intended to take place in person, but it was moved online due to national rail strikes which would have hindered participation.

Workshop 4 was attended by eight participants: five managers of detached youth work, two representatives of commissioning/infrastructure bodies and one detached youth worker.

Analysis

The qualitative interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, then analysed using the Framework thematic analysis method (Spencer et al., 2014), which involves identifying analytical themes both inductively and deductively and summarising the data by participant within the relevant theme and sub-theme.

Survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics to explore the range and frequency of responses. Data from the semi-structured interviews and the survey was synthesised to yield a picture of the most prevalent models of detached youth work and their core features.

Data from the interviews, workshops and survey was analysed separately and then triangulated and integrated to identify areas of difference and reinforcement and to substantiate and explain the findings. We identified where there were diverse views and commonalities both within and between data sources and considered possible explanations for these differences and similarities.

Timeline

Table 5. Timeline of project activity

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
Stage 1		
Mar–Apr 2023	Project initiation, development of study protocol	CEI
Mar–Apr 2023	Desk research and development of sample	GWC
May–June 2023	Survey development and fieldwork	CEI, BPSR
May–July 2023	Semi-structured interviews	CEI, GWC
July–Aug 2023	Workshops, development of the shared practice model and outline impact evaluation	GWC, BPSR, CEI
Aug–Sep 2023	Drafting of interim report	CEI, GWC, BPSR
Stage 2		
Nov 2023	Desk review of evaluation approaches	BPSR
Nov–Dec 2023	Semi-structured interviews	CEI
Dec 2023–Jan 2024	Finessing of impact evaluation design	BPSR
Jan 2024	Workshop	CEI, GWC, BPSR
Jan 2024	Drafting of report	CEI, GWC, BPSR

Stage 1 Findings

In this section, we present the findings from Stage 1 of the research. Using data from the interviews, survey and workshops, we answer Research Questions (RQs) 1, 2 and 3 in detail and discuss their implications.

RQ1. What models of detached youth work exist, how widely are they used and which are most likely to be relevant for this study?

Detached youth work is a flexible and responsive form of youth work which takes place in young people's space. Most detached youth work lets young people set the agenda in terms of what they would like support or guidance on, and the outcomes can, therefore, be varied and disparate. However, some areas are commonly targeted, including well-being and mental health, keeping young people safe from crime and exploitation, reducing antisocial behaviour and relationship building. These areas are targeted through a variety of activities such as one-to-one or group relationship building, informal education and advice, cultural and sports activities and signposting to other services.

While it can sometimes be framed in terms of what it is *not* (i.e. centre-based, adult-led, structured)*,* this section discusses the key features of detached youth work found through the interviews and survey to be prevalent across organisations and locations. We also present the commonalities and differences in how detached youth work is set up and carried out and in how delivery teams are trained and managed. Finally, we present an overview of the shared practice model developed with key stakeholders, which can be evaluated via a QED.

The nature of detached youth work

In order to begin to design an evaluation of detached youth work, it was first important to gain a thorough understanding of *what it is,* as any evaluation will only be meaningful if it truly reflects the work of the sector it is evaluating. Detached youth work is underpinned by strong principles and by a common sense of the underlying ethos.

In interviews, three key principles of detached youth work were emphasised: the work takes place in public space, is youth-centred and is voluntary on the part of the young person. Some of these principles distinguish it from other types of youth work while others are common across youth work practice.

The first principle is that the work takes place in a **public space**, which is seen as the young people's space in the sense that they have chosen to be there together and have a right to be there. This is the basis that other features stem from. Not having control over the physical space means that youth workers must continually negotiate their relationships with the young people, and the more typical power dynamic of power residing with the adult who is delivering services in agency spaces, such as youth centres or schools, is blurred. Youth workers meet young people 'where they are at': physically, in their own territory.

> *"I think it enables us to meet with those young people who wouldn't make use of other spaces, who have got an acute sense of where they don't have power and where they do have power, and that can be quite a lively place to go for." – Youth worker*

The second key principle highlighted is that detached activities must be **youth-centred**, meaning practice is centred on the experiences, needs, knowledge and interests of the young people rather than working to an

explicit and agreed set of activities and outcomes as is more typical in centre-based youth work. Although the youth organisation or funder may have some activities and outcomes in mind, the approach taken is much more flexible, with fewer or no prior assumptions about which aspects of their lives young people would like to address and how.

The third key principle emphasised by interviewees and workshop participants is that the interaction between the young person and the detached youth worker is always entirely **voluntary and negotiated** on an ongoing basis – the young person has not presented themselves at a youth centre for a named service, and they can walk away at any time. Although this principle is core to all youth work, in detached youth work, the voluntary nature is even more influential because the work takes place in young people's space.

These key features of detached youth work mean that relationship building is seen as central to quality detached youth work. Relationships enable young people to engage reciprocally and dialogically with youth workers, are built gradually over time and are based on mutual trust.

Further to these essential principles, a common ethos discussed across interviews and workshops is working in a strengths-based capacity with young people. Strengths-based work focuses on the skills and capabilities of a young person or community by valuing and expanding on the strengths already present. This is a key element to supporting young people's agency, which means recognising and facilitating young people's abilities to form their own views, express them and be heard in order to effect change. A strengths-based approach also recognises young people's rights to be in and use public spaces by enabling them to co-exist in shared spaces safely and positively with other community members. This contrasts with the common practice of moving young people on from public spaces or young people being accused of 'loitering'. Participants referred to the importance of taking a strengths-based, non-judgemental approach while understanding all the different backgrounds and experiences young people may have and giving them agency in their relationships and in the community.

> *"You're not looking to bring and be the life of the party, or to give them something to do, or to get them into a diversionary piece of work; you're working with what is already there with an assumption that it's full of riches already and that there's loads of learning to be had and loads of meaning already in what the young people are about." – Team leader*

Furthermore, one youth work leader described the importance of considering cultural congruence when navigating relationships with young people from different backgrounds. Elements such as the clothes the youth workers wear, the language or vocabulary they use and their heritage, race and ethnicity may influence how they are accepted by young people.

Participants contrasted the principles and ethos described here with poorer-quality detached youth work, which they have seen being delivered in the sector. This 'parachuting' work was described as short-term youth work that is not embedded in the community; does not utilise local knowledge; targets specific outcomes without respecting young people's agency, strengths and right to be in public spaces; and does not consider the consequences of ending the support. The duration of short-term work described by participants varied, with the general consensus being that working in an area for less than a year is insufficient to deliver quality detached youth work.

These principles and this ethos inform the whole approach of detached youth workers, from the initial scoping of an area through to the individual-level work. A broadly consistent approach to detached youth

work was described by participants, with some differences in the details of the ways in which they work and a desire to distance themselves from more superficial short-term work. This makes it possible to describe a single shared mode of practice that could be used for an evaluation, one with core features and the flexibility to allow for contextual variation. The shared practice model (Appendix 2) has been developed based on these findings, and support for the core and flexible elements of this model is described in detail throughout this section of the report.

Outcomes – the intention or purpose of detached youth work

In line with the principles described above, detached youth workers predominantly address the issues that young people themselves want to cover rather than targeting specific prior determined outcomes. Although many participants were reluctant to define in detail the outcomes of their work in terms of 'targets', they did nevertheless describe the parts of young people's lives that are improved through detached youth work. Recognising the sensitivity of describing targeted outcomes, we decided to approach this in the survey by asking about the areas of young people's lives the participants aimed to support. We asked survey participants to indicate which, from a preset list of aspects of young people's lives, they aimed to support through detached youth work. The survey responses (Table 6) broadly reflected the qualitative interview findings, with both methods highlighting that the work can and does address a wide range of issues.

Table 6. Aims of detached youth work delivered in England

What parts of young people's lives do you aim to support through detached youth work? Select all that apply.

Response	Percent
Well-being, confidence, mental health	98.7%
Antisocial behaviour	94.9%
Staying safe, gang exploitation, involvement in youth violence	93.7%
Substance misuse	83.5%
Social and emotional learning skills	82.3%
Engagement with other support services	82.3%
Relationships with peers and family	78.5%
Sexual health	78.5%
Engagement in education, training or work	70.9%
Other	7.6%

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 79 respondents.

Almost half of all participants (46.3%) selected all nine options, demonstrating the breadth of issues that their work addresses. Well-being, confidence and mental health accrued the most responses, supporting the assertion by interviewees that these are the primary areas of focus for the work. Addressing antisocial behaviour and young people's safety in their areas was also selected by more than 90% of participants, mirroring interviewees' explanation that making spaces safe for young people by working in conjunction with their community is central to their work.

> *"Those [sorts] of outcome stories are as diverse as the number of young people we're meeting." – Service manager*

Overall, the organisations we consulted with felt that detached youth work can have positive impacts in areas such as youth violence and antisocial behaviour, including reducing knife crime and exposure to exploitation, gangs and drugs, although they resisted the idea of these being the intended foci or outcomes of detached youth work. Workshop and interview participants emphasised that their work focuses on addressing underlying issues by building quality relationships with a trusted adult, supporting young people's well-being and creating physical and emotional safety. The work might also involve improving the physical environment with a view to improving safety (e.g. by getting broken street lights repaired). This can have a variety of outcomes, including safety from violence, both as victims and as perpetrators, and a reduction of other types of crime. Although many detached youth work services are concerned in some way with these issues, the predominant view we heard was that detached youth work addresses them indirectly.

> *"As a Violence Reduction Partnership, we're obviously about reducing violence, but we work on the causes of violence. So, if we can intervene at that low level and get young people signposted into different services, we see that as a success." – Commissioner*

Detached youth workers are passionate advocates of the wide-ranging impact of their practice on the lives of young people and their communities but are simultaneously candid about the challenges of working in the current youth work funding landscape, which often places value on measurable, pre-defined outcomes such as reducing youth violence. We heard about organisations managing the balance of addressing community or funder concerns and their emphasis on working with and building on the strengths of young people.

> *"Sometimes, funders give us the outcome in advance and tell us what they want. That's much more of a challenge with youth work, where actually, perhaps it's more helpful to ensure that there is space for outcomes to come out of the work that you don't know about until you've met with the young people and done your reconnaissance and worked out what's going on for the young people." – Workshop participant*

For example, the piece of work described in the quote below was initiated to target antisocial behaviour, but by taking a strengths-based approach, the detached youth work team was able to influence both the young people's and the wider community's perceptions.

> *"We'd been asked to go and work in a town centre or village centre precinct because of perceived antisocial behaviour. By the time we'd finished that piece of work, we'd done three pieces of graffiti art with a professional graffiti artist [and] 20 or 30 young people. The work's displayed on the library walls. The antisocial behaviour stopped. The perception of young people has changed from the community. That, to me, is what detached youth work is about." – Team leader*

This example also highlights the benefits of detached youth work beyond individual-level outcomes – it is also seen as leading to lasting benefits at a community level. In another case, a transport provider asked a detached youth work project to engage with a group of young people around antisocial behaviour. The detached youth work team agreed to go in and talk to young people about their experiences and safeguarding issues while working in parallel to educate the the transport provider about the issues that young people face. This resulted in the provider reconfiguring their service and training their staff to serve young people better, leading to increased safety for the transport provider staff, young people and other passengers using the transport services.

Many participants commented on the fact that funding for detached youth work is often linked with a specific predetermined outcome, such as reduced reports of antisocial behaviour, which is not always aligned with their ethos. Organisation leaders talked about their approach to uniting these conflicting goals, which is to work flexibly within funders' requirements without allowing the funder-set outcomes to undermine the youth-centred nature of the work. The fact that the work *can* result in positive change in funders' areas of interest is not seen as a justification to target those outcomes specifically, as the benefits of detached youth work are countless, varied and multifaceted, and focusing the work on targeted outcomes may have adverse effects.

> *"If you value the young people in front of you, outcomes do happen, but paradoxically, aiming for specific outcomes actually shrinks the number of potential outcomes." – Workshop participant*

> *"It is interesting, though, because the context for us was that we had this funding from Violence Reduction, and they obviously have an interest in reducing serious youth violence. For us, this was interesting because we'd say, 'Well, yes, of course, it does; it solves youth violence, but it also solves a whole host of other stuff for society'." – Senior manager*

Activities delivered in detached youth work

At the heart of detached youth work are the psychosocial interactions between youth workers and young people and the activities in which they take part. To explore the nature of the work further, we asked survey participants to indicate which activities, from a preset list, their organisation undertakes or offers as part of detached youth work. The most common activity selected by survey participants was 'Getting to know young people, befriending, relationship building' (Table 8). The emphasis placed on this aspect of the work was mirrored in the workshops and interviews. However, 82.6% of participants selected six or more options, again demonstrating how broad and fluid the approaches can be in the field and how skilled youth workers must be to be able to deliver the most appropriate work in each context. Interestingly, despite interview and workshop participants being reluctant to associate detached youth work with targeting youth violence, as described in the previous section, 71.6% of survey participants reported 'Intervening in conflict or responding to potential or actual violence' (Table 7) as one of the activities delivered by their detached youth work teams.

Table 7. Summary of the types of activities delivered by detached youth work services

What are the activities your organisation does as part of detached youth work? Select all that apply.

Response	Percent
Getting to know young people, befriending, relationship building	100.0%
Providing information, advice or guidance	93.8%
Simply being a presence on the street	85.2%
Signposting to services that other organisations provide	85.2%
Engaging them with other services your organisation provides	84.0%
Doing sport, cultural or other street-based activities	81.5%
Intervening to defuse conflict or responding to potential/actual violence	71.6%
Engaging with their peers	66.7%

Response	Percent
Providing mentoring or being a role model	64.2%
Facilitating youth-led projects	60.5%
Engaging with their family	49.4%
Other	9.9%

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 81 respondents.

Participants described outreach work, informal education and advocacy as elements that may form part of detached youth work but are not necessarily involved. Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

As described previously, outreach is seen as a distinct but complementary practice to detached youth work. Outreach work can take place in a young person's territory, but it is described as being intended to engage young people in other centre-based services rather than to work with them in the public space. Some signposting may be done as part of detached work, but interviewees asserted that this should not be the *purpose* of the work.

Some workshop participants saw articulating and communicating the differences between detached work and outreach as a key challenge. This is partly due to funders' and commissioners' misunderstanding of the purpose of street-based work and partly due to how the two have been discussed together historically.

> *"It's been really difficult to be able to advocate on behalf of detached youth workers and intervention that isn't just getting young people off the streets into a building. That's the challenge we've had with partners here." – Workshop participant*

Informal education is a way of working with young people to help them reflect on and learn from their experiences. This may take on a more organised shape at the request of young people. Topics explored through informal education and described by participants included sexual health, drugs and alcohol, and domestic abuse.

Advocacy is when youth workers promote the voices and views of young people, providing the opportunity for them to engage with or be heard by other agencies on a *'level playing field'*. For example, one detached youth worker described facilitating a dialogue between young people and their local authority which resulted in better lighting in the areas they used.

Emergent mechanisms of change

Three key themes in relation to mechanisms of change emerged from the workshops and interviews: relationship building, safety and building agency.

Relationship building was seen as a foundational aspect of youth work and described in terms that suggest it is simultaneously an input, a mechanism through which other changes occur and an outcome in its own right.

The quality of the interactions between youth workers and young people was considered the primary mechanism of detached youth work: *'It pivots on relationship building'*. Workshop participants emphasised that relationship building in this context takes advanced skills due to the limited tools at youth workers' disposal to engage and maintain contact with young people. Youth workers were described as *'change agents'*, earning the trust and respect of marginalised young people through consistency, integrity and authenticity. Having a trusted adult was described as welcomed by young people who may not have one at

home. For example, one organisation conducted a 'listening process' with 600 young people, which revealed trusted adults and safe spaces as young people's priorities. We heard descriptions of quality relationships as the input through which youth workers can deliver psychoeducational content, as the mechanism through which young people's social and emotional skills can improve and as the outcome of quality youth work.

> *"Trust-based relationships enable us to do the work that detached youth workers do with some very marginalised and disenfranchised young people who are highly suspicious of any adults." – Workshop participant*

Helping young people to be physically and emotionally safe was also seen as a key mechanism through which change occurs. Workshop participants talked about how they help young people to stay safe and to avoid exploitation and risk-taking, how they take steps to ensure a safe environment for young people, such as by ensuring streetlamps work and broken glass is removed, and how they encourage young people to keep each other safe and to be receptive to the idea that they share in the community responsibility to make safer spaces for everybody.

> *"We also use information from them, as well, so that we are targeting the areas that cause them concern and [find out] why it causes them concern and what they'd like to see and what makes them feel safe [and] what makes them feel unsafe within their areas." – Workshop participant*

Emotional safety was also highlighted by interviewees, who described how young people need to feel emotionally safe with an adult before they make disclosures or ask for support. One experienced youth worker described how they balance addressing risk and safety when taking a young person–led approach:

> *"I think the general good practice for good-quality detached youth work is those values of responding to the young person in front of you and just being able to really wisely understand when do we push the risk a bit more, and knowing the relationship here is strong enough, but we can talk about this issue [sic]. And I know the young person – if they don't want to talk about it – feels safe enough to be able to say, 'Shut up and go away' without it being a risk to the relationship. I know that we can talk about this issue without their response being what they think I want to hear but actually it being a constructive conversation for them." – Service manager*

Another potential mechanism of change identified is giving young people agency and power in the public space. Building on the key actions of well-being and confidence, young people are supported to have agency by helping them to feel heard and respected by their community. Detached youth workers described subtle ways in which they address the kinds of behaviour that could lead young people into involvement with police and youth justice services and that other community members might experience as problematic by encouraging young people to have the space and permission to choose how to act then reflect on and take responsibility for their actions, thereby improving young people's social and emotional skills while also encouraging community cohesion.

Organisations undertaking detached youth work

The survey provides an overview of the organisations that undertake or are otherwise involved in detached youth work.

Survey responses demonstrated that detached youth work is delivered by a variety of agencies. As shown in Table 3 in the *Methods* section, around half (49%) of the organisations that took part in the survey were charities, non-governmental organisations or voluntary or community sector organisations. Just over a third (38%) were local authorities. Eight per cent were faith-based organisations, and Four per cent were either a commissioning or funding body. Respondents represented provision across all regions of the UK (Table 8), showing that detached youth work is a widely adopted practice. However, due to the sampling approach, we cannot interpret these responses as representative of the distribution of detached youth work taking place across the country.

Table 8. Summary of the regions where detached youth work is carried out in England

In which countries and regions has your organisation undertaken detached youth work? Select all that apply.

Region	Count	Percent
Yorkshire & Humberside	25	23.8%
North West	18	17.1%
North East	12	11.4%
West Midlands	11	10.5%
South West	11	10.5%
East of England	9	8.6%
Greater London	9	8.6%
East Midlands	5	4.8%
South East	5	4.8%

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 93 respondents

Who is carrying out detached youth work, and how much?

Detached youth work is delivered across all regions of England by a range of organisation types and sizes. The provision of detached youth work across England has gone through several phases over the last 15 years, as described by interviewees and in the survey data. This section provides an overview of the types of organisations delivering youth work across the UK and the scope of their work.

Changes in funding to the youth sector have hit detached work particularly hard in some areas. Following the 2010 General Election and austerity, some youth services had to close detached youth work services and projects. Throughout the interviews and workshops, we heard reports of funding being reduced by two-thirds, team sizes being reduced from 18 to four and services being dissolved. However, many detached services reported (in the survey and in interviews) that they had expanded since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, partly because it was the only way to reach young people during lockdown and partly because it is seen as a cheaper service than more formalised youth work provision.

The majority (55%) of survey participants worked for organisations that have been delivering detached youth work for more than 10 years. However, a significant proportion (28.6%) also reported that their organisation started delivering detached youth work in the last five years, suggesting a possible recent rise

in this type of work. Participants also reported that the amount of detached youth work their organisation delivers has increased since 2018 – 52% said they now deliver more detached youth work, while 23% said they deliver less or have stopped, supporting the idea that there has been an increase. The remaining participants (19.5%) indicated that the amount of detached youth work they deliver has not changed.

Survey participants came from a variety of types of organisations, as described in the *Participants* section. The leadership of the organisations that provide detached youth work reflects many parts of society; only 23% did not have leadership from one or more of the following groups: women, Black or other minoritised ethnicities, people with disabilities or LGBTQ+ individuals.

There is a wide variance in the reach of detached youth work organisations, spanning from just one site to working across more than ten sites. Team size also varies, with 26% of participants reporting that just one member of their team is involved in detached youth work provision, 41% that they have a team of between two and five and 33% that they have a team of six or more.

Where does the work take place?

Interview and workshop participants were clear that detached youth work can take place in any public space in which young people are present. There was some discussion of the appropriateness of the term 'street-based', as detached youth work also takes place in other types of public spaces, such as cafes, parks and shopping centres. One approach taken by organisations is to be flexible and responsive to where young people are and when they congregate, as this enables the youth workers to move with young people and the seasons to provide the most appropriate support at a particular time.

> *"It evolves and changes according to the social landscape. – Youth worker*
>
> *"I think, for us as well, one of the markers that we're actually doing this in an empowering way for young people is there's now a group of young people who follow us around and say […], 'Oh, we need to go to this place here because we've seen these kids and […]' So, [there are] now young people who tell us where to go and do our detached youth work." – Team leader*

Alternately, at some organisations, the youth workers walk set routes or visit precise locations during each detached session to ensure that young people know where they can be found at specific times each week. For example, they might walk between a school and the local park after school every Tuesday, which provides important consistency for young people. Young people can then choose to meet or avoid the youth workers. The process of selecting these areas and routes to work in is described in the *How is detached youth work organised?* section below.

The survey data reflects these perspectives and provides an overview of the types of spaces that the work takes place in (Table 9). We asked survey participants to indicate where detached youth work takes place. Participants could select all or some of a range of settings, and the results show that, while the work typically takes place outside, most organisations work across multiple settings, depending on where young people are spending their time.

Table 9. Summary of the spaces where detached youth work takes place

Which types of spaces do you reach or meet young people in during your detached youth work? Select all that apply.

Setting	Percent of participants
Streets	89.0%
Parks, skateparks	86.8%
Housing estates	75.8%
Cafes or other food outlets	36.3%
Shopping centres	34.1%
Rural settings	26.4%
Other	15.4%

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 91 respondents.

Detached work can include outreach, that is, informing young people of the centre-based services available and encouraging them to use them. Although outreach work was not considered a core aspect of detached youth work, some interviewees mentioned that public space–based provisions may move into a building or youth centre if young people request activities that require it. The difference between this kind of work and outreach is that it is an organic progression of detached activities rather than something that brings young people into an established service.
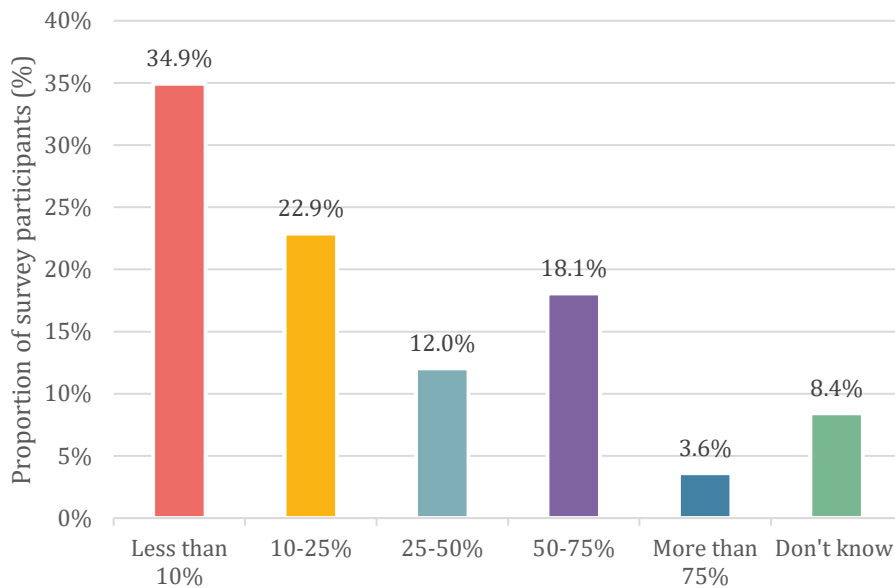
Who participates in detached youth work?

The ages of young people participating in detached youth work range from under ten to over 24, but 91% of survey participants reported that the most common age group is 10–17-year-olds. Regardless of age, they are typically young people who are not ready or able to commit to participating fully in more formal or centre-based services. Some services target specific groups of young people, such as those engaging in antisocial behaviour on public transport, but most target a specific location and work with the young people they engage there.

Survey participants were asked what proportion of the young people they meet are from minoritised ethnic groups. The results show that there is a lot of variation, and the results are likely to be influenced by the regions in which participants work. For example, in Yorkshire and Humberside, which is where the largest proportion of survey participants work, census data shows that 81.7% of people identify as White British, compared to just 36.8% in Greater London (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

Figure 2. Proportion of young people reached by participants' organisations from a minoritised ethnic group

Approximately what proportion of the young people you reach in detached youth work are from a minoritised ethnic group? Select one option.

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 80 respondents.

None of the participants indicated that their work intentionally targets young people from particular ethnic backgrounds, although the environment they work in steers the focus of their work. For example, one youth work leader described how their inner-city environment means the issues they deal with tend to include knife crime, exploitation and gangs. Many participants identified that the young people they engage with often come from backgrounds of trauma and disadvantage, and many specifically target their work in areas of deprivation.

> *"You're naturally going to work with those kids that are either disadvantaged or harder to engage because, let's be honest, the one thing that's never changed in youth work […] A vast majority of young people that go to a youth club, for example, wouldn't necessarily be hanging on the streets. The young people that we really need to be targeting to help and aid and pull along are those young people that are hanging around on the streets." – Team leader*

The number of young people engaging with the service can be very seasonal due to changing weather and school timetables. One interviewee noted that they typically meet 5–10 teenagers in an individual location during a session in winter, but in summer, the groups they would encounter in a location are much larger – up to 50 young people – and younger.

Most organisations report engaging with more than 50 young people per week, although this may take place across several locations and sessions.

Figure 3. Average number of young people who receive detached youth work per organisation per week

Approximately how many young people are reached by your organisation through detached youth work? Please select one.
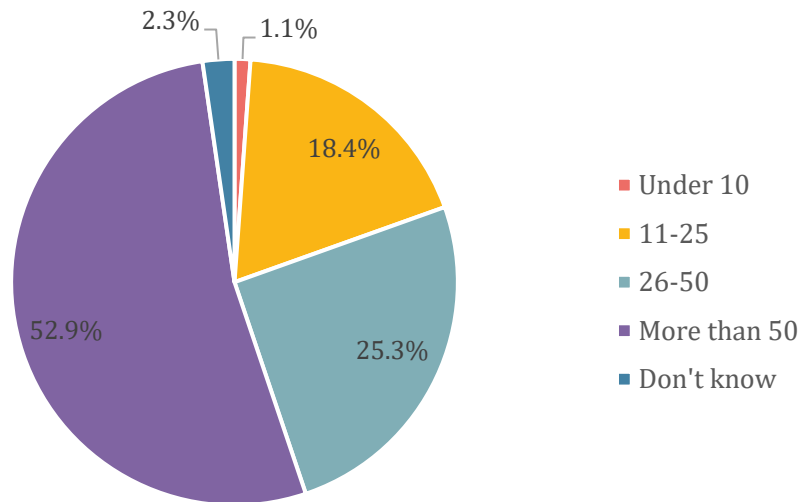
Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 84 respondents.

Furthermore, most organisations report encountering more than 15 new young people per week, again with the potential for the encounters to take place across multiple sites and sessions.

Duration of detached youth work relationships

Interviewees and workshop participants stressed the importance of sustained work in detached youth work – both in terms of direct contact with individual young people and in terms of establishing themselves within a community as a trusted service. Many stated that effective work is facilitated by being embedded in an area for several years and that, in some cases, it can take more than a year of working within the community before young people will trust you. Some saw short-term work as potentially harmful, as young people and the community may feel abandoned and lose trust in detached youth work services.

> *"The length of time it will take to actually have a real impact to build some good working relationships with young people. […] That isn't something that can be rushed."* – *Workshop participant*

Figure 4. Average number of new young people engaged in detached services per organisation per week

On average, how many new young people does your organisation make contact with in an average month? Select one option.
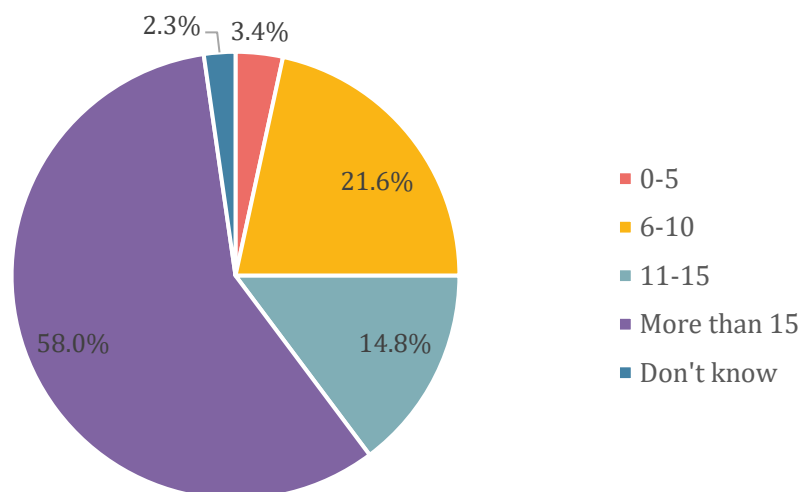
Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 85 respondents.

These reflections may describe an 'ideal' service, as the survey data suggests that the average length of time a young person is engaged is less than the duration described in interviews – 60% of participants state that the typical length of time they work with a young person is less than a year (Table 10). This apparent inconsistency will be explored further in Stage 2 of the feasibility study.

Table 10. Summary of the duration of contact with young people

What is the typical length of time that you or your organisation works with an individual young person? Please select one.

Response	Percent
One interaction	2.4%
Less than one month	7.2%
One to three months	19.3%
Three to six months	13.3%
Six months to a year	18.1%
More than a year	27.7%
Don't know	12.1%

Source: Detached Youth Work Survey. Base: N = 80 respondents.

Sustained work was also identified by workshop participants as key to recruiting and retaining experienced staff, as it enables them to provide a high-quality service over the long term. Participants identified the restricted career paths in youth work, the part-time or sessional work and the low pay as barriers to building a detached youth work team.

Set-up, training and management

Through the survey, interviews and workshops, we have built an understanding of the typical process of setting up and managing detached youth work. The following features and processes appear to be common across organisations.

Location or area selection

The process by which an area is selected for detached youth work varies by organisation according to their size, type and focus. Organisations may have a set location (for example, local to their offices), or the location may change with the needs of their community or depending on available funding. A locality for the work may be proposed by a funder or commissioner based on a rise in incidents, data on arrests or indices of deprivation. Some delivery organisations described combining that information with community perspectives to ensure the work was welcome in the area. Some work in areas on a temporary basis, moving with the young people and community insights, while others stay in one area on a more long-term basis. The size of areas also varied – the areas youth workers visited in one session ranged from a single street corner or park to a whole neighbourhood.

Reconnaissance, mapping the area and building community relationships

These three processes were identified as separate but linked elements by interviewees and workshop participants and were seen as features of high-quality youth work (although not necessarily always undertaken, depending on resources and the duration of a project). This step can involve building a consistent presence in an area by walking around, networking with businesses and residents and becoming a familiar face for young people. Youth workers may get to know shop staff, councillors and local police, sharing an understanding of their roles and informing them of the process and benefits of detached youth work. Interviewees described the importance of appreciating the ongoing community activity and of building on rather than interfering with positive social action. Doing so helps detached workers understand the community's needs and perspectives, local resources and possible challenges and start to identify how they can support young people in the most effective way.

> *"We always tell the police when we're in an area so that they know what we're doing. We tell local community members, we've got councillors we know, and we try and pinpoint key people – adults as well – in that community to let them know that we're around." – Senior manager*

Establishing contact with young people

Different approaches were described here. There were opposing perspectives on whether youth workers should initiate contact with young people or leave it to young people to initiate contact. Some interviewees placed value on building trust and familiarity by 'being seen around' and letting young people make the first contact. Alternatively, youth workers may take the more targeted approach of actively engaging young people.

> *"If they don't want to engage at that first instance, then maybe two or three times of just seeing us, they'll engage then." – Service manager*

Training and management

<u>Youth worker training</u>

The advanced and specific skills of detached youth workers were highlighted by interviewees and workshop participants as critical to providing high-quality detached youth work. On top of a formal youth work qualification, detached youth workers require specific training in detached work and will typically gain experience by working in pairs or groups with more experienced detached youth workers. The formal

training described by participants included training in mental health first aid, sexual health, safeguarding, multicultural issues and drug use, as well as in typical youth work activities and sports coaching. Due to working in public spaces without proximate support in the case of an incident, service leaders emphasised the importance of detached workers knowing about available local services and having their contact details immediately to hand. High-quality training was considered crucial for effective detached youth work.

> *"I'm really keen that the professional underpinning of this work isn't underestimated." – Workshop participant*

> *"I think the theory and the lived experience need to marry. It's fundamental that people know how to safeguard young people properly, for themselves and for the young person. I think that without the training, there's so much missing. I'm all for lived experience, but that experience could be so much richer if you add the theory to back it up. Hence me saying that I think it's very, very important for them to have the youth work training." – Commissioner*

Some service leaders reported that they are pushing for more consistent training requirements for detached youth workers across organisations and regions. We also heard from commissioners that they recognise the need to include funding for training in their offers to organisations to ensure that young people get a good-quality service, particularly in the context of training no longer being provided by local authorities.

> *"We recognise that this is probably not going to come from the local authority any more, so we are doing our best to upskill and develop the sector so that we can respond to the needs of young people." – Commissioner*

> *"The way I set up my team is that everyone is trained to a certain level, a certain standard, where, when we go out, we know we're confident that, if we come across any of these issues, we have the right skills, knowledge, contacts […] to be able to support that vulnerable young person or that young adult in that time, in that space." – Team leader*

However, formal training was not considered the only, or even the most important, way for detached workers to gain the skills necessary to deliver quality detached youth work. The interpersonal skills and personality required to build relationships were seen as crucial to delivering detached youth work and were not always seen as teachable. One participant explained that she would employ someone based on their life experiences and psychosocial skills then provide the formal youth work and other necessary training.

Skills that interviewees considered important for a detached youth worker included flexibility, authenticity, resilience, being a good problem-solver, the ability to improvise or think on your feet, the ability to set and maintain clear boundaries and not being reactive.

Workshop participants described their detached youth workers as more experienced than their centre-based youth workers, again highlighting the importance of these interpersonal skills:

> *"They are slightly different to my centre-based youth work team; actually, I'm not as worried as people arriving with the training and qualifications and much more testing around aptitude, skills, experience." – Workshop participant*

"Anyone can knock out an NVQ 3, but to actually have the skills to really engage kids, that's a different thing." – Team leader

<u>Youth worker supervision</u>

Further to ongoing training, service leaders emphasised the importance of regular reflective supervision for detached youth workers with their peers and/or a manager. Supervision can help to ensure that young people receive a good service by identifying areas of challenge and improvement and providing youth workers with support for any issues that arise. This is particularly important for detached youth workers, who work with higher levels of risk by operating outside the safety of a building or a larger team. Supervision is provided in a range of ways, including peer- and group-based supervision.

<u>Service and funding management</u>

Managers always play an important role in supporting youth workers, and even more so in detached work where there are more risks and unknown factors due to being in a public space and doing work that is youth centred. Workshop participants saw the role of a manager as crucial to supporting effective detached youth work practice. Managers also need a nuanced understanding of the service landscape and the *'push–pull issue around who is funding the work and what is the agenda of the funder'*. A good manager or management team can act as a buffer between funders' requests to work to predetermined outcomes and the youth workers 'on the ground', helping the youth workers to negotiate between a funder's target areas and a youth-centred approach. Participants described the need to work closely with funders over the long term to help them understand the particular characteristics of detached youth work.

"There's a whole other set of skills that need to be held, either [by] experienced senior workers or with managers, around how you deal with the kind of boundaries of detached youth work and what it is and who's looking after it." – Workshop participant

Reflection and debrief

A process to prepare for and debrief from each detached youth work session was considered an important aspect of maintaining the quality of work being delivered to young people, although the approach taken varied across the organisations we interviewed. The opportunity for detached youth workers to reflect on their work and the young people's responsivity during sessions was seen as core to successful detached youth work. It allows youth workers to learn from each other, to consider how to approach future sessions and to support each other.

Some interviewees described their process as involving informal group debriefs after each session, during which they record notable moments and safeguarding issues. Others explained that they routinely document key information about each session in a form which may include some or all of the following: the staff present; weather conditions; where they encountered young people; how many young people they interacted with; a summary of the perceivable demographics of the young people they met (gender, approximate age); safeguarding issues; other information they learnt about the young people, such as whether they are a young carer or if they have disabilities, etc.; and important moments in or aims that they achieved during the session.

A shared practice model for detached youth work

As part of the feasibility study, the evaluation team worked with key stakeholders (including funders, commissioners and providers of detached youth work) to develop an outline of a shared practice model that detached youth work organisations could potentially work to in the context of a future trial. The model aligns common principles and practices, which were identified through the interviews, workshops and survey detailed above, into a framework for practice that would support both impact evaluation and fidelity monitoring.

The shared practice model follows three principles of detached youth work – that it is young people–centred, relational and community-integrated – and has four sections:

- Set up and implementation
- Ongoing delivery
- Closing the project
- Knowledge, skills and behaviours.

The model sets out a series of 'elements' that define the criteria that must be adhered to for the purposes of a shared practice model.

Principles

Young people–centred: detached youth workers centre the needs and experiences of the young people with whom they are working.

Relational: detached youth workers build trusting and respectful relationships with young people, relying on authenticity and integrity.

Community-integrated: detached youth workers have local knowledge developed through reconnaissance prior to the start of the detached youth work project. Detached youth workers may work with local stakeholders as well as young people to build this knowledge, depending on the project's aims.

Practice model sections

<u>Set up and implementation</u>

Area selection: project leads will use data and local knowledge, such as that built through community engagement, to determine in which area(s) to deliver detached youth work.

Reconnaissance: detached projects will begin with an initial reconnaissance period, the duration of which will depend on previous levels of integration with and knowledge of the community.

Team composition: detached youth work teams will comprise at least two experienced detached youth workers plus a supervisor or manager, and detached youth work managers will oversee project delivery and support the team with training, peer-to-peer learning opportunities and regular supervision.

<u>Ongoing delivery</u>

Duration of engagement: a minimum commitment of two years in one area is required for reconnaissance, relationship-building and delivery.

Relationship-building: detached youth workers focus their engagements with young people on developing trust, respect and emotional safety and on building insight into young people's experiences, needs and concerns. Through this, detached youth workers model positive relationships, enable young people to be heard and reframe the issues that are affecting young people.

Informal education: detached youth workers work with young people to help them reflect on and learn from their experiences, supporting personal and social development alongside specific learning opportunities that respond to the young people's experiences, needs and interests.

Optional: detached youth workers support young people through advocacy (working with young people to promote their voices and representation) and outreach (signposting young people to other provisions or sources of support), as well as other work, including cultural and sports activities, facilitating youth projects and intervention in potential or active antisocial behaviour or violence.

Closing the project

Detached youth workers will have a detailed plan of how to end a detached youth work project to avoid the potentially damaging effects of a sudden withdrawal of support.

Knowledge, skills and behaviours

The skills and experience of detached youth workers: detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working towards completion of a Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice; lead detached youth workers will have a minimum of two years' experience in the area in which they will be working; youth workers will hold a set of skills core to the shared practice model of detached youth work.

Ongoing supervision: detached youth workers should be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their practice (through supervision) a minimum of once a month.

RQ2: What interventions or practices could detached youth work be compared with? Is it distinct enough from other activities to be able to detect an impact?

Distinction from other services

As described in the previous section, the key feature of detached youth work that distinguishes it from other types of youth work is that it takes place in a public, non-institutional space. From this premise, other distinguishing features, such as its strongly youth-centred approach, the need for enhanced youth worker training and the longevity of the work, follow. While many of the components of detached youth work are arguably present in centre-based work, the context of working in a public space means that the intensity and intentionality of detached youth work make it a distinct practice. The overwhelming feedback from participants was that detached youth work is distinct from other youth services in both its 'essence' and its implementation.

What other interventions are young receiving when they participate in detached youth work?

We asked interviewees about other interventions (both those delivered by their own organisations and other services accessed by the young people they engage with through detached youth work) to build a picture of 'business as usual' for young people.

In terms of their organisation's own work, participants described a distinction between the youth services on offer to young people and the services that are accessed by young people engaged in detached youth work. We heard from many service leaders that their detached services reach the most marginalised young people, who are unlikely to engage with other youth services. These young people may be in school, attending pupil referral units or not in education, employment or training. This implies that, for many young people, business as usual may involve little to no social or emotional support.

In terms of the other services used by young people, when asked about what is available to young people in their area, participants listed many activities and services: school-based mentoring, school drop-in sessions, youth councils, structured youth clubs and homework clubs, open access youth groups, sports clubs, and other community projects, such as the nationwide Step Together programme, which helps marginalised young people participate in volunteering. Interviewees conjectured that these services are predominantly delivered by third sector organisations and that the majority of funding is provided with the intention to reduce youth violence.

RQ3: What are delivery organisations' views on evaluating the impact of detached youth work? What are the motivations and concerns of leaders in the field?

Current approaches to measurement, monitoring and evaluation

The current approaches to data collection described by delivery organisations in interviews were oriented towards the monitoring and mapping of practice and identification of qualitative changes rather than the evaluation of their impact. Through the debrief forms described in the previous section, organisations may record young people's names, ages and other demographic information. However, it was not always considered appropriate to probe young people for this information. Rather, workers collect it as it is volunteered or make educated guesses (for example, guessing a young person's age from their appearance). Common practice also includes recording notable moments, positive stories and safeguarding incidents. The monitoring activities described were thought to provide an opportunity for youth work teams to monitor the quality of their work and to ensure they were providing the right services in the right places. The data was also used by some organisations to map the presence of young people in public spaces on a physical and online map across the delivery of a project. Typically, the main other use of this monitoring data was to produce reports for funders and commissioners to demonstrate activity and impact.

One organisation described its approach to recording the perceived impact of its practice. After each session, the youth workers debrief as a team and record how many instances of achieving the organisation's aims that they witnessed, both quantitatively and qualitatively. These aims are exploring and overcoming challenges, achieving goals and supporting youth action and voice in the community.

> *"So, we'll use this reference sheet to understand what, if any, goals we might have addressed on any given night. So, there's a debrief that takes about half an hour, where we're talking through experiences, feelings, conversations, and this forms part of that, where we'll basically go through a narrative of the night and then pick out the moments where there might have been a particular outcome that matches the aims we're looking for." – Service leader*

Another organisation used creative methods to get feedback from young people and to gauge their thoughts about their lives. They invite young people to use chalk to write and draw on the floor in response to prompts such as, 'This year I am grateful for' or 'Going into the new year, I want to bring this with me'. This enables the youth workers to get insight into how optimistic the young people are feeling and identify the things the young people value about their community and the youth work service.

> *"Young people are shaping what that space is, with a general desire for better well-being, shaping the direction from us." – Team leader*

Some organisations have attempted to get feedback about the service from young people through questionnaires or feedback forms: one reported that it had previously used the Short Warwick– Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, one had used one of YMCA George Williams College's suite of measures for practitioners and young people and one said it had tried verbally asking young people to rate their knowledge of a particular topic before and after addressing it with informal education. However, this was seen as a 'box-ticking exercise' to 'keep management happy', and we heard strong concerns that introducing forms interrupts the organic relationship between the young person and the youth worker. Other approaches discussed by interviewees included organisation-level tools to measure their organisation's

social impact and using police data to look at changes in crime rates (although the interviewees recognised that they could not attribute changes in police crime data to their services alone). The feasibility of using standardised questionnaires and surveys with young people will clearly be a key issue for exploration in Stage 2.

Views about evaluation

Overall, interviewees and workshop participants expressed an understanding that evaluation is important. While there were hesitations about some evaluation methods, which are described later in this section, the sector responded positively to the idea of gathering evidence for the benefit of its work with young people. This was supported by the interest in this project – experts and organisations from across the sector have been highly engaged throughout. We heard that a larger-scale, high-quality evaluation would benefit the sector by encouraging high standards of detached youth work practice and data use. Collecting data and monitoring practice were considered essential to knowing that their *'work is working'* and to *'create noise about excellent practice'* to ensure that they can provide the best service possible to young people.

There was also a recognition that, in the current funding landscape, evaluation needs to go beyond recording *'bums on seats'*, qualitative reports and case studies to looking at the measurable value to society that detached work provides. Some saw it as important to be able to verify the impact that they know detached youth work has in terms of housing, health and employment outcomes as well as long-term cost savings to local government. This would, in turn, benefit the sector by demonstrating impact to commissioning bodies and opening up funding opportunities. One perspective was that detached youth work has not been evaluated thoroughly so far because it is seen as a cheap solution to crises of antisocial behaviour and does not warrant evaluation and that as a result, it is not funded sufficiently.

Overall, participants would welcome a high-quality evaluation that has been designed *with* the sector, one that respects the nature of detached youth work and gives a voice to young people. However, there were also some serious concerns expressed about the appropriateness of formally evaluating detached youth work, with some interviewees stating that conventional evaluation methods *'just don't work'* in this context. These concerns were primarily focused on data collection with young people and how this would interfere with the principles of voluntary engagement and agency on which detached work is based.

> *"There's a recognition that, actually, this really valuable work can't be valued using the current valuing tools – evaluation tools – properly, so we need to change what we value at that policy funding level." – Team leader*

The further concerns and challenges about evaluation expressed by participants fell into six key topics (Table 11).

Table 11. Participant evaluation concerns and challenges.

	Participant concern	Considerations noted by participants
1	The challenge of developing and evaluating a valid and comparable model of detached youth work practice	The wide variation in 'dosage' across young people. That detached youth work does not have a programmatic structure with a beginning, middle and end. The diverse and subjective nature of the outcomes achieved by detached youth work.
2	The challenge of attributing change or impact to detached youth work within a complex system	The difficulty of selecting a comparison group in a complex, interacting and fluid social landscape. The diverse and subjective nature of the outcomes achieved by detached youth work. The complexity of attributing outcomes to detached work when they emerge in the wider context of national policy, local services, education and young people's maturation.
3	Concerns about randomisation	The ethics of randomising young people 'out' of a service that they are already receiving. The ethics of identifying individual young people or an area that could benefit from a service and then not providing it.
4	The practical difficulties of collecting data directly from young people	That asking young people to fill in a questionnaire could interfere with session activities, damage their relationship with the youth worker and go against their ideas of the service as a safe and confidential space. This could be mitigated by using peer or embedded researchers. The validity of responses. Young people may not trust that they can answer honestly, they may not feel comfortable providing negative feedback and those with an established relationship may report more positive perspectives to 'do right' by their youth worker. The difficulty of tracking an individual young person through their journey. Young people move around

	Participant concern	Considerations noted by participants
		physically and may engage sporadically over extended periods, and their aims change over time.
5	Placing emphasis on young people's voice and being youth-centred in all interactions	The power inferred by external adults commenting on young people's lives and activities.
		That quantitative evaluation tools do not reflect the joy, interests, thoughts and feelings elicited by detached youth work.
6	Representing the whole sector	That the scale and requirements of an evaluation could make it difficult for smaller, grassroots organisations to participate. These organisations work with some of the most marginalised young people, who would, in turn, not be represented in such an evaluation.

While some of these concerns are easier to address than others, they were taken onboard in the design consulted on in Stage 2 and are set out in later sections. The participants also made some recommendations for approaches to evaluation that would be acceptable to the sector; again, these are reflected in our proposed design. They include:

- Ensuring a strong incorporation of young people's voices, with a focus on what they do and do not enjoy and a focus on the outcomes that they value.
- Incorporating both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes into data collection and reporting and placing emphasis on positive outcomes, such as improved confidence and prevention. Measuring multiple outcomes to capture the wide range of experiences.
- Genuine co-production, achieved by designing the research materials with young people and practitioners and bringing young people in as researchers. Placing value on learning from young people in their own spaces.
- Getting community-level baseline data during the reconnaissance phase of setting up, achieved by recording community perceptions of young people and feelings of safety rather than by asking young people to complete forms at the start of their journeys.

Stage 2 Findings

In this section, we present the findings from Stage 2 of the research in response to RQs 4, 5 and 6 and propose an evaluation design appropriate for detached youth work. Throughout this section, we refer to 'the evaluation' to mean the overall evaluation, including the efficacy trial (or 'the trial') and implementation process evaluation (IPE) elements, as well as the delivery support.

RQ4. What research questions could a robust evaluation answer, including the consideration of priority outcomes, mechanisms to be tested, sub-group effects and implementation factors?

and

RQ5. What methods could be used, including scope for an RCT or QED?[1]

Overview

At the end of Stage 1, we developed the initial design for an impact evaluation design, which involved a patch-level RCT, with a patch defined as the usual small areas in which detached youth work organisations work, which vary in size and geography. The efficacy trial will involve identifying and randomising new patches eligible for detached youth work to either the intervention and or control arm and then tracking outcomes in both groups at the community level. We consulted on this proposed design in the Stage 2 interviews and used these interviews and the workshop to consider in more detail how this design might work in practice.

Our overall conclusion is that this design is potentially feasible but challenging. As a result, our recommendation is to undertake an initial programme of work to test the feasibility of the design and come to a conclusion about the ability to proceed to an efficacy trial.

The first phase of this work will be an analysis study to help establish likely effect sizes and, hence, the minimum sample size for a trial. This will involve a secondary analysis of retrospective police data from areas which have existing detached youth work and comparison areas which do not, with some high-level implementation data collection to understand the nature and intensity of the detached youth work delivered.

The second phase of the work will be a co-design phase, the focus of which will be to discuss and *reach a consensus* about the evaluation design, including both what the outcomes should be and how they should be measured and collected. With the need for the outcomes and approaches to be consistent across all the evaluation sites, the co-design will be conducted in much the same way as the development of the shared practice model and theory of change; that is, the evaluation team takes into account the range of views before drawing its conclusions about the optimal approach.[2]

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[1] See p. 4 for the RQ4 in full.

[2] This is further discussed under RQ6.

The co-design phase will be followed by a pilot trial to develop and test procedures. It will be designed to allow it to be an internal pilot trial (in which the pilot trial data is then included in the full trial, were an efficacy trial to go ahead).

In our view, the complexities of how detached youth work is delivered on the ground are such that any efficacy trial – and indeed, any preceding pilot trial – will need to be complemented by a deep and thorough IPE in order to understand the impact estimates and mechanisms of change.

In this section, we present an overview of the proposed design for an efficacy trial and IPE, elements of which will be subject to change after co-design and piloting.[3]

The theory of change (Appendix 3) outlines the intended impacts of detached youth work for young people and for local communities. Based on the intelligence gathered in this study and explained further below, our assessment is that it is not feasible to measure impacts for individual young people using either an RCT or QED. We are, therefore, proposing an RCT to measure community-level impacts, with other methods used as part of the IPE to understand the changes experienced by young people, based on the approach recommended by Smith et al. (2023) for the evaluation of place-based approaches for addressing youth violence. This overall design aims to ascertain whether changes (at the community level) can be *attributed* to detached youth work and whether detached youth work can plausibly be said to have *contributed* to change for young people. A credible case for the effectiveness of detached youth work could be made if the RCT element finds community-level outcomes to be in line with the theory of change and other methods find changes for young people (and communities) to be in line with the theory of change, based on activities delivered in patches in line with the shared practice model and the theory of change.

The subsequent sections address RQs 4, 5 and 6, describing (a) the research questions which could be answered by a trial of detached youth work, (b) the evaluation design options which were considered and discounted, (c) the detail of our proposed efficacy trial design, (d) a high-level design for the IPE and (e) the risks of such a design and how they could be mitigated (including detailed proposals for the initial analysis, co-design phase and pilot trial).

Summary of the proposed efficacy trial

We are proposing a two-year, patch-level efficacy RCT akin to other YEF place-based evaluations but with the random allocation of patches to intervention and control. The unit of analysis will be the patch, using patch-level (rather than individual or young person–level) outcomes. In summary, local consortia will be commissioned to deliver the evaluation, with each consortium area (such as a town or part of a city) provisionally identifying around 10 patches.[4] Per consortium area, five of the patches will be assigned to intervention and five to control. Overall, we anticipate a trial with around 15 consortia, giving 150 patches in total (75 per arm of the trial).

This trial design is, in many respects, similar to RCTs of hot-spot policing that have been conducted, in which a police force identifies local areas where crime is most likely to take place and then focuses resources in those areas. Braga et al. (2019) carried out a review of 65 studies of hot-spot policing, most

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[3] The preceding analysis, co-design phase and pilot trial are discussed under RQ6.

[4] Whether 10 is a reasonable number will need to be tested during the co-design and pilot stage. It may be slightly too high.

from the US, with 27 of the studies being RCTs. The majority of these trials involved local hot-spot places being identified and then randomly allocated to intervention or control, with crime rates being tracked over time by place. The review concluded that hot-spot policing leads to a small reduction in crime rates, the overall effect size being 0.132. A 'place' is described in the review as somewhat smaller and more contained than a typical detached youth work patch: 'a very small area reserved for a narrow range of functions, often controlled by a single owner and separated from the surrounding area', with examples of places including stores, homes, apartment buildings, street corners, subway stations and airports. What the hot-spot places share in common with detached youth work is that the areas are very local and will often be smaller than standard statistical geographical units. The sample size of the trials in the review by Braga et al. varied very considerably, from very small trials with less than 25 places per arm of the trial to much larger trials with over 100 places per arm.

There are, of course, some very significant differences between the hot-spot policing trials and the proposed trial of detached youth work. The style of intervention is very different, and the range of community-level outcomes expected to change is arguably wider for detached youth work. In addition, many of the hot-spot policing trials were of much shorter duration than is proposed for a trial of detached youth work, so the issues we have identified around maintaining control areas as detached youth work– free areas over the trial period will not have been as acute. Nevertheless, the fact that hot-spot policing trials have been successfully carried out does suggest that a similar trial for detached youth work ought to be feasible.

Table 12 sets out the basics of our proposed trial, each step of which is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

Table 12. Steps in the delivery of an efficacy trial

Step 1: Delivery teams are commissioned	The efficacy trial design necessarily involves buy-in from a number of local partners, including local authorities, police and crime commissioners, the police forces, youth justice services and local delivery organisations. This would be best achieved by inviting consortium expressions of interest from areas interested in delivering detached youth work as part of the trial. We estimate the need to involve around 15 consortia, representing 15 local delivery teams (which may comprise one or more delivery organisations).
Step 2: Delivery teams identify eligible patches	The trial necessarily involves patches where there is no current (or has been no recent) detached youth work but where there is an identified need for or value in introducing detached youth work (drawing on defined parameters for assessing and demonstrating need). We anticipate asking each delivery team to identify around 10 eligible patches, giving a trial with 150 patches in total, 75 of which would be randomly allocated to detached youth work and 75 to control.

Step 3: Evaluation team collects baseline outcomes, with help from delivery teams	Prior to randomisation, the evaluation team will collect baseline data from the patches on all the outcomes of interest. Precise outcome measures will be subject to further co-design and piloting, but data sources are expected to include administrative data from the local police, observational data about the patch and surveys of the local community. In addition, the evaluation team will work with delivery teams to map what other (non-detached youth work) provision is happening which might influence the outcomes of interest.[5]
Step 4: The patches are randomised, and detached youth work begins in intervention areas	Delivery teams will begin work in intervention areas. They must necessarily commit to endeavouring not to introduce detached youth work in the control areas for the duration of the trial, although the trial design is likely to need to allow a degree of flexibility in this regard.
Step 5: A two-year trial period – monitoring for potential contamination	We are proposing a two-year delivery period, including the initial set-up stages. During this period, the evaluation team will work with delivery teams to monitor issues which may affect the outcomes of interest. A key focus of this monitoring will be on any detached youth work delivered within control patches (because a need results in either the consortium delivery team or another detached youth work organisation working there), but it will also include monitoring other provision and/or activity being delivered in intervention and control patches.
Step 6: Evaluation team collects follow-up outcomes	The evaluation team will collect follow-up (administrative, observational and survey) outcomes one and two years after baseline, mirroring the metrics used at baseline.
Step 7: Analysis and interpretation	The trial data will need to be analysed on an intention-to-treat basis, even though it may prove impossible to prevent detached youth work from being used in some of the control areas. However, the IPE data will be key to understanding the impact estimates and mechanisms that lead to change, with the plan to employ contribution analysis, taking into consideration data collected from both elements of the evaluation.

Research questions and measures

We are proposing that the efficacy trial formally measures the impact of detached youth work on the local community using a combination of patch-level administrative data (e.g. police data on recorded crime), observational outcomes and community surveys. Example survey questions have been included in Appendix 5. The precise measures are subject to further co-design and piloting (see below for a longer discussion of

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[5] Much of this work may already have been undertaken by consortia when identifying eligible patches. We anticipate that it would involve using a written pro forma completed by delivery teams.

this), but in broad terms, we expect the trial to follow the theory of change to answer the following research questions:

- What impact does detached youth work have on:
  - Local-level antisocial behaviour and crime (including different types of incidents)?
  - Observable markers of 'issues' in the patch (e.g. drug-related littering, graffiti, broken glass, problems on public transport)?
  - Perceived level of safety among (different sections of) the local community?
  - Perceived levels of community cohesion among (different sections of) the local community?

As discussed below, the administrative data is likely to be the most robust source of outcomes data, in comparison to the observational and survey measures. As such, we propose that the primary outcome be one that is measurable using police administrative data.

Whilst the impact of detached youth work on its direct 'recipients' (i.e. the young people with whom the detached youth work teams engage) cannot be measured by the proposed trial design (the rationale for which is discussed below), we recognise the importance of being able to answer research questions related to observable and perceived changes among these young people. These research questions are both important in their own right and in explaining the mechanisms of change which might result in community-level impacts, and our proposed approaches to understanding these points are outlined within the IPE section below.

Methods for the efficacy trial

We addressed the methods to be used in an efficacy trial, including:

1. Is there scope for an RCT or QED, and if QED, with what comparison group/s?

2. How could data feasibly be collected?

3. What effect sizes are likely; what sample size will be needed to detect those effects?

In this section, we set out, in more detail, the proposed efficacy trial design, drawing on the Stage 2 interviews and workshop to explain our thinking. A number of elements require further work – in the form of co-design and piloting phases – before we are in a position to write a full protocol for the efficacy trial. These elements are highlighted and discussed in the sections below. However, before doing so, we revisit alternative designs that we considered and discounted during our work in Stage 2.

Other impact evaluation designs considered and discounted during Stage 2

The recommended design for the efficacy trial is just one design of a number that were considered. Some of these alternative impact designs were very different to the recommended design, whereas others were just variations. In summary, the other designs considered were:

- A retrospective matched area QED, in which outcomes for patches that have recently received detached youth work are compared to outcomes for a matched comparison group of non-detached youth work patches
- A prospective matched area QED, in which outcomes for patches that are planned to receive future detached youth work through the normal commissioning channels are compared to outcomes for a matched comparison group of non-detached youth work patches
- An RCT with random allocation of young people, focusing on outcomes for the young people targeted by detached youth work

- A QED with a matched comparison group of young people, focusing on outcomes for the young people targeted by detached youth work
- A QED version of the recommended RCT design, in which patches are assigned to detached youth work or into a comparison group but not randomised.

Each of these alternative designs is discussed in turn below.

1. <u>A retrospective QED</u>

A retrospective QED would be the cheapest and quickest of all the impact designs considered, but we ruled it out because of the fact that it would provide only very limited evidence of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of detached youth work.

This design would involve identifying patches where detached youth work has recently been delivered to establish the level of change in patch-level outcomes from before the detached youth work started (i.e. at baseline) to an agreed post–detached youth work date using administrative data that can be obtained retrospectively (primarily police data).

The evaluation team would, in parallel, identify a group of comparison patches where detached youth work has not been used but that had a similar level of 'baseline' police outcomes on youth crime to the detached youth work patches. The change over time for the comparison patches would then be compared to the change over time in the detached youth work patches using a difference-in-differences estimator.

Our main reasons for ruling out this design were that:

- The range of outcomes that could be collected retrospectively is very limited (restricted to those available in administrative data), and a lot of the changes that the theory of change suggests detached youth work should generate at an area level (e.g. those perceived by members of the community) will simply not be captured.
- The IPE would need to be done retrospectively and would be relatively thin as a consequence.
- The evaluation team would have no control over the nature or quality of the detached youth work carried out in the intervention patches, nor would they be able to track, in any detail, other activities which may have affected outcomes in either the intervention or control areas.

Note that whilst ruling out a retrospective design for the main evaluation, we would suggest that a version of this design be used in secondary analysis during the pilot stage because it will generate effect-size estimates for the primary police data outcomes that can be used to finalise the efficacy trial sample size calculations.

2. <u>A prospective QED based on normally commissioned detached youth work</u>

A second, relatively cost-effective impact design would be a prospective QED where patches that are due to receive detached youth work in the near future are included in an evaluation alongside a matched comparison group of non-detached youth work patches. The main advantage of this model is that the cost of the detached youth work itself would come from existing funding channels, with the only main additional cost being the evaluation.

The main disadvantage of this model is that the evaluation team would not be able to exert control over the nature, quality or duration of the detached youth work delivered. Commissioners may be persuaded to adopt some or all of the shared practice model, but this is not guaranteed.

A related difficulty is that the evaluation team would need to forge partnerships with the detached youth work commissioners and gain their agreement that the evaluation can go ahead, especially the IPE

elements of the evaluation. It is unclear whether this will be feasible or not. Finally, there would be issues to overcome around the selection of suitable matched comparison areas (similar to those outlined below for alternative design 5).

Overall, our judgement is that this model could be considered further if new funding for a detached youth work trial cannot be secured, but it is a sub-optimal approach to evidencing the impact of detached youth work for the reasons set out above.

3. <u>An RCT focusing on outcomes for the young people targeted by detached youth work</u>

We have concluded that an RCT with the randomisation of individual young people will not be feasible.

Randomisation at the level of individual young people would distort the way that detached youth work is delivered and experienced in local patches, and it would simply not be possible for youth workers to work with an 'intervention' group of young people in a particular patch whilst not working with young people from the same patch who have been allocated to the control group. There are a number of other objections to an individual RCT beyond this, such as the difficulty of obtaining informed consent for randomisation in an intervention that is, by design, very fluid.

4. <u>A QED focusing on outcomes for the young people targeted by detached youth work</u>

We have considered whether there are RCTs or QEDs that could be used in which outcomes for a group of young people engaged with detached youth work are compared with outcomes for a control group or matched comparison group of young people. However, the key obstacle here lies in identifying a suitable comparison group of young people and then collecting data from it.

In the context of our recommended design (an RCT of patches), the control group of young people would be those young people in control patches who would have been targeted for detached youth work if detached youth work were to be used in that patch. So, in our proposed design, a control group is potentially identifiable. However, through interviews, we have established that it would be impossible for unbiased outcomes data to be collected from this control group, given that there would be no youth workers in the control patches engaging with the young people and developing trusting relationships. By their very nature, the control group would be disengaged and suspicious, and an approach by a researcher is very unlikely to be successful. This is also a key reason for our recommendation that an impact study focus on area-level outcomes rather than outcomes for individual young people.

Some thought has been given to whether a comparison group of young people could be identified through other services or via the police. However, given that in the absence of detached youth work, many (if not all) detached youth work cohorts would not be engaging well with services and many would not be known to the police, sourcing a comparison group through other services would not give a valid estimate of the counterfactual. Potentially, a comparison group could be found via schools, perhaps in combination with social services, local police or youth offending services, but it would be extremely difficult to identify and gain access to such a group for an evaluation. Furthermore, even if a suitable comparison group could be identified in this way, the problem of how comparable outcomes data could be collected from them remains. For all of these reasons, we have ruled out a matched comparison group of young people.

5. <u>A QED version of the recommended design, in which areas/patches are assigned to intervention and comparison groups without randomisation</u>

If it did not prove possible to convince consortia expressing an interest in the study to agree to the random allocation of patches to detached youth work and control, then adopting a QED version of the

recommended design would be a reasonable alternative. Under this design, rather than identifying and randomly allocating patches, the bidding consortia would agree with the evaluation team on new patches where they would work for the purposes of the evaluation, and the evaluation team would work with the consortia to identify matched comparison patches. This is a weaker design – there is a risk that the detached youth work patches would be chosen on the basis that they are the areas seen to be in immediate need of support, with the comparison patches being those that are deemed to be in less urgent need, a difference that could lead to a biased estimation of impact. But the design does give the consortia more ability to choose where they would work.

Our conversations with youth agencies to date have not identified any strong objections to random allocation per se.[6] We believe that an RCT is feasible and is likely to be accepted.

The proposed patch-level efficacy trial

The following sections follow the process of setting up and running the proposed efficacy trial as outlined in Table 10. Within each step, we provide the details of the design and, where necessary, explain the rationale for decisions based on what we have learned from the interviews and workshop in Stage 2. We highlight issues which require further exploration during the co-design phase and pilot trial.

Step 1: Delivery teams are commissioned

While the funding mechanism for any future evaluation of detached youth work is still under discussion within the YEF, our recommendation is that it should involve the recruitment and/or commissioning of local partnerships, in which one or more detached youth work delivery organisations express interest/bid in consortia involving other major stakeholders from their areas. We expect consortia to include the local authority, the police forces and other relevant organisations (e.g. youth justice services, other voluntary sector and social enterprise youth organisations, other funders, police and crime commissioners, violence reduction units/partnerships, neighbourhood services, housing teams and transport teams) in specific areas involved in the tender process. Our expectation is that the delivery of detached youth work, including management time and the facilitation of or involvement in evaluation activities, would need to be fully funded in order to have sufficient control over the trial and, particularly, to ensure against contamination in control patches. The funding model will be particularly important for smaller organisations, which typically have limited resources.

We are proposing this commissioning approach for the following reasons.

1. **Getting buy-in:** by running a tender process for involvement in the trial, consortia (and the organisations within them) will be putting themselves forward with a clear understanding of the commitment and involvement required. This should ensure that only those who feel able to adhere to the stipulations of the trial will apply. Most notably, if the funding is linked to taking part in a trial rather than simply to cover delivery costs, then this provides more traction for the evaluation team to stipulate particular design requirements (e.g. the randomisation of patches or support with data collection).
2. **Access to police data:** while the primary (and some secondary) outcomes proposed can draw on publicly available data, there is the potential to access other hyper-local-level police data or data held

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[6] Note that this point relates to random allocation. There were some concerns raised about committing to not working in control areas during the length of the trial, which are discussed above and apply to both the RCT and QED designs.

by local youth justice services. Pre-specifying this requirement in the tender documents and involving police forces within the consortia will help ensure that this data is available for the trial for both the intervention and control areas.

3. **Delivery monitoring:** within the Stage 2 interviews and workshop, one of the main perceived barriers to the random allocation of patches was the requirement not to introduce detached youth work to control patches for the duration of the trial. Many (but not all) detached youth work organisations are commissioned/grant-funded by local authorities or violence reduction units, under which terms detached youth work organisations are expected to be reactive to local needs and situations. Interviewees spoke with relative consistency about patches where detached youth work is delivered being identified in collaboration with their funders (e.g. the police, the local authority or local action teams). Moreover, some spoke about the speed with which they might be asked by the funder to start detached youth work in an area that has just been identified as a hotspot and/or a place with emerging challenges. Under this model, where detached youth work organisations bid for trial funding in consortia with local authorities, police forces and other stakeholders, there would be a combined understanding of the rationale for not working in control patches. This is not to say that we underestimate the challenges of doing this in practice. We discuss this issue further, including how to incorporate allowing for some level of flexibility, in Steps 4 and 5.

4. **Encouraging new areas:** the trial design requires that the trial starts with a set of patches which are either new to detached youth work or where there has been no very recent detached youth work.[7] As a result, there would be an advantage in encouraging expressions of interest from consortia from within areas where there is currently no or little detached youth work being delivered and less of a recent history of its delivery. It would make it easier to identify 'new' patches for the trial in these areas, and, arguably, there would be fewer tensions with the randomisation design in areas where there is no established procedure for being reactive to local needs (as described in Step 2). Certainly, some detached youth work organisations and local authorities in the Stage 2 interviews and workshop (all of which had an established practice of detached youth work in their local areas) raised questions about their ability to identify sufficient numbers of eligible patches in which they were not either currently working or had not worked in the recent past. That said, we do not necessarily expect this to be an insurmountable issue in areas with established detached youth work practice, and this will be unpicked further in the co-design stage. Moreover, the evaluation team will need to discuss the challenges in involving areas new to detached youth work in terms of these areas' ability to set up new systems on the ground (e.g. with experienced detached youth workers) which comply with the shared practice model.

5. **Tracking intervention and control areas over time:** a consortia model would bring in more local intelligence and make it much easier to track what is happening, beyond detached youth work, in both the intervention and control areas.

Under our proposed design, we expect to need to recruit around 15 consortia drawn from 15 different areas. We would propose a call for expressions of interest in order to recruit the consortia, with an in-depth engagement and selection process alongside. The YEF may wish to lead this process, or it could be undertaken by the evaluation team, using our networks and expertise to engage directly with likely consortia members.

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[7] An appropriate 'wash-out' interval would need to be agreed on during co-design, but we expect it to be around two years.

The call for expressions of interest would invite consortia to put themselves forward for involvement in the study. We recognise that time will need to be allowed for some potential consortia to form or strengthen, given that the call will include invitations for consortia in areas where there has been no *recent* delivery of detached youth work. Since only one consortium per area will be engaged in the study, potential consortia, including multiple delivery organisations, may also need time for local negotiation and coordination.

The evaluation team's experience from the YEF's multi-site trial of mentoring suggests that a call for expressions of interest needs to be exceptionally clear in order to assist potential consortia in assessing their suitability for and alignment with the requirements of the evaluation. This will involve defining the role of and requirements for consortia (and the individual members thereof) expressing interest in the study, providing an accessible yet detailed explanation of the shared practice model and evaluation design, all data collection requirements (including access to the necessary administrative data) and the selection process for areas, as well as outlining how the evaluation team would work with consortia in the co-design phase. A full suite of information would include briefing sheets, frequently asked questions, an overview of the shared practice model, evaluation design and timeline, and forms to capture the detail required for the expression of interest. It is recommended that this information is proactively distributed by evaluators and shared with stakeholders engaged in this feasibility study to ensure maximum reach.

Consortia expressing interest in being part of the study will need to demonstrate:

- The current and historical context for the delivery of detached youth work locally, including the absence of recent delivery of detached youth work in patches which would be eligible for the work

- The ability and capacity to deliver detached youth work with fidelity to the shared practice model, including the size and make-up of the delivery team and pre-existing levels of training and experience

- The ability to maintain engagement in the study for the duration of the evaluation, including any follow-up data gathering

- Established and effective partnerships/working relationships with a range of local agencies, including the local authorities, police forces, criminal justice agencies, business representatives, neighbourhood services and local youth organisations (with local authority, police and, potentially, youth offending team involvement in the consortium as a specific requirement, plus other local services for signposting in response to young people's specific support needs) and that these partnerships can support extensive data sharing

- Knowledge of and relationships with other bodies/agencies with a potential interest in detached youth work locally, who will need to be engaged and communicated with throughout the study (for example, to reduce the likelihood of contamination and/or maintain the status of no detached youth work delivery in control patches), including faith groups, schools, funders of local youth and community provisions, and sports and arts facilities

- An extensive and in-depth insight into the area the consortium represents, evidenced via (hyper)local data on and knowledge of the context for young people, the prevalence and experience of serious youth violence, community perceptions of young people and youth crime, and the pre-existing 'local youth offer'

- Evidence of need for or the potential benefit of detached youth work in a range of patches within the area, drawing on pre-defined data (including local crime data, data on the local youth population and rates of young people not in employment, education or training)

- A highly developed safeguarding practice

- An understanding of and willingness to be part of an RCT, including being part of the randomisation process and understanding the implications for control patches, and the ability to confirm that detached youth work will not be introduced in the control areas for the duration of the study

We have considered whether it would be optimal for the oversight of consortia's delivery and evaluation activities to be overseen by the evaluation team or by an umbrella organisation commissioned by the YEF and situated between the detached youth work delivery organisations and the evaluation team (a model used in some YEF multi-site trials). We recommend, for this trial, that the oversight is provided by the evaluation team for two reasons. First, the detached youth work sector does not have an associated umbrella body with the reach or capacity to undertake this role, and the breadth of agencies involved at a local level (across criminal justice bodies, local government, healthcare services and the voluntary and commercial sectors) does not lend itself to coordination by one body. Second, this is a particularly complex trial with delivery agencies that are likely not experienced in working to trial procedures, and we think close liaison between the evaluation and delivery teams will be essential.

Step 2: Delivery teams identify eligible patches

The identification of patches eligible for the trial will be the role of the detached youth work consortia in each area. They will be required to employ their usual insight-gathering approaches to identifying patches, such as using local knowledge and local authority data. The Stage 2 interviews suggest that reconnaissance should be used both to identify specific patches for detached youth work and to start to understand the dynamics of young people's gatherings and community perspectives in selected areas. While the interviews did not sharply distinguish these stages, they would need to be distinguished in the evaluation as pre- and post-randomisation activities. Based on what we heard, there is a degree of variation in how the initial area identification is done, involving input from youth provision and stakeholders, including police, local authorities, schools and neighbourhood and housing services. In some cases, patches appear to be identified using local-level data (e.g. police data on crime levels or data from the local authority, schools or the NHS), whilst other interviewees spoke of discussions at stakeholder meetings. In some cases, a patch may be identified by reconnaissance in an area and/or by having consulted with local communities, including public transport providers, local businesses and residents (including young people). The evaluation team will use the co-design stage to agree upon the approach required.

Under our design, each of the 15 consortia will identify around 10 eligible patches, giving a trial with around 150 patches overall. The Stage 2 interviewees suggested there might be quite a lot of variation in the nature and size of the patches they identify, with some being just a handful of streets or even a street corner and others being whole estates. It is unlikely that a consistent definition of a patch can be imposed, but there will need to be discussion with each consortium to ensure the patches they have identified are

ones that are sufficiently focused to allow change over time to be observable. Our expectation is that most of the patches in the trial will be small.[8]

Sample size calculations

It is difficult to carry out a formal sample size calculation for the trial, given the current lack of data on likely effect sizes. We therefore suggest that prior to the pilot stage, secondary analysis be carried out that compares police outcomes data in patches which have recently had detached youth work with data from a matched comparison set of non-detached youth work patches. This will give an estimate of the probable size of impacts on police incidence. These estimates can then be used to help finalise the efficacy trial sample size calculations. Implementation data should also be collected to provide an overview of the nature, intensity and duration of the detached youth work undertaken. This would be used to inform an interpretation of the police data and to provide further examples of detached youth work in practice, against which the assumptions underpinning the trial design could be tested. How such a study will work is set out in the section below on mitigating risks (RQ6).

Our preliminary sample size calculations suggest that a trial with around 150 patches (75 per arm) will probably be sufficient, although we cannot be very confident about this prior to a pilot. Assuming a fairly high pre–post correlation, of around 0.8,[9] samples of this size would allow for detectable effect sizes of around 0.27 standard deviations.[10] To illustrate what this means in lay terms, if each area was scored on a binary outcome (e.g. 1 = low crime; 0 = high crime), and 50% of the control areas were to score 1 at follow-up, the percentage would have to be 64% in intervention areas for a 'significant' impact to be identified. That is, detached youth work would have to change outcomes for around 14% of patches (or one in seven). This seems an ambitious, but not *overly* ambitious, target for detached youth work. A trial of this size would be a reasonable compromise between being practical to set up and manage while also being able to detect what, at present, look to be plausibly sized effects.

Table 13 sets out the approximate detectable effect sizes for a range of different sample sizes and for four different assumptions about the pre–post correlation (0.6, 0.7, 0.8 and 0.9). The sample sizes range from 25 per trial arm to 300. The table illustrates that if the YEF's target for trials of a minimum detectable effect size of 0.2 or smaller is to be met, then a trial with around 200 patches per arm is likely to be needed. If the hot-spot policing review (Braga et al., 2019) estimate of an effect size of 0.13 was to be used as the benchmark, then more than 300 patches per arm would be needed. Trials of this size are far less likely to prove practical and affordable than a trial with 75 per arm, but the initial secondary analysis stage will help determine whether they will be necessary and allow for decisions to be made on whether to move forward to an efficacy trial. Importantly, the secondary analysis stage will allow for the costs of

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[8] Likewise, we are unlikely to impose a maximum or minimum number of young people to work with per patch. The trial will try to reflect the natural variation that occurs in detached youth work. The sample size calculations are driven by the number of patches, rather than the number of young people.

[9] An analysis of police data from lower level super output areas (LSOAs) suggests that, for LSOAs that are in the top decile in terms of incident numbers in Month 1, the correlation between Month 1 and Month 25 incident numbers is around 0.9. So, the 0.8 assumed here is likely to be conservative.

[10] 80% power; 5% significance level

detached youth work to be estimated, which will allow for an assessment to be made of the smallest effect size that would make detached youth work cost-effective.

Table 13. Minimum detectable effect sizes for different sample sizes (80% power, 5% significance level)

Pre-post correlation	Number of patches per trial arm					
	25	50	75	100	200	300
0.6	0.63	0.45	0.37	0.32	0.22	0.18
0.7	0.57	0.40	0.33	0.28	0.20	0.16
0.8	0.48	0.34	0.27	0.24	0.17	0.14
0.9	0.35	0.24	0.20	0.17	0.12	0.10

Contamination and non-compliance

A complicating factor is that, within the trial, there will be a degree of unavoidable contamination and non-compliance. A condition of taking part in the trial will be that control patches should not have detached youth work introduced during the evaluation period, but we have heard from several interviewees that there will be considerable pressure from local authorities, as well as other funders and commissioners, to override this if an acute need for detached youth work arises. The evaluation team will need to work with the delivery teams to limit this as far as possible, but we anticipate there will need to be some flexibility allowed.[11] Also, on the detached youth work arm, there will be patches where detached youth work starts but is pulled for various reasons (e.g. it fails to get traction working with young people in a particular patch or the issues it was addressing are resolved).

There may also be patches where the young people who are targeted for detached youth work simply move to another patch. When tracking the patches in the trial, patches such as these may appear to have changed positively on the evaluation outcomes, whereas, in practice, the issues may have simply moved elsewhere. This would not bias the estimates of impact if it were to affect both arms of the trial, but if the detached youth work itself triggers the moves, it could be biasing. The effects will need to be monitored as part of the IPE, but, in addition, analysis of change in police outcomes in areas neighbouring the detached youth work areas will need to be conducted to identify spillover effects.

The final sample size calculations ought, if possible, to factor in all of these likely dilution effects. The pilot stage should give some indication of the likely scale of each.

Step 3: Evaluation team collects baseline outcomes with help from delivery teams

Prior to randomisation, the evaluation team will need to collect baseline data from each of the patches on all the outcomes of interest. While we have come a long way in developing the theory of change during Stage 2 of this scoping study, the precise nature of these patch-level outcomes is an issue for further

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[11] This will need to be further explored in the co-design phase and pilot trial, but we anticipate situations where the delivery and evaluation teams agree to some short-term detached youth work which would fall well short of the outcome described in the shared practice model, as well as allowing the interventions which are defined as business as usual.

discussion at the co-design phase, involving not only delivery organisations but also the young people themselves (see RQ6).

For now, we have set out, under RQ4, the broad research questions around the impact of detached youth work that the trial will aim to address, and here, we set out our current thinking about what the likely outcomes (and their data sources) might be.

To align with the theory of change, the proposals include outcomes from administrative data as well as primary data collection in the form of 'on-the-ground' observations and community surveys. While primary data collection across 150 patches is a significant undertaking, our proposed approach attempts to minimise the time and cost, integrating the data collection in terms of who collects the data and when it is done. The pilot trial will be crucial to testing the work involved in these data collection tasks and assessing the role of these outcomes alongside those available in the administrative data.[12]

Outcomes from local-level administrative police data

The most robust and comprehensive outcomes data available to the trial will come from hyper-local police data, and we, therefore, propose that these provide the primary outcome for the trial (as well as for one or more secondary outcomes).[13]

Our proposed primary outcome is based on publicly available data from data.police.uk, which includes the geographic coordinates of each reported incident and the month it occurred. This data will allow for the construction of patch-level measures of reported antisocial behaviour and crime over time.

The co-design stage will hone in on the precise measure to be used as the primary outcome, with others likely being included as secondary outcomes.[14] The options for the primary outcome are as follows.

1. The number of all reported incidents[15] (or number per population size).
2. The number of reported incidents known to be those that are more likely to involve young people. While the database does not include information on the profiles of those involved in the incidents (where known), the evaluation could draw on other data about the age profile of those involved in particular types of incidents or crime. For instance, Police National Computer data from 2009/10 (Cooper & Roe, 2012) suggests that half (51%) of all robberies leading to a conviction involve young people aged 10 to 17, as do a third (32%) of proven burglaries and three-in-ten (31%) proven offences against vehicles.[16]

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[12] For instance, if an analysis of the pilot data suggests the observational and/or survey data are more sensitive to change than the administrative data, then the case will be stronger for their inclusion in the efficacy trial.

[13] The scoping study considered and discounted the use of other administrative data sources where the only postcode data was based on the person's home address, including educational and health service use outcomes. These were also not central to the theory of change.

[14] Note that the co-design stage will involve coming to a consensus on the approach, which will be adopted consistently across all areas. This will be made clear to those taking part in the co-design stage.

[15] Examples include antisocial behaviour, bicycle theft, criminal damage and arson and burglary.

[16] Whereas, in contrast, only 7% of proven fraud and forgery offences and 13% of proven drug offences involved young people aged 10 to 17.

3. The number of particular types of incidences that detached youth work might aspire to reduce.

Reliance on publicly available data clearly removes any risks over data access. However, there are a number of other potentially valuable local data sources that should be discussed with consortia at the pilot stage. As discussed in Step 1, above, we expect the consortia approach to ensure that the local police and youth justice services will enter into data-sharing agreements for the purposes of the trial. Whilst we have had no direct discussions about this with local teams (as these would be hypothetical until the trial patches are identified), our understanding is that other evaluation teams have successfully negotiated access. Indeed, this is the approach proposed for the YEF's Neighbourhood Fund evaluation. The pilot stage should include a discussion of whether local police forces collect – and would share – more detailed information on the incidents available from data.police.uk, notably, information on the victims. If this is possible, measuring the impact on young people as victims of crime may be valuable.

Whether youth justice services data (collected on the Access Plus system) on young people involved in the criminal justice system includes data on the location of any incidents and whether this could be made available at a hyper-local level. If it could, then the potential to include outcomes on young people's contact with the criminal justice system could be explored, including types of contact (cautions, arrests and convictions) as well as diversions (e.g. community orders).[17]

Observational data about each of the patches

Observational data will be used to provide (semi-)objective measures of antisocial behaviour and local safety. This approach has previously been used in evaluations of hot-spot policing (Braga, 2019b). Again, the precise measures will be decided during co-design. However, during the Stage 2 interviews, it was suggested that they might include:

- The presence of graffiti
- The presence of broken glass
- The presence of drug littering
- Increased noise levels
- Other examples of antisocial behaviour.

There are no existing data collection tools for these outcomes that we are aware of, so these would need to be developed and validated as part of the pilot stage. Each outcome would be clearly defined to ensure consistency across the patches and across time, with the data collectors receiving a detailed briefing about how to record what they observe. The pilot stage would include testing the reliability of the measures using two data collectors in the same patch, comparing their observations (inter-rater reliability) and repeating the measures over short time intervals (test–retest reliability).

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[17] If the system only includes geographic information about where the young person lives, then it would not be possible to use this data to measure the impact of detached youth work at a patch level.

We also propose to use information recorded by, for example, bus, tram or subway providers about the number of incidents reported on public transport[18] and, potentially, complaints to local councillors which were raised as potential prompts for detached youth work during our workshops and interviews.

Exactly who collects this data is, again, an issue to be explored further in the co-design stage and pilot trial.[19] One option is to use a researcher from the evaluation team, while another is to employ and train local people, though we have discounted observations being undertaken by youth workers from the detached youth work agency, as there would be potential bias. Both the above options have advantages. The researcher would ensure a level of independence in the measures, while there is a risk that a local (young) person might feel they have a vested interest in showing the patch in a particular light. However, there is value in investing in the local community in the context of the wider aims of detached youth work. Using local people may also provide more flexibility in the time period over which the observations are made (e.g. at different times of day over a week, rather than in a single day, which would be the approach required when using a member of the evaluation team). If the co-design stage highlights a preference for local data collectors, then the pilot stage could be used to test whether this approach leads to any bias in the observations by comparing the observations collected by researchers with those collected by local people.

The observations would involve the researcher/local person spending time in each street within their patch and noting down evidence of the specified issues. A percentage score would then be created for each patch, either per issue or as a composite score across the issues. For instance, a patch in which drug littering was evident in five of the 10 streets in the patch would get a percentage score of 50. Incidences on public transport would involve using drivers' incident reports.

Survey data within each of the patches

The Stage 2 interviews identified a number of potential community-level outcomes of detached youth work, which are reflected in the theory of change and could be measured as part of the efficacy trial. Young person–level outcomes are also crucial to understanding the change that detached youth work can bring about, and approaches to measuring these are described in the IPE section.

Community-level outcomes that could be measured as part of the efficacy trial include both the perceptions of people living within the community – including young people – and those of local workers (notably shopkeepers), the staff in community hubs (including libraries) and, potentially, school safeguarding leads. We propose the distribution of short 'drop-off' surveys to all addresses, both residences and businesses, within the local patch.[20]

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[18] From the interviews, we are aware of such data being collected by transport providers. On the assumption that this information is not collected consistently across all providers, we propose that a simple bespoke data collection tool be developed, into which the evaluation team inputs data provided by transport providers in a consistent format.

[19] The final data collection approach agreed would need to be implemented consistently across all patches.

[20] This approach would be low cost, with the drop offs conducted during the periods when researchers or local people are undertaking their observational work.

Surveys of local residents (including young people) would be used to capture:[21]

- Feelings of local safety (during the day, after dark)
- Feelings of community cohesion
- Attitudes towards young people
- Perceived attitudes of young people
- Perceived antisocial behaviour by young people (e.g. increased noise levels, graffiti).

Surveys of businesses will also include the above measures but will also capture incidences such as shoplifting by young people.

The evaluation team will be able to draw on survey questions which have been developed and tested for a number of existing or previous surveys, including the UK Household Longitudinal Study, Community Life Survey, Place Survey and Crime Survey for England and Wales. Appendix 5 provides some example questions which will form part of a consultation exercise during the co-design phase.

Survey respondents will be given the option of completing the survey online or returning it by post. While we have concerns about low response rates, this is the best way of quantitatively capturing these outcomes within the community. The co-design and pilot phases will be used to develop the optimal approach to encouraging community members to respond to the survey.[22] This will include the co-development of the accompanying information, potential community publicity (e.g. posters) and events, and the use of incentives and reminders. The costs of the exercise and the response rate achieved will be monitored during the pilot so that a view can be taken on the value of this element of the evaluation to an efficacy trial.

The survey responses will be used to create patch-level outcomes, either for the community as a whole or (after further discussion during co-design) among particular groups of the population, such as residents, businesses, young people and older people. In other words, the formulation of the outcome measures will be, for example, the percentage of residents who feel safe to go out after dark, the percentage of shopkeepers who report shoplifting by young people and the percentage of young people who feel part of their community.

Other baseline data about each of the patches

In addition to the baseline outcomes, the evaluation team will need to work with delivery teams to map what other provision is happening in both the intervention and control patches which might influence the outcomes of interest. We would expect this to include activities such as other centre-based youth provision or youth projects; police activity, including regular patrols and targeted approaches such as hot-spot policing; and other community cohesion or community safety activities. Some of this data may have been collected by the delivery teams during their reconnaissance work (see Step 2).

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[21] This is a more inclusive approach than alternatives such as monitoring social media or local neighbourhood groups.

[22] It is difficult to extrapolate from other surveys to estimate a likely response rate. It is possible that the hyper-local nature of this survey will increase the likelihood of receiving responses.

Step 4: The patches are randomised and detached youth work begins in the intervention areas

Once the baseline data collection is complete, the patches will be randomly allocated to intervention or control (with stratification by the delivery partner).

Step 5: A two-year trial period – monitoring for potential contamination

Subsequent to the randomisation of patches, we are proposing a two-year delivery period, including the initial set-up stages by the delivery teams. This suggested trial length is suggested to balance the need to allow time for the detached youth work to be embedded and take effect against the challenge of keeping control groups detached youth work–free for the period of the trial. During the Stage 2 interviews, there was a fair degree of variation in reports of how long a detached youth work team would typically work in a patch and in perceptions of how long it would take for any impacts of detached youth work to be evident in our outcomes of interest. While some interviewees reported working – and needing to work – in patches for anything from 18 months to over five years, others talked about other shorter, more ad hoc, projects which might last a matter of weeks or months.[23] In terms of observing change, some interviewees spoke of being able to see changes within weeks of a project starting, including improvements to feelings of local safety. However, others spoke of detached youth work taking several years to support sustainable change. Distinctions were made between being able to elicit change and being assured of sustained change.

During this period, the evaluation team will work with delivery teams to monitor issues which may affect the outcomes of interest. A key focus of this collaboration will be any detached youth work delivered within the control patches because either the consortium delivery team or another organisation have felt it necessary to enter the patch, but it will also monitor other provision and/or activities happening in the intervention or control patches.

We expect this monitoring to be the responsibility of the delivery teams. The evaluation team will need to provide a bespoke system in which to record the activity in intervention and control patches, as described in the IPE section below.

Step 6: The evaluation team collects the follow-up outcomes

The precise follow-up periods will be decided during the co-design phase and tested in the pilot trial. However, we are proposing that the evaluation team collects the same outcomes as at baseline at two follow-up time points (we suggest at one year and after two years). Further discussion may lead us to suggest restricting the one-year data collection just to those outcomes which might reasonably be expected to have changed after a year, with data collection on the full set of outcomes only carried out after two years of detached youth work delivery in the intervention areas.

Step 7: Analysis and interpretation

The analysis of the efficacy trial data will follow standard practice for RCTs, with the exact details for the efficacy trial being determined after the pilot stage. The main analysis will be intention to treat– and regression-based, potentially with a complier average causal effect analysis to estimate the impact on

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[23] Note that this refers to how long teams work within an area, rather than how long they work with a particular group of young people. Many interviewees reported a high turnover of young people with whom they might be working over the period.

compliers. Some outcomes will be more prone to non-responses than others, and for these, an analysis of the correlates of a non-response will be needed and sensitivity analyses incorporated as necessary. Between-consortia effects could arise, and these will need to be anticipated and analyses conducted to identify and explain them.

The implementation and process evaluation

Overview and research questions for the IPE

The impact evaluation described above will require an in-depth IPE to monitor trial implementation, provide context and depth to the impact findings and provide insight into change from the perspectives of the young people and their communities and the necessary conditions and mechanisms that have led to the change.

Our proposed IPE design will be responsive and flexible, taking into account participating organisations' capacities, young people's preferences and wider community events and policy changes during the trial's duration. The evaluation components proposed are:

- Frequent contact with delivery agencies and local partnership leads
- Collection of administrative and monitoring data
- Qualitative research conducted with detached youth work agencies and other consortia members
- Qualitative research conducted with local stakeholders
- Creative qualitative research conducted with young people
- Surveys of young people.

The final shape of these activities, particularly the qualitative work and surveys with young people, will be determined through a significant co-design phase described below.

The proposed IPE research questions address perspectives on both the delivery itself and the evaluation procedures at multiple levels. These are as follows.

1. **Impacts:** what are the perceived impacts of detached youth work, including differences by groups and services? How does change come about, and how does this align with the theory of change, including proposed mechanisms of change? Does detached youth work reduce inequity, and is it at least as impactful for those young people experiencing it who face the greatest disadvantage? What impacts do other community members experience?
2. **Reach**: how many young people are reached? What are their characteristics? Does detached youth work reach the intended young people (i.e. those who are particularly disadvantaged and marginalised from other local services)?
3. **Fidelity to the shared practice model and adaptations:** is the service delivered in line with the shared practice model (including the frequency of sessions, types of activities, adherence to patches, values and the quality of practice)? What adaptations are made and why?
4. **Activities:** what activities are delivered in detached youth work? How are decisions about the activities made? What is taken into account, which parties are involved and are there local triggers that influence activity? How is the wider community engaged and influenced through detached youth work?
5. **Acceptability and appropriateness of detached youth work:** how is detached youth work experienced by young people? How does this vary by area, young people's circumstances and the activities they receive? Does what is delivered respond to the issues of inequity faced by young people? How is detached youth work experienced by other community stakeholders?

6. **Acceptability of the RCT design and contamination:** how acceptable was the RCT design? Was any detached youth work delivered in the control patches? What did it take to preserve control patches from detached youth work?
7. **Appropriateness and feasibility of the evaluation arrangements:** were the research methods and tools used viewed as acceptable, including by the most marginalised young people?
8. **Business as usual:** what activities were delivered as business as usual in the control and intervention areas? What additional or new activities were undertaken in control areas in response to local events which, absent the trial, could have been addressed through detached youth work? How were arising issues resolved?
9. **Costs:** what was the cost of delivery of the detached youth work? If it is possible to ascertain, what was the cost of delivery of any additional activities undertaken in the control areas in response to issues that, absent the trial, would have been addressed through detached youth work?

IPE research methods

Monitoring data

The evaluation team will need to establish an online monitoring data system (to be completed by each agency for all intervention and control patches) to understand whether detached youth work agencies have delivered with fidelity to the shared practice model, collected data about business-as-usual services and checked for any detached youth work delivery in control patches. In intervention patches, the data collected will include:

- Reconnaissance activities and planning
- Delivery start and end dates
- Session frequencies and duration
- Numbers of young people engaged and types of engagement used in each session
- If possible, descriptive demographic information about young people, including whether they were new or repeat contacts and how many times they were engaged
- Activities delivered and topics addressed
- Whether and why delivery stopped before two years
- Whether the young people moved to a new location
- Youth worker and manager characteristics, training and supervision
- Other non–detached youth work provisions in the patches.

In control patches, a much lighter-touch approach will be used to collect data about any detached youth work and non-detached youth work provisions.

Liaison with detached youth work agencies and consortia representatives

Regular (at least monthly) liaison with key members of each of the 15 detached youth work delivery teams will need to be used to support compliance with the trial arrangements and collect information about what is happening 'on the ground' (both in terms of detached youth work and other provision in the intervention and control areas), any local incidents that may affect the delivery and impact of detached youth work and any other contextual information (e.g. school or local authority policies). This liaison will also present the opportunity to plan other elements of fieldwork, hear deliverers' perspectives on the project and address any issues as they arise.

The evaluation team will also liaise regularly (less frequently) with key consortia partners (such as Violence Reduction Units or police forces in intervention and control patches) to monitor service delivery in the trial patches and any incidents that arise.

Interviews with delivery staff

The evaluation team will undertake semi-structured interviews with staff in a variety of roles (managers, team leaders, youth workers) in a purposively selected sample of detached youth work patches (likely selecting one patch per consortium). These interviews will provide more depth to our understanding of the detached youth work activities being delivered, how decisions are made about what to deliver, the nature of the groups and individuals the teams are working with and how these change over time, perceived impacts for young people and their communities and any other changes observed in the local area. Interviews are likely to be undertaken at two points in time: around mid- and end-trial.

Qualitative research with local stakeholders

Alongside the community surveys which form part of the RCT (described above), the evaluation team will also undertake qualitative research (likely semi-structured interviews and focus groups) using a purposive sample of detached youth work patches and with a range of local stakeholders, including local schools, shop staff, transport providers and other local businesses/agencies, and local residents. These interviews will be used to identify where and how change is happening in the local area and further afield, gauge local attitudes to young people and how they shift over time and understand other contextual changes in the local area.

Qualitative work and surveys with young people

It will also be important to undertake qualitative work with the young people involved in detached youth work to understand their perspectives on it. This element of the work will be extremely important to centring young people's voices in the evaluation and will be guided by the shared practice model and theory of change. We will use this element to understand the young people's experiences of detached youth work, the changes it has brought about for them, the acceptability and appropriateness of the shared practice model for young people, issues around equitable delivery and (particularly in the pilot phase) the acceptability of the data collection approaches.

Data collection approaches used with young people

When designing the approach to any data collection with young people, there are some key issues to consider to ensure that the work is not only respectful of the young people's experiences but also empowers them and is consistent with the spirit and principles of detached youth work. This is particularly important, given the likely greater disadvantage and vulnerability of the young people involved in detached youth work. Our proposed approaches draw on issues and recommendations discussed in the interviews with detached youth work agencies and offer a high-level review of publications that provide guidance on fieldwork with marginalised young people (supplemented by interviews with research experts); these are included as Appendix 4. The methods to be used will need to be developed and tested during the co-design phase and pilot.

The key ingredients for the successful engagement of young people in research identified through our review include:

- Having a good understanding of the population or community

- Designing data collection approaches that are suitable for the population

- Ensuring that young people and 'gatekeepers' (detached youth workers and managers) understand the value and importance of the research

- Training key members of the delivery team, whether they are supporting or conducting the research

- Building trust, rapport and mutual respect

- Thinking carefully about when and how to obtain consent

- Working out how best to keep in touch

- Providing incentives.

These issues are relevant to both qualitative research and survey work, and are addressed below.

<u>Qualitative and creative data collection methods used with young people</u>

For the qualitative elements of the IPE, we anticipate focusing on one patch per detached youth work agency, with patches being purposively sampled. During the co-design phase, the evaluation team will explore effective and acceptable methodologies with young people and youth workers. The approaches will be flexible and adaptive, recognising that what is optimal will depend on the nature of detached youth work in each area (and the extent to which data collection can be embedded in it), the circumstances of the young people, the relationships they have with the youth workers and the experiences and capabilities of the detached youth work agencies.

We propose to develop a menu of creative approaches to offer youth agencies and to work with the selected agencies to establish which one/s would be most suitable for use in their context. This approach will allow for a level of consistency across data types while also respecting contextual differences.

The options we are considering are training peer researchers (young people from the detached youth work patch) or embedded researchers (e.g. youth workers from other agencies not connected with the detached youth work providers) to conduct interviews or collect voice or video clips, or getting youth workers working with the young people to create a youth-led podcast, video or other creative project. The detached youth work agencies involved in the scoping study also expressed their enthusiasm for undertaking interviews with young people, although this would raise concerns about objectivity, potential bias and the conflation of roles.

Our view is that it is unlikely to be feasible or optimal for members of the research team to undertake interviews with young people, although we would explore this further in the co-design phase (see below). While there are some advantages to researchers from the evaluation team collecting data from the young people directly (namely, objectivity and confidence in how the data collection has been conducted), the interviews and review highlight significant drawbacks relating to understanding the population and promoting trust and respect.

Embedded and peer researchers are more likely to have lived experiences similar to those of the young people and to know the local community, and they will therefore be able to relate to and build rapport with the young people and their peers. They are better placed than the research team to stay in contact with individuals if a longitudinal approach is taken. Training embedded or peer researchers may also provide benefits to the community recipients as well as the research itself. Rather than an extractive research

exercise, which involves 'taking from', this approach enables the evaluation to 'contribute to' the community.

The benefits of using peer or embedded researchers include:

- A reduction in the risk of a power relationship between the researcher and the participant
- An increased likelihood of mutual understanding and shared language
- An increased likelihood that young people will feel they can answer honestly (particularly when wanting to express dissent or dissatisfaction)
- The presence of insider knowledge on the part of the interviewer
- A feeling of empowerment on the part of both the interviewer and participant
- An ability to avoid placing additional workload on service providers.

Challenges and disadvantages of peer researchers and embedded researchers include the following:

- They are less experienced than the evaluation team, which may affect the quality of the interviews and ability to deal with potentially very sensitive issues.
- There are ethical issues around putting researchers into potentially risky situations and invoking memories of their own lived experiences.
- There is the possibility that the research and the detached youth work will become conflated or that the research will interfere with the detached youth work approach.

These issues are core to the future design of any qualitative and survey data collection with young people and will, therefore, be explored thoroughly in the co-design phase.

A key consideration for any work that is embedded within the detached youth work sessions is the extent of youth worker involvement. The guidance or presence of a youth worker, particularly in a creative project, may skew the responses by enhancing favourable perspectives and inhibiting negative perspectives. Furthermore, introducing a creative project with the IPE questions in mind may interfere with the organic and youth-led nature of detached youth work. On the other hand, giving young people total freedom over the nature of the work may limit its relevance to the evaluation.

Any high-quality qualitative data collection with young people in this context requires a trusting relationship with youth workers established over an extended period. There is also significant transience in the dynamics of groups engaged by detached youth work. The evaluation team will, therefore, establish appropriate time points and groups to invite to participate in this element of the work in regular meetings with local agencies and consortia representatives.

Whatever qualitative approaches are selected, it is likely that the young people who contribute to the qualitative (and survey) work will be the more engaged ones, those who have had the most positive experiences of detached youth work, and they will not represent the full range of experiences. It will, therefore, be important to frame these elements as illustrating what detached youth work, at its best, *can* achieve rather than as representing the full range of 'what detached youth work *does* achieve.

Surveys of young people

Surveys of young people engaged in detached youth work provide the opportunity to capture snapshots or, potentially, longitudinal data regarding young people's experiences at pre-determined time points throughout the two years. The form of the survey would be established with the young people through the co-design phase and piloting. Interview participants described a range of possibilities, from paper-based to

digital and from self-completion to 'interviewer'-guided. The relative benefits and drawbacks of the approaches to be considered in co-design are outlined below, and many of these considerations also apply to the qualitative work described in the previous section.

Survey mode

The survey mode and method of distribution have significant implications for response rates, the types of questions that can be asked and the reliability of responses. There are a number of options.

- Paper-based surveys were preferred by many of the detached youth work agencies interviewed; they described them as easier to distribute and collect 'in the moment' (compared to using, for example, tablets), with youth workers able to support the young people to complete them. However, there are several issues associated with paper completion, including possible low literacy levels, limited confidentiality (which might affect the accuracy of responses) and group dynamics when surveys are completed with peers. Although youth workers could support young people by reading questions and writing answers on their behalf, this would reduce objectivity and introduce potential bias.
- Online surveys can be distributed via email or text (although this requires young people's contact details) or using QR codes (which, if made available to young people on cards or posters, would remove the need for their contact details). QR codes have been used successfully by some detached youth work projects. While some detached youth work interviewees saw social media as a useful tool for distributing a QR code or survey link via a platform already known and trusted by young people, there are issues concerning reach and response rates and safeguarding concerns, particularly when working with younger children.
- Custom-made apps can also be used for data collection. Apps can be used to implement traditional long-form surveys in a user-friendly format, to send short 'burst' surveys at set intervals and to collect phone data such as GPS locations. The advantage of apps is that (as with online surveys) young people have control over what they provide, and the process can be less stigmatising and more confidential. Apps also allow minimal contact between the researchers and young people and prevent the data collection from interfering with the detached youth work. Furthermore, app-based surveys enable longitudinal data collection from the same young people. However, there are concerns around take-up and response rates; the youth workers emphasised that many young people are very conscious of data privacy, and the impersonal nature of notifications makes them easy to ignore.
- The interviewees discussed giving phones or handheld devices to young people with the app or survey questions loaded. On balance, given the duration of the delivery and evaluation period, we think this is less likely to be feasible, but it remains an option under consideration.

Whatever the mode, surveys are likely to be distributed by the detached youth work youth workers, as this is more likely to result in a consistent approach, although the surveys could be distributed by peer or embedded researchers (if used). The selected approach will need to be developed through the co-design phase, and it is likely to involve compromise on some aspects in order to satisfy others, including accessibility, response rates and the ability to elicit accurate answers. For example, digital web-based approaches may invite more objective responses but have a lower response rate, particularly for young people with the highest levels of need, while in-person, paper-based approaches may be less objective but reach a broader spread of young people engaged with the service. Some interviewees commented that, if required by funders, they can '*get it done*' even if the data collection process is not ideal, but our aim should

be to ensure that the data collected is rich, reliable and truly representative of the young people who take part.

Timing

Although some detached youth work representatives felt it might be possible to collect data from young people early in a detached youth work project, the balance of views was that it was not feasible until relationships had already been developed with young people in the course of detached youth work delivery. This means a conventional baseline time point will not be feasible and the data collection will need to rely, at least in part, on retrospective questioning (asking young people to look back to when their contact with detached youth work began or another fixed point and to comment on the types of change they have experienced since then).

If feasible, we would like to include a longitudinal approach to data collection so that the same young person is asked to complete a survey at two or more time points, with the data linked. It is unlikely to be feasible to do this using conventional methods (by asking for contact details), but it might be possible with an approach that uses either QR codes or an app sending 'burst' surveys at set intervals.

Content

Any survey data collection will need to be short and focused, covering issues directly relevant to young people's lives and to the detached youth work and reflecting the outcomes and mechanisms of change set out in the theory of change. Although it would be optimal, if possible, to include carefully selected validated measures, the co-design phase will need to consider whether this is acceptable to young people, recognising the importance of avoiding framing questions in ways that could be labelling, stigmatising or triggering.

The nature of the questions asked can also influence engagement. Interviewees said that young people are more likely to enthusiastically take part when questions are about their lives and what they want. On the other hand, personal questions and particularly identifiable information are considered likely to deter young people from completing surveys. This issue may be mitigated by only introducing data collection once a trusting relationship has been built and providing clear messaging around confidentiality.

Consent

Arrangements for informed consent (relevant to qualitative research as well as surveys) will need to be developed and tested with the young people in the co-design phase and will need to be concise and foreground young people's rights. Young people must be given clear information about the voluntary nature of any activities they are asked to engage in. The evaluation team will also consider how to incentivise participation and whether financial incentives are appropriate.

Interviewees emphasised the importance of providing young people with clarity about what they are being asked to do and why. Doing this effectively is thought to boost response rates and accuracy of responses.

<u>Cost data</u>

The evaluation will follow the requirements for cost data collection and reporting specified in the YEF Cost Reporting Guidance. Data will be collected from detached youth work agencies and other relevant consortia partners and will cover staff and labour costs, buildings and facilities, materials and equipment, in-kind contributions and other relevant costs. The evaluation team will include costs for the delivery of detached youth work but not the evaluation or the co-design phase. The co-design phase will be used to specify the

data required and to set up feasible approaches for cost reporting. Where possible, data collection will be linked with financial reporting arrangements used by the YEF to oversee grants to consortia.

Cost data will be analysed and reported for the delivery of detached youth work for the trial, with costs given per participant. Total costs will be broken down into pre-requisites, set-up and recurring costs.

Table 14. Summary of proposed IPE components

Component	Sample	Timing/frequency	Focus
Monitoring data	All detached youth work agencies, covering detached youth work and control patches	Ongoing	Reach Fidelity Activities Business as usual Contamination
Liaison with detached youth work agencies	All detached youth work agencies, covering detached youth work and control patches	Monthly	Reach Fidelity Activities Business as usual Contamination Acceptability of RCT and other evaluation procedures
Interviews with delivery staff and other consortia members	Managers, team leaders and youth workers in 15 detached youth work patches	At mid- and end-point of trial	Impacts Reach Fidelity Acceptability and appropriateness of detached youth work Activities Business as usual Contamination
Qualitative research with community stakeholders	E.g. school staff, local councillors, shop staff, transport providers, local businesses and local residents	At mid- and end-point of trial	Impacts
Qualitative research with young people	Young people engaged in approximately 15 detached youth work projects	TBD	Impacts Activities Acceptability and appropriateness of detached youth work Appropriateness and feasibility of evaluation processes (pilot)

Surveys with young people	All detached youth work patches	TBD	Reach Impacts
Costs data collection	All consortia	TBD	Costs

RQ6. What are the risks, and how could they be mitigated?

At the start of the scoping study, we posed this research question in terms of risks and mitigations. However, in concluding the scoping study, it feels more appropriate to discuss here the challenges and remaining unknowns and our subsequent conclusion that a decision about an efficacy trial should be made after a retrospective study of detached youth work and comparison patches based on published police data, followed by a period of co-design, which is then followed by an internal pilot trial.

So, we start by setting out the issues which each of these pre-efficacy trial stages will seek to address and discussing how they will do so.

Secondary analysis of existing police data to estimate likely effect sizes

The most significant unknown factor in designing an efficacy trial is the likely effect sizes. Without a credible estimate of these, it is not possible to determine the minimum sample size needed for a trial. To address this, we suggest that, as an initial step, a retrospective study should be commissioned which uses a QED to estimate effect sizes on published police outcomes.

The broad approach such a study would take is as follows.

1. A number of youth agencies (likely around 10) will be recruited to help with the exercise, with each being paid a small fee for doing so.
2. Each of the 10 agencies will identify five to 10 patches that they have worked in within the last five years, focusing on those in which the duration and type of work they did is similar to the shared practice model. Postcodes will need to be supplied for these patches so that the evaluation team can match them with the corresponding police data.
3. Historic police data will then be used to identify a pool of comparison patches (for practical reasons, a patch is likely to be an LSOA selected from the local areas that the 10 youth agencies work in). These comparison patches will be selected because they have similar levels and crime trends to the detached youth work patches.
4. The evaluation team will then provide the list of potential comparison patches to the youth agencies and ask them to identify any in which they believe detached youth work has been used in the last five years. Any such patches will be excluded from the comparison list.
5. Differences in crime outcomes post–detached youth work will then be compared between the detached youth work and comparison patches after controlling for any differences in the historic levels and trends in crime between the sets of patches. This will give the estimated effect sizes.
6. Light-touch implementation data will also be collected to understand the nature, intensity and duration of the detached youth work undertaken in each patch. Our expectation is that this could be gathered through a single interview with each agency, with a pro forma sheet sent in advance so that the interviewee can collate information from other sources within the agency if needed.
7. Where feasible, the youth agencies will also be asked to provide the approximate costs of their delivery of detached youth work in each of the patches in this study. This will allow for a crude assessment of the cost-effectiveness of detached youth work and will also help with estimating the costs of an efficacy trial.

Co-design phase

While this scoping study involved a great deal of consultation across Stages 1 and 2, the focus to date has been on talking with the organisations delivering or commissioning detached youth work. We have developed a shared practice model and a theory of change on the basis of these discussions and have gone

a long way towards designing an evaluation. However, we believe that there is a crucial role for a co-design phase: to drill down further into specific points of evaluation design and implementation for the proposed trial. Such a phase will involve not only detached youth work agencies but also young people and community members. Because the trial outcomes and procedures will need to be consistent across all consortia/patches, the co-design phase will work in a similar way to the development of the shared practice model and the theory of change. Rules of engagement will be developed in advance of the co-design stage, which will make it clear that the role of co-design is to discuss and develop issues in order to come to a broad consensus which will then be incorporated by the evaluation team into the final evaluation design.

We envisage working particularly closely with the detached youth work agencies that are selected to take part in the trial through a series of facilitated workshops that will drill down into evaluation practicalities. Some of the questions noted below will require work with other consortia members, particularly police forces. We would also want to work with one or more groups of young people, particularly on the design of data collection approaches and instruments and consent arrangements. This would best be undertaken with existing groups of young people working with the detached youth work workers or with other consortia partners, with the evaluation team briefing the relevant organisations to consult with the young people they work with and report back. Consultation with community members on data collection approaches and measures for community surveys would also ideally involve existing community representatives and groups.

We think that the following issues would benefit from co-design.

- **Decisions around outcome measures:** this work will involve taking the theory of change and unpacking the outcomes deemed by the co-design groups to be most appropriate for the evaluation.[24] Where the outcomes require survey data collection, the co-design groups will be involved in helping to formulate the survey questions. Where they involve police data, the evaluation team will work with police representatives to identify the specific measures to be used to focus on antisocial behaviour and crime involving young people.
- **Optimal approaches to data collection within the community:** the co-design groups will help with the development of the survey methodology, including the mode of data collection, the content of the covering letters, the appropriate use of incentives and other ways of maximising responses. They would also help with the development of data collection tools and metrics for observational data outcomes (such as levels of graffiti and drug littering), most of which we believe would need to be developed from scratch specifically for this study.
- **Optimal approaches to data collection with young people:** as part of the IPE, this will involve surveys, interviews and creative methods. For the survey, the co-design groups will help with determining the optimal mode, frequency, scope for longitudinal elements, questions and measures. The evaluation team will also consult the co-design groups on the types of creative methods that might be used and how best to support this work.
- **Mapping business as usual:** the co-design work should also involve activity to support each consortium to identify the range of provision currently or recently available in their identified patches.

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[24] The rules of engagement will include the fact that the aim of the trial is to measure the impact of detached youth work on a pre-specified set of outcomes.

- **Approaches to the monitoring data**: the evaluation team will consult with detached youth work agencies and other consortia members on feasible approaches for the regular collection of monitoring data about detached youth work and other delivery in the patches.
- **Shared practice model:** since many detached youth work agencies will not have been involved in the development of the shared practice model, the evaluation team will provide a detailed briefing on it and check all agencies are able to work to it.

A key stage between the co-design work and the launch of the internal pilot will be to provide very thorough briefings on trial procedures and other data collection.

Internal pilot trial

Following the co-design phase, we are proposing an internal pilot trial. Should an efficacy trial go ahead, the data from the pilot trial would form part of the efficacy trial.

We believe that a pilot trial is required to test:

- How best to ensure against the contamination of the control patches and the removal of detached youth work from intervention patches
- How best to support consortia, particularly delivery agencies, during the course of the trial
- The feasibility of involving consortia with no recent experience of detached youth work
- The ability of consortia to identify sufficient numbers of eligible patches of sufficient size with a suitable density of young people to approach
- The risks of falsely attributing positive change to detached youth work where there has simply been the displacement of young people's activities to another area
- How best to collect observational data
- How best to collect data and maximise response rates in community surveys
- Procedures for accessing hyper-local police data on youth crime
- Arrangements for collecting ongoing monitoring data to monitor fidelity and contamination.

Alongside the pilot trial, we would also run a small-scale version of the IPE described above.

We would suggest a one-year pilot trial that follows each of the steps of the efficacy trial that we set out above, from the commissioning process onwards, but with follow-up outcomes only after a year. We propose funding three consortia, each of which would identify 10 eligible patches, with detached youth work introduced in five and five acting as control.

Supporting delivery agencies

Consortia involved in the trial – both the internal pilot and any future efficacy trial – will need significant and focused support from the evaluation team throughout the trial's duration. The experience of working with delivery partner organisations in the YEF's multi-site trial of mentoring suggests that this support needs to be built on consistent, personal relationships and backed up with clear and detailed information on every element of the study. The support offer should be well-planned in advance, but equally, it must have the ability to swiftly respond to new 'needs' as they emerge. The innovative nature of the study means it is highly probable that there will be unforeseen questions and challenges at multiple points. These challenges are likely to relate to the alignment of robust research and evaluation processes with the realities of detached youth work practice 'in the real world'. The evaluation team will benefit from an in-depth

understanding of practice and delivery models within the youth sector in order to anticipate, reflect on and design solutions to emergent issues and then communicate them clearly, compassionately and consistently.

It is proposed that support to (potential) consortia commences in the expression of interest/assessment phase. Organisations considering expressing interest in the study, including the process of building a consortium model for the purpose of engagement, will need in-depth information to enable them to assess the suitability of the opportunity for their operating contexts and the potential demands on their service. They will need detailed information via briefings and frequently asked questions documents, as well as opportunities to ask questions to the evaluation team in person (via webinars or bookable information calls, for example) and, potentially, even support with 'matchmaking' where there are two or more potential consortia in any one area.

Once consortia (and their respective areas) have been selected, support will need to shift to 'socialising' the shared practice model, including workshops to explore the model in depth, refine/finalise the associated materials (including the theory of change) and work through the practical implications.

Once selected, consortia should be allocated to a dedicated member of the evaluation team for one-to-one support and begin a pattern of regular meetings – potentially as often as weekly at some points in the study. It will be critical to ensure that the right representative(s) of the consortium are involved in one-to-ones, and that the in-person support is backed up by detailed information in a format that consortium leads can easily and effectively 'take back' to their consortium partners. The clarity of messaging will be key. It is also recommended that monthly email updates are issued by the evaluation team to all consortia, celebrating progress and sharing important information and milestones.

The lead representatives are also likely to need regular opportunities for contact with specialists in the evaluation team in order to support specific areas of the study, such as data matching and ethical consent processes with young people and their parents/guardians.

As the study moves towards being underway, a series of workshops on specific elements of the evaluation will be scheduled (for example, the randomisation process, how patches are defined and delineated, and the requirements relating to data sharing) and will likely run several times to ensure that all consortia can be represented, with group sizes small enough to enable conversation.

Once the study is underway, it is likely that consortia members will benefit from a programme of opportunities to come together around specific themes – for example, approaches to engaging local businesses in the study, or models of place-based, cross-sector working with criminal justice agencies.

Towards the end of the study, dedicated workshops will be needed to support the interpretation and sharing of data and learning and to bring consortia together to show appreciation for their involvement.

Summary of risks and their mitigation

The risks and proposed mitigation strategies are summarised in Table 15 below.

Table 15. Risks and mitigations

Risk	Likelihood/impact	Mitigation
Low engagement by detached youth work agencies and local consortia at the recruitment stage due to concerns about the evaluation	Low/high	• The level of engagement in the feasibility study suggests sufficient interest, though not all agencies may choose to participate. • George Williams College has excellent networks for the recruitment of agencies; other existing networks will also be used. • The co-design stage will support retention.
Outcome measurement: detached youth work agencies and local consortia are resistant	Medium/medium	• The invitation to form consortia will make the terms of engagement clear. • The co-design will ensure that all organisations have a voice within the terms of engagement; particularly regarding the outcome measures.
Insufficient patches identified by participating consortia	Medium/high	• More consortia are invited to take part.
Contamination: detached youth work delivered in control patches	Medium/high	• Clear expectations are set from the start about evaluation requirements, reinforced in a co-design with clear instructions. • There will be regular liaison with consortia to identify risks early. • It should be made clear what can be provided in control patches, including 'light-touch' detached youth work and business as usual.

Detached youth work in an intervention patch is terminated early	Low/medium	• The feasibility study strongly suggests that a longer delivery period is needed and will be welcomed. • If delivery finishes early because the organisations feel the need has diminished, this should show through positive outcomes. • If delivery finishes early because organisations fail to get traction, this is fine (as this is part of a trial of the usual approach to detached youth work), although it will dilute the impacts.
Young people continue to gather but move out of their patches	Medium/medium	• This is hard to control, but it is part of usual practice in detached youth work. Where it happens, it has the potential to dilute/bias impacts, particularly if young people move to control patches.
Challenges in accessing police data	Low/high	• The evaluation team will offer their expertise and prior experience in accessing police data. • A sufficient timeframe will be allowed in set-up to negotiate access. • The police forces are included in the local consortia.
Low response rates to community and young people surveys; low engagement in qualitative research	High/medium	• The co-design phase will be used to develop high-quality, tailored research instruments and processes. • There will be an option not to proceed with these outcome measures after the pilot.

Conclusion

Our recommendation is that it is viable to proceed to an impact evaluation of detached youth work using the cluster RCT design outlined and with an in-depth IPE. Although the challenges of a rigorous evaluation are clear, and it is important that the design and conduct of an evaluation reflect the ethos and principles of detached youth work, we think these challenges can be mitigated with a collaborative and thoughtful approach and by working closely with local consortia and including an initial analysis stage, co-design phase and internal pilot.

Table 16. Summary of feasibility study findings

Research question	Finding
What models of detached youth work exist, how widely are they used and which are most likely to be relevant for this study?	Detached youth work is delivered across all regions of England by a range of organisations. There is sufficient consistency across key elements to establish a shared model of practice for evaluation.
What interventions or practices could detached youth work be compared with? Is it distinct enough from other activities to be able to detect an impact?	Detached youth work is distinct from, for example, outreach, community safety work and open access centre–based youth work. We propose an evaluation approach that does not rely on comparison with other provisions or services.
What are delivery organisations' views on evaluating the impact of detached youth work? What are the motivations and concerns of leaders in the field?	Delivery organisations recognise the value of evidencing the impact of detached youth work and are concerned that any evaluation should reflect and not distort its values, aims and practices.
What research questions could a robust evaluation answer, including the consideration of priority outcomes, mechanisms to be tested, sub-group effects and implementation factors?	Subject to initial piloting, an impact evaluation could assess the effectiveness of detached youth work on local areas, with priority outcomes relating to antisocial behaviour and crime, community safety and community cohesion. An IPE could test the mechanisms of change for individuals and the community, as set out in the theory of change, and explore factors including individuals' journeys, reach, fidelity and adaptation, acceptability and feasibility, contamination, business as usual and costs.

What methods could be used, including:	We outline the design for an RCT based on 'patches' appropriate for detached youth work, with the intervention patches receiving the work and control patches receiving business as usual. The data required would come from administrative data, observation, and community-level surveys. We provisionally estimate that a trial with around 150 patches will be needed.
• Is there scope for a cluster RCT or QED, and if a QED, with what comparison group/s? • How could data feasibly be collected? • What effect sizes are likely; what sample size will be needed to detect those effects?	
What are the risks, and how could they be mitigated?	The key risks are that detached youth work takes place in control areas, the groups of young people move out of the patch, insufficient patches are identified and non-administrative data collection is challenging. These could be mitigated by the careful selection of consortia, an initial analysis of police data, a co-design phase and an internal pilot.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Data privacy notice

Appendix 2: Shared practice model

Appendix 3: Theory of change

Appendix 4: Literature review

Appendix 5: Example survey questions on community cohesion and local safety

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Data privacy notice

Privacy Notice for the Detached Outreach Youth Work Feasibility Evaluation ('DOYW')

1. Introduction

Centre for Evidence and Implementation and its affiliates, subsidiaries and related entities ("CEI") is working in collaboration with Bryson Purdon Social Research ("BPSR"), Centre for Youth Impact ("CYI", also known as YMCA George Williams College ("GWC")), and the Youth Endowment Found ("YEF") ("we", "us", "our"). We are committed to protecting the privacy and security of the personal data we collect about participants in the Project ("you/your").

The purpose of this privacy notice is to explain what personal data we collect about you when we conduct research for the Detached Outreach Youth Work Feasibility Evaluation project. When we do this, we are the data controller.

Please read this privacy notice carefully as it provides important information about how we handle your personal information and your rights. If you have any questions about any aspect of this privacy notice you can contact us using the information provided below or by emailing us at amy.hall@ceiglobal.org or dpo@theevidencequarter.com quoting "Detached Outreach Youth Work Feasibility Evaluation" or "DOYW" or "CEI #1143" in the subject or body of the email.

2. Personal information we will collect and use

Where you have been identified as an individual holding relevant information about Detached Outreach Youth Work programmes we will collect and use the following categories of personal information:

- Name, email address, telephone number, job title, location (local area only)
- Answers you provide in interviews we may have with you, workshops you may attend and surveys you respond to where you volunteer any personal information such as any lived experience and opinions you hold about the programmes

3. How we will collect information about you

We will collect personal data in a variety of ways and at a variety of times throughout the Project. We refer to "direct data collection" when data is collected directly from you and we refer to "indirect data collection" when the data is not collected directly from you. We will collect personal information from you in the following ways (you may not be involved in all aspects of the project details below):

- From a local authority, charity, website holding your contact information, colleague or individual known to you within the DOYW programme you are involved in or related to (indirect data collection)
- From yourself within an online/telephone interview (direct data collection)
- From yourself via an online survey we have sent you (direct data collection)

4. Purposes for which we use personal data and the lawful basis to do so

When conducting the research study, we will use your personal data for the following purposes and on the following lawful bases. The table below is relevant to all data subjects involved in the research study:

Purpose	Lawful Basis for Processing
To write a research findings report based on information gathered, accessed and analysed. No personal data will be in the report.	The lawful basis we will be relying on is the legitimate interest of the Data Controller.
To make contact with you to see if you would like to take part in the Project as a participant providing us with key information about DOYW programmes.	
To send you a survey about the working parameters of DOYW programmes.	
For us to contact you to participate in an interview, focus group or workshop as part of the Project which will be recorded, transcribed and de-identified (we will make it such that we cannot work out who you are within any transcripts once recordings are deleted).	
To identify personal data and take relevant action upon submission of a data subject rights request.	Compliance with a legal obligation. The legal obligation is the UK General Data Protection Regulation to uphold your data protection rights

5. Sharing your data

It is unlikely that we'll ever share your personal data outside the UK. If, however, it becomes necessary for the purposes of conducting our research we will only share it with organisations in countries benefiting from a UK or European Commission adequacy decision, or on the basis of International Data transfer Agreements or European Commission Standard Contractual Clauses with a UK required addendum (all of which are recognised by the UK) which contractually oblige the recipient to process and protect your personal data to the standard expected within the UK.

Any data shared with the below categories of recipients is the minimum necessary for the task they have been instructed to carry out on our behalf or in conjunction with us. Each category of recipient is subject to pre-approved review to ensure comparative technical and organisational measure for keeping the data secure.

- Research partners
- Digital communications and storage providers

- Pre-approved transcription vendors
- Pre-approved online survey platform provider (Managed by CEI)

There may be scenarios where we are subject to a legal obligation to disclose or share your personal data, such as with law enforcement agencies, regulatory bodies or public authorities in order to prevent or detect crime. We will only ever disclose your personal data to these third parties to the extent we are required to do so by law.

We may also share your personal data if we choose to sell, transfer, or merge parts of our business and/or group, or our assets in the future. Or we may seek to acquire other businesses or merge with them. During any such process, we may share your data with other parties. We will only do this if they agree to keep your data safe and private. If a change to our group happens, then other parties may use your data in the same way as set out in this notice.

6. How long we keep your data

Data will be reduced, redacted, de-identified and deleted at appropriate times so we retain the minimum amount of data possible throughout the research study. We will keep your personal data for at least 2 years after the project ends in case there is a requirement to address any issues or complaints with the project, or should the project be commissioned to continue. Unless there is an extension to the Project it is due to be finished in December 2023.

Transcription agencies are instructed to confirm deletion of interview recordings and any copies of transcriptions of interviews within 7 days of delivery of the transcription to CEI.

We will never reuse or retain your data unless there is a legal reason for us to do so.

7. How we protect your data

We implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect data that we process from unauthorised disclosure, use, alteration or destruction. Data protection assessments are conducted for each research project and all recipients of data used within any research data.

Your information is securely stored on a dedicated drive, and access is controlled by secure access policies maintained by all research partners for the duration of the Project.

We will always keep these under review to make sure that the measures we have implemented remain appropriate. Any personal data is not subject to any automated decision-making.

8. Your rights and options

You have the following rights in respect of your personal data:

- You have the right of access to your personal data and can request copies of it and information about our processing of it.
- If the personal data we hold about you is incorrect or incomplete, you can ask us to rectify or add to it.
- Where we are using your personal data with your consent, you can withdraw your consent at any time.
- Where we are using your personal information because it is in our legitimate interests to do so, you can object to us using it this way.
- Where are not using your personal data for direct marketing, including profiling for direct marketing purposes. If we were you could object to us doing so.
- You can ask us to restrict the use of your personal data if:

- o It is not accurate,
- o It has been used unlawfully but you do not want us to delete it,
- o We do not need it any-more, but you want us to keep it for use in legal claims, or
- o if you have already asked us to stop using your data but you are waiting to receive confirmation from us as to whether we can comply with your request.
- In some circumstances you can compel us to erase your personal data and request a machine-readable copy of your personal data to transfer to another service provider.
- You have the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing (including profiling) that produces legal effects concerning you or similarly significantly affects you.

You will not have to pay a fee to access your personal data (or to exercise any of the other rights). However, we may charge a reasonable fee if your request for access is clearly unfounded or excessive. Alternatively, we may refuse to comply with the request in such circumstances.

If you wish to exercise your rights, please contact us at amy.hall@ceiglobal.org and dpo@theevidencequarter.com.

9. How to Complain

You can also lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office. They can be contacted using the information provided at:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire,

SK9 5AF

Helpline number: 0303 123 1113

ICO website: https://ico.org.uk/concerns

10.   Contact us

If you have any questions, or wish to exercise any of your rights, then you can contact:

Project: Detached Outreach Youth Work Feasibility Evaluation ('DOYW')

Organisation:Centre for Evidence and Implementation

Address: The Evidence Quarter, Albany House, Westminster, SW1H 9EA

Alternatively, you can email us at dpo@theevidencequarter.com

To contact the project team, please contact: Amy Hall: amy.hall@ceiglobal.org

11.   Changes to this privacy notice

We may update this notice (and any supplemental privacy notice), from time to time as shown below. We will notify you of the changes where required by applicable law to do so.

Last modified May 2023.

Appendix 2: Shared practice model

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to draw from the values and principles of detached youth work to define a shared practice model that may be evaluated via an experimental design and implementation and process evaluation.

This model aims to align common principles and practices identified through interviews, workshops and a survey with sector leaders into a shared model that would support both impact evaluation and fidelity monitoring. The model has four parts:

- Set up and implementation;
- Ongoing delivery;
- Closing the project; and
- Knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

The use of the term 'Elements' below relates to criteria that must be adhered to for the purposes of a shared detached youth work practice model. Throughout the document, additional aspects of detached youth work are described that may feature within practice settings to a greater or lesser extent. In line with the young people-centred/community-specific nature of detached youth work, an intentionally high level of flexibility has been worked into the model, albeit underpinned by clear principles.

For consistency, we use the term 'youth worker' throughout to refer to the adult that is involved in detached youth work delivery. We recognise that, in practice, this adult may have a range of other titles/job roles depending on the project, setting or agency in which the provision is located. In referring to 'adults', we are specifically addressing roles that imply positions of trust and potentially authority (in respect of safeguarding, advice and signposting), and which are occupied by those aged 18 or over. This is intended to specifically differentiate those in a peer or near-peer role, who may be under 18.

Principles of detached youth work

The principles of detached youth work are largely in line with those that underpin youth work in a broader sense. There is, however, particular emphasis on working relationally with the experiences of young people, and detached youth work practice being rooted in community context.

Young people-centred

Element P1: detached youth worker will centre and engage with the experiences of the young people with whom they are working.

Whilst detached youth workers may be working to a particular set of objectives such as crime reduction or engaging with young people which are deemed particularly vulnerable to exploitation (defined by a commissioner or funder, for example), a key principle of detached youth work is that it is youth-centred. This means actively listening to young people, and working with their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and experiences rather than imposing an external agenda, pace, activity or topic of conversation.

Relational

Element P2: detached youth workers will build trusting and respectful relationships with young people, relying on authenticity and integrity.

Quality relationships between youth worker and young people are built on trust and respect, which must be earnt and maintained by the detached youth workers. This is achieved by the youth worker demonstrating integrity and authenticity, being consistent with their actions and words, and having a genuine commitment to the young people with whom they are working. Detached youth workers understand that the quality of the relationship is the foundation for all other 'work' that may take place.

Community integration

Element P3: detached youth workers will have local knowledge, developed through reconnaissance prior to the start of the detached youth work project. Detached youth workers may work with local stakeholders as well as young people to build this knowledge, depending on the project's aims.

Successful detached youth work is dependent on workers holding a deep understanding of young people's experiences and the context of the settings/environments in which they are delivering. Local knowledge enables youth workers to leverage community resources, including those of allied provision, such as social care, local authorities, buildings-based community projects, or community policing, as well as develop risk management processes prior to, during and post detached youth work 'sessions'.

In practice, community integration can look very different between detached youth work settings. For example, it might involve facilitating meetings between young people and local businesses or working with a tenant-management organisation to make an area safer for young people. Without good levels of integration with the local community, detached youth work risks being less effective.

Practice model

This section outlines key elements of the shared practice model across the phases of 'Set up and implementation', 'Ongoing delivery', 'Closing the project' and 'Knowledge, skills and behaviours'. We recognise that detached youth work practice is often undertaken outside the parameters of a tightly defined project with a beginning, middle, and end. However, for the purpose of ensuring our proposed model is evaluable, we have described a semi-structured approach. The shared practice model is based on delivery by a 'team' (i.e. at least two youth workers plus a supervisor or manager).

Set up and implementation

Area selection

Element S1: project leads will use data and local knowledge, such as community engagement, to determine the area(s) in which to deliver detached youth work.

Defined area selection processes, based on data regarding the area of selection as well as local knowledge, should be used to choose areas for the detached project. Detached youth work excludes centre-based provision and should be focused on public spaces such as city centres, parks, rural spaces, and community spaces.

Reconnaissance

Element S2: detached projects will begin with an initial reconnaissance period, the duration of which will depend on previous levels of integration with and knowledge of the community.

During the reconnaissance period, the detached youth work team will seek to:

- Identify and understand the young people with whom they wish to work; including who they are and the background of their context-specific experiences (political, structural, and cultural).
- Situate background information (data and insight) within the context and experiences of young people;
- Identify and communicate with key allied services/stakeholders such as shop owners, social services, and the police, to locate opportunities for joined-up working and establish effective modes of collaboration and communication for the project's duration;
- Gain an in-depth understanding of safety concerns/risks associated with specific geographical 'hot spots' in the chosen area; and
- Understand local timelines, including time-related 'crunch points' in relation to support needs as well as seasonal changes.

Team composition

Element S3: detached youth work teams will comprise at least two experienced detached youth workers plus a supervisor or manager.

Element S4: detached youth work managers will oversee project delivery and support the team with training, peer-to-peer learning opportunities and regular supervision.

Effective team management is crucial to ensuring that a detached youth work project runs effectively and supports the wellbeing of youth workers. This will include holding pre- and post-session 'briefs and debriefs', pairing inexperienced or newly qualified team members (paid and voluntary) with experienced detached

youth workers, and providing monthly supervision. These elements can strengthen the quality of the project provided by the detached youth work team. It is important for detached youth workers to think, question, consider, and learn from their experiences as practitioners, and this requires structured support and protected time.

Ongoing delivery

Consistent presence

Element O1: detached youth workers will be present in selected areas for at least four hours a week.

Detached youth workers should be available and present in the young people's space, for a chat or to offer advice, for at least four hours a week, to ensure sufficient contact to have an impact in the area. Time allocation will vary depending on the time of year (with increased presence during autumn and winter) and needs of the provision but will equate to a minimum four hours a week throughout the duration of the project. The same detached youth work team should be present for the allocated four hours per selected area. Being present in an area can mean walking around a particular patch, on a set or flexible route, or being in one place, depending on the location and movement of the young people. Being present may involve signposting to other support or services available locally, and acting as a trusted adult by listening and responding to young people's concerns or questions.

Relationship building

Element O2: detached youth workers focus their engagements with young people on building relationships

Detached youth workers focus all their contact and engagement with young people on developing trust, respect, and emotional safety, working through an asset-based approach. Through engaging young people in dialogue, listening to them and enabling them to be heard, detached young workers will build insight into young people's experiences, needs and concerns. Through this interaction, detached youth workers model positive relationships, enable young people to be heard, and can reframe issues that are affecting young people.

Activities

Element O3: detached youth workers engage young people in/through informal education.

Informal education is defined here as a way of working with young people to help them reflect on and learn from their experiences, supporting personal and social development alongside specific learning opportunities that respond to experiences, needs and interests. Informal education is not about teaching, skills development or giving advice, though detached youth work can include such activities. The process of reflective thinking is enabled through genuine enquiry. Informal education approaches will vary depending on the context.

Advocacy – optional

In this context, advocacy is taken to mean working with young people to promote their voices and views, ensuring fair representation, and providing an opportunity to engage with other agencies on a level playing field. This may include engaging with the local authority, community forums, local businesses, and the

police. When advocating for young people, the intention is to enable young people to be heard. Therefore, the detached youth worker needs to recognise when to speak for young people and when to encourage them to speak for themselves. Advocacy is an optional element, and detached youth workers will engage in advocacy to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the local context and the young people they are working with.

Outreach – optional

Outreach youth work can also take place in the young people's territory. However, in comparison to detached youth work, the purpose of outreach work is *specifically* to signpost young people to other services with a view to young people (re)connecting with these services, such as youth clubs. Like detached youth work, the outreach youth worker will normally start where a young person is at, both physically and emotionally. Outreach youth workers tend to be involved in the centre-based projects from which outreach work takes place. Outreach is an optional element in this practice model: detached youth workers will engage in outreach to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the local outreach strategy, and outreach must *not* be the primary focus of the work.

Other activities – optional

Detached youth work may include a variety of other activities including facilitating youth-led projects, sports and cultural activities, and intervention in potential or active antisocial behaviour or violence.

Duration of engagement

Element O4: a minimum commitment of two years in one area is required for reconnaissance, relationship-building, and delivery.

It is recommended that detached youth work in a specific area is conducted for two years, as a minimum. As a guide, newly formed detached youth work projects would spend the first year understanding and building relationships in the local area and identifying how footfall and behavioural patterns vary across the year, in order to establish the project locally. The second year would then be used to deliver detached youth work, based on that knowledge. Any further years can be used to continue to facilitate and document change. Taking a long-term approach enables detached youth work organisations to earn and build quality and trusting relationships with both young people and the local community.

Limitations associated with short-term programmes are that the young people and community lose trust in detached youth workers because they feel abandoned or feel support is only available when there are severe antisocial behaviour issues present. Short-term programmes also reduce the support detached youth workers can offer.

Closing the project/coming to the end of the project

Element C1: detached youth workers will have a detailed plan of how to end a detached youth work project to avoid the potentially damaging effects of sudden withdrawal of support.

An important part of all youth work is managing endings, and this is particularly true for detached work which can often engage the most marginalised young people in a community. Detached youth workers will need to work with young people so that they are aware that the youth work relationship is either going to come to an end and/or change going forward. The end of a project should also be communicated to any

community contacts and allied services. Endings are as important as relationship building to ensuring positive social impact of the work.

Knowledge, skills, behaviours

Quality detached youth work is predicated on the skills and experiences of the detached youth worker. As such, this model specifies minimum training and experience requirements for project workers. In addition, there are specific working practices that must be adhered to, such as the undertaking of consistent reflective and supervisory activities.

Skills and experience of detached youth workers

Element K1: detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working towards the completion of a level 2 certificate in youth work training

As a minimum, employed detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working towards the completion of a level 2 certificate in youth work training. This qualification confers an accredited qualification as a Youth Support Worker.

Element K2: lead detached youth workers will have a minimum of two years' experience in the area in which they will be working.

Every team will have at least two experienced detached youth workers who are able to support and mentor less experienced detached youth workers. An experienced detached youth worker is defined as be someone who has a minimum of two years of experience in detached youth work.

Element K3: detached youth workers will hold the below skills, core to the shared practice model of detached youth work.

In order to provide a project that is engaging, fun, and interesting to young people whilst maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring safety for all parties, detached youth workers must demonstrate:

- Flexibility and adaptiveness: an ability to adapt to the needs of young people and the context;
- Authenticity: 'realness' in their interactions with young people;
- Resilience: an ability to manage challenging situations;
- Dependability: an ability to be consistent, reliable and trustworthy in the things that are said and done;
- An ability to manage boundaries;
- Strong negotiation skills;
- Strong psychosocial skills: an ability to build voluntary relationships with young people and community stakeholders;
- An ability to effectively facilitate relationships between young people and community stakeholders, encouraging joint working through dialogue and action;
- Respect for young people's territory and their existing strengths;
- A high level of professional judgement, being able to consider various perspectives when making decisions, both in the moment and when planning for future sessions;
- Awareness of safeguarding policy and practice guidelines;

- An ability to be critically reflective, think and challenge their own actions, motivations, and assumptions;
- Conflict management skills;
- Attentive to risk throughout detached youth work session;
- A person-led approach: listening to, understanding, and working with young people through reflection and dialogue; and
- An ability to effectively understand, implement and be responsive to equality and the diversity of young people and community stakeholders.

Ongoing supervision

Element K4: detached youth workers should be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their practice through supervision, a minimum of once a month.

Supervision may be provided by an experienced detached youth worker, team leader or manager, or an external supervisor to critically reflect on and learn from practice. Supervision should take place for one hour every month, as minimum. Peer-to-peer reflective spaces will also be provided, where detached youth workers can come together and discuss concerns or practices that worked on the ground.

Appendix 3: Theory of change

The theory of change has been developed in line with insights and perspectives gathered from a series of interviews, surveys and workshops with detached youth workers and detached youth work commissioners.

The theory of change specifically connects the core (and more flexible, or 'responsive') activities of detached youth work with short to medium term outcomes for young people and communities, and seeks to set out how these intermediate outcomes influence change at community level with particular reference to preventing young people's involvement in serious youth crime and violence.

The theory of change situates detached youth work 'in context', and within a deep understanding of the needs, experiences and perceptions of young people and the wider community (recognising that young people are full members of this community), and both the assets and risks that are present. It also represents the core principles of detached youth work: a focus on public space, the centring of young people's experiences, a strengths-based approach, and voluntary engagement.

The 'pathways to impact' are two-fold, focusing on activities with and changes for young people, and for the community. The theory of change articulates how these activities (one to one and group engagement, alongside advocacy) represent 'mechanisms of change', which in turn influence short and medium term outcomes.

This represents the dual emphasis of detached youth work: work with young people individually and in groups, and the relationship between young people and their communities.

The short and medium term outcomes set out the anticipated changes for young people (primarily via personal and social development and reconnection to other local services) and the community (focused on the relationship between young people and the wider community, and the building of trust, positive perception and safety).

These outcomes flow into longer-term impact for young people (increased social capital, engagement in learning and work, and reduced involvement in crime/violence) and, at the population-level, for the community.

Principles	Activities	Mechanisms of Change	Outcomes	Impact
The core principles of detached youth work	Detached Youth Work - What you do	How change comes about for young people and other community members	Short to medium term changes	The long-term impact of detached work for young people and the wider community

Young people

Interactions take place in public space

Voluntary engagement negotiated on an ongoing basis

Youth led

The work is strengths-based, culturally considerate, and long-term

One-to-one conversations with young people

Befriending, mentoring, relationship building

Engaging young people with warmth and responsiveness

Encouraging young people to reflect on their experiences

Street-based sports, cultural and other activities

Advice, guidance and informal education including about relationships, rights and behaviours

Group sessions with young people

Outreach and signposting to other services

Restoring balance after conflict

Encouraging young people to reflect on the consequences of their actions

Promote responsibility, positive decision making, and emotion management

Community

Advocacy for young people in the community

Encouraging young people to interact positively with their community and the local environment

Engaging with and getting buy-in from family

Facilitating dialogue between young people and between young people and communities

Conflict prevention and interruption (actively or by being a presence)

Facilitating youth-led community projects (e.g. music, street art)

Raising issues in the local area with relevant authorities (e.g. lighting, broken glass)

Young people see and experience authentic, reliable, consistent and positive relationships

Young people experience empathy and care and feel valued and heard

Young people see and experience effective conflict avoidance and resolution

Young people experience positive alternatives and healthy challenge

Community members gain a better understanding of young people's needs and right to public space

Young people gain a better understanding of the communities needs and perspectives

Young people recognise their own agency and ability to make choices in their lives

Positive, trusting relationships are developed between DYWs and young people

Young people develop more positive relationships with peers and other adults

Young people more likely to access local provision

Young people's emotional regulation and resilience increases

Young people's sense of agency and self-efficacy increases

Young people make more positive choices and participate less in risky behaviour

Presence of DYWs makes community members feel safer

Other community members have a more positive perception of young people and their rights

Young people feel heard and valued in their community

Local agencies have a better understanding of young people's needs and wishes

Improved relationships and collaboration between young people and local stakeholders

Young people feel a greater sense of belonging to their community

Improved life chances for young people

Young people have increased social capital, social networks and positive relationships

More young people are in education, employment and training

Fewer young people are a victim of criminal or violent acts

Fewer young people commit criminal or violent acts or ASB

Fewer young people are vulnerable to or victims of criminal exploitation

Improved community safety and cohesion

Reduced levels of crime and ASB

Young people feel safer in public spaces

Less criminal exploitation of young people

Other community members feel safer in public spaces

Improved physical environment

Young people's needs are taken into account more by commissioners and providers of youth services

Appendix 4: Literature review

What can the published methodology literature tell us about quantitative data collection with young people who are traditionally hard to reach?

1. Introduction

Our proposed evaluation design measures the impact of Detached Youth Work (DYW) using patch-level antisocial behaviour (ASB) and crime statistics.[25] However, in order to understand potential impacts at the patch-level, it is essential that the evaluation collects a wide range of contributory 'change' data from the young people involved in DYW and potentially from DYW providers and observations from within the intervention and control/comparison patches. The evaluation therefore needs to capture change in the range of young people outcomes that DYW aspires to improve, which include (but are not restricted to) wellbeing, confidence and trust. Given the nature of the young people involved in DYW, we anticipate that collecting these data, over time, will be a key challenge in the evaluation.

To help us think through how best to address these challenges, we have conducted a very brief review of the methodological[26] literature around research among (or about) 'hard to reach' young people,[27] including reviews and write-ups of individual projects.[28] In addition, because we are interested in the potential use of short smartphone or text surveys, we have explored what we can learn about this methodology from the literature. While this brief review was not designed to be comprehensive, it has uncovered a number of pointers and ideas which we intend to feed into the evaluation design in Stage 2 (and, if we proceed, in the full evaluation).

As well as using Google Scholar[29], and targeting the websites of organisations likely to be working in this area, we reached out to researchers at NatCen Social Research and Ipsos MORI.

Much of the literature on quantitative research among hard to reach young people populations (both articles using the general term and those focusing on particular populations) includes discussion about how to identify and recruit participants where an obvious 'sample frame' is not available. Within our proposed evaluation design for DYW, this will not be the case, with young people involved in DYW approached for inclusion in the study. Rather, in our short write up here, we start by discussing 'ingredients' highlighted in the literature as being important to the success of any research among hard to reach young people. We

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[25] We concluded from Stage 1 that the impact design would necessarily be reliant on local-level administrative data. We concluded that it would be infeasible to measure the impact at the level of an individual YP, as this would require identifying and recruiting into the evaluation YP in the control/comparison patches who were similarly hard-to-engage as those who responded to DYW in the intervention patches.

[26] While there may be useful information embedded with articles and reports focusing on substantive findings from studies with relevant groups, limited time means that we have necessarily reviewed articles and reports where the main focus was on the methodological approaches taken.

[27] While we have used hard to reach as a search criteria, we recognise differences in how this term is used. Where relevant, we drew on research among other hard to reach groups, and among YP more widely.

[28] YP populations included social disadvantaged YP, care leavers, gang members, disabled YP, YP with issues with alcohol, and LGBTQ+ YP.

[29] Search terms included: (a) research/surveys with hard to reach groups; hard to reach young people; young people; gangs; homeless people; care leavers; (b) embedded researchers; (c) smartphone surveys; text surveys; app surveys.

then go on to reflect on the methodologies which might best allow us to include these ingredients in our longitudinal data collection design. We focus in particular on the potential value (but also any shortcomings or challenges) of (a) employing embedded researchers and (b) using smartphone/text surveys to track young people's outcomes over time.

2. Key ingredients for successful engagement of young people in data collection

The term 'hard to reach' young people includes different dimensions. In addition to being 'hard to identify' (an issue less pertinent to any DYW evaluation), these young people may be difficult to reach by nature (e.g. a more transient population) and, for a subset, also be more likely to consciously avoid contact (e.g. if they are wary of authority or involved in illicit behaviours) (Becker et al, 2014; Eidson et al, 2016).

There are a number of implications arising from this, with broad consensus in the literature that it is important to:

- **Have a good understanding of the population or community:** Several papers point to the importance of a close appreciation of the population or community involved in the research (e.g. Eidson et al, 2016). If the researchers or fieldworkers do not have previous experience, they need to learn about it, via routes including engagement with key stakeholders and/or immersion in the community (e.g. volunteering or taking part in community activities) (Savardi and Kilpatrick, 2022).

- **Ensure young people – and gatekeepers - understand the 'point' (the value and importance) of the research:** Several papers (e.g. Bonevski et al, 2010) talk about the importance of buy in from gatekeepers, who need to understand, and be able to convey, the importance of the research, and be confident themselves that the research team has the requisite processes and safeguards in place for the young people they work with (also see the later point about training).

  In terms of ensuring that the young people themselves understand the value of the research, this starts with the initial approach about the study (in the case of detached youth work, this is likely the detached youth worker). Whether or not a young person engages is often contingent on 'buy in' about the point of the research and what might happen as a result of the study findings. It is crucial that young people understand the benefits of the research, including potentially to themselves (Bonevski et al, 2010).

  Emphasising the value of the research then continues throughout the process, where keeping the study prominent and salient can act as a reminder or incentive for young people to want to remain involved (Becker et al, 2014). Papers referred to the benefits of having a study 'branding' (Eidson et al, 2016) and a social media presence (Bonevski et al, 2010), as well as visibility (e.g. posters) in the local community. When young people are asked to provide data for the study, it needs to be presented in ways which run in line with the feelings among some young people (and indeed service providers) about the kinds of data collection required by funders, viewed as 'tick box' exercises linked to funding milestones (Tiffany, 2016).

- **Train gatekeepers and in-field researchers:** Given the key role played by whoever is introducing the study to young people (e.g. service providers, researchers), it is important that they are fully trained, and preferably experienced. For instance, there is evidence that whether or not a young person provides contact details is linked to how they are asked (Becker et al, 2014). Culturally trained and skilled fieldworkers, or local/peer researchers can help in cases where young people are lacking trust (Bonevski et al, 2010).

- **Build trust, rapport, and mutual respect:** Key to the success of any study of hard to reach young people is the initial and continued building of trust (Becker et al, 2014). Papers talk about having to overcome a natural distrust (Savardi and Kilpatrick, 2022), a mistrust of researchers and potential fear of stigmatisation and/or exposure of illegal or illicit behaviour (Bonevski et al, 2010). As above, in the case of an evaluation of detached youth work, the initial work will be that of the detached youth worker introducing the study. However, in order to be clear about the independence of the study, this will likely be taken forward by the study team, who needs to ensure a building of trust through continued and positive interactions (Becker et al, 2014). Whether the service provider or study team, papers talk about the importance of consistency of staff (Becker et al, 2014).

- **Think carefully how to obtain consents:** Obviously, part and parcel of informing young people fully about the nature of the research and what it involves is gaining informed consent, with usual practice also involving obtaining parental consent for those under 16. Indeed, this was the case in most studies included in the review. However, some papers (Pickles, 2020; Kennan et al, 2012) raised questions about the appropriateness of asking for parental consent in all cases. In some instances, researchers and ethics committees conclude that seeking parental consent represents an increased risk to the young people and should therefore not be sought. Instead, researchers need to work with service providers, or someone else who might act in loco parentis, to assess the young people's Gillick competence. Any evaluation of DYW may have to think through similar issues of risk before assuming the need for parental consent.[30]

- **Work out how to best keep in touch:** Given the nature of many hard to reach young people populations, the literature often concludes that the optimal way of keeping in touch is often via mobile phone.[31] Given young people may avoid unfamiliar phone numbers, making initial contact or recontact by text may work well (Eidson et al, 2016). That said, phone numbers may change more frequently (or, inaccurately provided), meaning that it is important to collect as many different forms of contact as possible, including other messaging platforms (e.g. SnapChat, Instagram, Messenger), email addresses, and family and friend contacts, with evidence of higher follow up rates where young people provided more contacts (Becker et al, 2014; Eidson et al, 2016). Asking for consent to ask the service provider for updated contact information can also be useful (Eidson et al, 2016).

  In terms of how often the research team should be in touch with young people, the advantages of retaining engagement via relatively frequent contact needs to be weighed up against the perceived burden of too many survey completion requests. There were some suggestions of the value of interim 'check ins', rather than frequent data collection waves (Becker et al, 2014). young people are also more likely to provide recontact information if they understand the purpose of the study (and if they are told about incentives for later completion, see below) (Becker et al, 2014).

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[30] While NSPCC ethical guidance defaults to obtaining parental consent, it includes provision for researchers to articulate the case for not obtaining parental consent, in exceptional circumstances.

[31] For the DYW YP population, there may be more opportunity for face-to-face encounters, given they are known to more often frequent particular patches.

Some papers talked about the value in having researchers in the field to help retain contact with young people and provide a continued 'presence' of the study within the community. However, related to this, one study highlighted the added difficulties of retaining contact in winter months when fewer young people were out and about (Eidson et al, 2016).

Finally, it is important to remember that providing contact information is not one-way, with papers stressing the importance of ensuring that young people having easy access to the contact details of the study team (Eidson et al, 2016).

- **Provide financial incentives:** There is a general consensus of the value of offering financial incentives to young people for each data collection point. There were also suggestions in the literature to pay incentives for each piece of contact information provided (in a study within Becket et al.'s review (2014)) or at initial engagement and check in points (Eidson et al, 2016). The exact incentive model, and monetary value, varied a lot across studies, with arrangements including progressive incentives, rising for each completion (Becker et al, 2014). Bonevski et al (2010) cited an RCT which showed the benefits to the study of incentives among social disadvantaged groups. However, one study raised a caution about the way in which cash incentives can influence the profile of young people involved, with young people (not necessarily those who would be eligible) signing up solely because they heard that they would be paid (Eidson et al, 2016).

- **Design data collection that is suitable for the population:** Papers describe the importance of designing – and piloting (Bonevski et al, 2010) – surveys, or other data collection tools, that will work with 'hard to reach' young people populations. Data collection instruments should ideally be designed (or at least agreed) with young people (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022). Lengthy surveys could be replaced with shorter ones asked in different sittings (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022).

  It is important to avoid asking or framing questions in ways which could be labelling, stigmatising or triggering (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022). Studies also need to ensure that the language used is adapted to suit the population (Bonevski et al, 2010), and that any decisions around data collection are mindful of the cognitive demands of the particular group (Savardi and Kilpatrick, 2022) as well as potential literacy and language issues (Flanagan et al, 2015). Some papers talk about avoiding data collection appearing similar to form filling or the kinds of repeated measures young people are asked to complete in other settings (e.g. school) (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022). Likewise, there was suggestion of the benefits of avoiding the use of standardised measures and focusing on measures which more closely capture issues pertinent to the young people (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022).

  Young people can be particularly wary of providing factual information (e.g. postcode and benefit receipt) (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022) – again this comes back to the need for clear explanations about the purposes of any data collection and reassurances around confidentiality.

3. **Methods of data collection**

The reports and articles in the review rarely drew firm conclusions about the precise effectiveness of different approaches. However, all discussed the challenges in keeping young people involved in studies over time. None of the studies focused on populations which were sufficiently similar to the young people involved in DYW for us to be sure what might work more or less well in the case of an evaluation of DYW (although one study reported higher attrition rates among young men, Eidson et al, 2016). However, what

is clear is that any data collection among the young people involved in DYW is likely to benefit from a multipronged approach (as well as the need to have sufficient budget to be flexible and responsive to trying different methods of engagement (Eidson et al, 2016)). Papers were clear that, among young people who are hard to reach for different reasons, a uniform approach to recruiting, engaging and keeping in touch with young people is unlikely to be optimal (Becker et al, 2014; Bonevski et al, 2010). It also highlights the advantages of also tracking outcomes via administrative data.

As part of Stage 2 of the DYW evaluation feasibility study, we are considering the relative values and shortcomings of different approaches to data collection from young people involved in DYW. There is probably consensus that, for the kinds of outcomes we are likely to track (wellbeing, confidence, safety, etc.), the default is to ask these in a self-completion format. However, we also need to consider issues raised in a number of papers – for instance around language and literacy – which would suggest that there are advantages in offering alternative, interviewer-administered, modes of data collection in particular circumstances (Eidson et al, 2016; Bonevski et al, 2010).

There are questions about how best to approach young people about completing self-completion measures, and how to identify and cater for those who might benefit from more help in their completion. The research community has a lot of experience with the more traditional approaches of either (a) asking service providers to administer the survey on behalf of the evaluation team or (b) the evaluation team sending out links to online surveys inviting a response.

However, here, we assess briefly what the literature tells us about two alternative approaches, which might be valuable, individually or in combination, within the context of DYW, and the population of young people it services, namely:

a. Embedding fieldworkers within the local area

b. Using smartphone app or text based surveys

a. *Embedding fieldworkers*

Embedded fieldworkers are employed by the evaluation team to be physically located within the community of interest. The advantages of the embedded approach include an ability to build a rapport and level of trust with the participants; to be better able to keep in contact; and to take an observational role within the area. Best practice is often for embedded fieldworkers to have lived experience.

While there is not a large body of literature on using embedded fieldworkers with young people, we can learn, to some limited extent, from the studies which discuss the use of peer researchers. That said, while embedded fieldworkers will likely have lived experience, in the context of working with young people, they will necessarily be somewhat older than participants (unlike peer researchers).

The benefits of using peer researchers are well rehearsed with the papers reviewed. These include, but are not limited to, a reduction of the risk of a power relationship between researcher and participant; an increased likelihood of mutual understanding and shared language; an increased likelihood the young people feel they can answer honestly (particularly when wanting to express dissent or dissatisfaction); insider knowledge on the part of the interviewer; and a feeling of empowerment on the part of both the interviewer and participant (Lushey and Munro, 2015; Bradbury-Jones et al, 2018). Employing embedded

fieldworkers with lived experience would certainly speak well to some of the points in Section 2 (e.g. understanding the community, building rapport and trust).

Embedded fieldworkers, if done well, can draw on some of the same advantages as service providers, building a close and/or trusted relationship with young people. One advantage of the embedded fieldworker approach over asking service providers to be involved, is to avoid the risk of adding to the workload of service providers, highlighted by de St Croix and Doherty (2022) as a disadvantage of the latter approach.

Embedded fieldworkers may have a valuable role to play, even if the primary method of data collection is online. While many papers stressed the advantages of using online methods to collect sensitive, potentially stigmatising, information among young people, they recognised the downsides of a solely online approach meaning limited opportunities to build rapport – and thus encourage engagement and trust in the research project (Flanagan et al, 2015). Indeed, some talked about the value of asking sensitive questions in the context of a trusted relationship (de St Croix and Doherty, 2022).

In addition to working with young people, another advantage of embedding fieldworkers is their ability to collect observational and community-wide data to help better understand changes in young people's outcomes. For instance, Bonevski et al (2010) talked about the value of collecting objective community-wide data on alcohol and tobacco sales in local stores (in the context of a study of how to improve health among disadvantaged groups).

However, alongside the advantages of embedded fieldworkers, papers also point to certain drawbacks to using peer researchers, which could equally apply to the embedded approach. These include peer researchers being less experienced than traditional fieldworkers (even good training cannot make up for experience). This applies to the quality of interviewing, to dealing with potentially very sensitive issues, and to navigating working in potentially risky areas (Lushey and Munro, 2015). In addition, there are ethical considerations around the potential for the work to invoke memories of their own lived experiences. Papers highlighted the need for a clear and transparent job description, and well as the necessary support mechanisms in place, to ensure that peer researchers understand what is involved (Lushey and Munro, 2015).

Other challenges to using embedded fieldworkers – which could equally apply to involving service providers in the data collection – include the risk of the data collection becoming 'a thing' integral to the DYW process or interfering with the DYW process. Linked to this, are issues raised in the papers about the challenge of asking young people to complete surveys when they are in a group situation, where the group dynamic can interfere with how they respond (Tiffany, 2016).

b. Smartphone app or text-based surveys

A number of papers emphasise the potential attraction, or preference, of short app surveys among young people. They are more likely to be drawn to more 'current' methods of data collection (Kauer et al, 2009), and the anonymity of the methodology can be seen as less stigmatising and more confidential (McInroy, 2016). In addition, the use of these short online surveys fits with feedback in Stage 1 about the need to keep data collection with young people involved in DYW relatively 'light touch' and unobtrusive to encourage

response. Therefore, here, we summarise some key points of relevance arising from a growing number of studies using short smartphone or app surveys, particularly those focusing on young people.[32]

Broadly, there are three types of longitudinal smartphone or app data collection described in the literature:

1. More traditional surveys, where respondents are invited to participate to a number of surveys over time;
2. Momentary sampling or 'burst' surveys, where respondents are prompted at frequent and/or random intervals to complete a short questionnaire about the current moment;
3. Using information automatically stored on the phone (e.g. GPS location) to build a picture of the respondent over time.

There appears to be value in 'burst' surveys, which could be used instead of or as complementary to the more standard approach of tracking outcomes at fixed intervals, asking retrospectively about a reference period. Burst surveys can capture momentary outcomes (e.g. wellbeing, safety), collected alongside contextual information (e.g. who someone is with, where they are, etc.). A large example of this kind of study is 'Mappiness' (http://www.mappiness.org.uk), a smartphone app study developed at the London School of Economics. The study members complete very short (less than a minute) surveys when randomly contacted during the day, measuring wellbeing in the context of where they are, who they are with, etc. Members give consent for their GPS location to be tracked, and they can choose to take and upload a photograph. This would be a key study to look at further, in terms of the software and methodologies used. This kind of approach has been used in other studies of young people (see Meegahapola and Gatica-Perez, 2020), who cite the value of in situ measures and, again, talk about the added value of photo, video or audio data provided by the young people. The timing of the prompts is important to consider. Mappiness allows participants to set the time range for being prompted, whilst another study of young people's drinking behaviour found that young people were less likely to respond to early morning prompts (Kauer et al, 2009).

There is mixed evidence in relation to who is more or less likely to agree to participant in app or text-based surveys, or to go on to complete them (or consent to passive data collection). In general, those who use their phone a lot are more likely to engage, as are younger people (Maruyama et al, 2015) and those who are more educated (Keusch et al, 2022, Jackle et al, 2023, Gilbert, 2020). To refine the issue of age further, one study of young people, looking at alcohol use, found that school age children were more likely to respond than older young people (Kauer et al, 2009). The evidence on gender is less clear cut, with some studies citing higher participation among men (e.g. the LISS survey cited in Keusch et al, 2022) and others among women (e.g. Jackle et al (2019), in relation to recording expenditure). There is some evidence that participants are more willing to provide data over which they have control (e.g. measures, photos) rather than passive data such as GPS locations (Gilbert, 2020). Participation is enhanced by the use of incentives (e.g. Amazon points), used for initial downloading of the app/program, for each data collection point and for consent to passive data collection (e.g. GPS location) (Keusch et al, 2022).

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[32] Many papers devote quite a bit of time to methods used to encourage sign up and response from a non-specified population, which is not relevant in the context of approaching YP involved in DYW.

Some studies provided phones or hand-held devices, with the data collection tool preprogrammed into it. For instance, Nelson Laska et al (2011) did this in a study of young people's eating patterns, where they were asked to record their food and drink over a week. Similarly, a study of young people's alcohol use and related mood, stress and coping behaviours used 'momentary sampling' where young people were prompted to complete a short survey four times a day over a week. The survey programme was loaded onto a study mobile at the start of the survey period via Bluetooth, with the data downloaded at the end of the period (Kauer et al, 2009[33]). The age 14 sweep of the Millenium Cohort Study (MCS) tested the optimal way of getting young people to complete a light touch time use diary on two random days. Offered a smartphone app (compatible with a smartphone or tablet), a web-based (compatible with laptop or desktop) survey or a paper version, the team found that young people were more likely to choose the app over other methods (Chatzitheochari et al, 2018).

There are technical issues to overcome with any app-based survey, with some studies only working on Apple (e.g. mappiness) or android systems (as Apple limits the amount of passive data collection that can be undertaken) (Keusch et al, 2022, Gilbert, 2020).

With app or text surveys, messages or push notifications are used to provide advance warning of a survey being sent (e.g. Chatzitheochari et al, 2018 sent three SMS messages in the days leading up to the survey) or reminders to complete. Papers referred to increased reporting rates and compliance when reminders were used, with a view that young people responded positively to these types of prompts (Meegahapola and Gatica-Perez, 2020).

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[33] It is worth noting that there have been significant advancements in mobile phone technology since this paper was written.

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Appendix 5: Example survey questions on community cohesion and local safety

Place Survey

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live? *(also asked in Community life)*

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Fairly dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

How strongly do you feel you belong to your immediate neighbourhood? *(also asked in Community Life)*

1. Very strongly
2. Fairly strongly
3. Not very strongly
4. Not at all strongly

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together*? (also asked in Community Life)*

1. Definitely agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Tend to disagree
4. Definitely disagree

In your local area, how much of a problem do you think there is with people not treating each other with respect and consideration?

1. A very big problem
2. A fairly big problem
3. Not a very big problem
4. Not a problem at all

How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?

How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area during the day?

1. Very safe
2. Fairly safe
3. Neither safe nor unsafe
4. Fairly unsafe
5. Very unsafe

Thinking about this local area, how much of a problem do you think each of the following are? *(also asked in the British Crime Survey) – Matrix question*

- Noisy neighbours or loud parties
- Teenagers hanging around on the streets
- Rubbish or litter lying around
- Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles
- People using or dealing drugs
- People being drunk or rowdy in public places
- Abandoned or burnt out car

1. A very big problem
2. A fairly big problem

3. Not a very big problem
4. Not a problem at all

How much you would agree or disagree that the police and other local services are successfully dealing with these issues in your local area?

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree

Community Life Survey

Thinking about the people who live in this neighbourhood, to what extent do you believe they can be trusted?

1. Many of the people can be trusted
2. Some of the people can be trusted
3. A few of the people can be trusted
4. None of the people can be trusted

Do you think that over the past two years your area has

1. Got better to live in
2. Got worse to live in
3. Not changed much

UK Household Longitudinal Study

Overall do you like living in this neighbourhood?

1. Yes
2. No

Do you ever worry about the possibility that you, or anyone who lives with you, might be the victim of crime?

1. Yes
2. No

Is this…

1. a big worry,
2. a bit of a worry
3. or an occasional doubt?

How safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark? *(also asked in British Crime Survey)*

1. Very safe
2. Fairly safe
3. A bit unsafe
4. Very unsafe

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – *Matrix question*

"I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood"

"The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me"

"I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood"

"I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years"

"I think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighbourhood"

"I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood"

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

Crime Survey for England and Wales

How much is your own quality of life affected by crime on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is no effect and 10 is a total effect on your quality of life?

How much is your own quality of life affected by fear of crime on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is no effect and 10 is a total effect on your quality of life?

Most of us worry at some time or other about being the victim of a crime. Using one of the phrases on this card, could you tell me how worried you are about the following.

...having your home broken into and something stolen?

…being mugged and robbed?

...having your car stolen?

...having things stolen from your car?

...being raped?

...being physically attacked by strangers?

...being subject to a physical attack because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?

…your personal details such as your name, address, or bank account details, being used   without your permission or prior knowledge?

…being a victim of fraud?

1. Very worried

2. Fairly worried

3. Not very worried

4. Not at all worried

5. (Not applicable)

What do you think has happened to crime in your local area over the past few years?

1. Gone up a lot
2. Gone up a little
3. Stayed about the same
4. Gone down a little
5. Gone down a lot