

## EVALUATION REPORT

# Detached youth work: scoping study

## Scoping study report

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Centre for  
Evidence and  
Implementation

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## About the Youth Endowment Fund

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

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

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

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

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## About the evaluators

### Centre for Evidence and Implementation

The Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) is a global not-for-profit evidence intermediary dedicated to using the best evidence in practice and policy to improve the lives of children, families and communities facing adversity. Established in Australia in late 2015, CEI is a multi-disciplinary team located across five offices in London, Oslo, Singapore, Melbourne and Sydney. We work with our clients, including policymakers, governments, practitioners, programme providers, organisation leaders and funders, in three key areas of work, to:

- 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.

Lead contact: Jane Lewis, Associate Director, [jane.lewis@ceiglobal.org](mailto:jane.lewis@ceiglobal.org)

### Bryson Purdon Social Research

Bryson Purdon Social Research (BPSR) LLP is an independent research partnership specialising in policy and programme impact evaluation and survey methodology. We work on evaluations across a range of policy areas, including support for families, health and disability, and ageing. We collaborate with academics, research organisations, consultants and third-sector organisations, leading on the design and analysis of impact evaluation. We specialise in quasi-experimental and randomised controlled trial designs.

Caroline Bryson, Co-founder and Partner, [caroline.bryson@bpsr.co.uk](mailto:caroline.bryson@bpsr.co.uk)

Dr. Susan Purdon, Co-founder and Partner, [susan.purdon@bpsr.co.uk](mailto:susan.purdon@bpsr.co.uk)

### The Centre for Youth Impact at YMCA George Williams College

YMCA George Williams College was an independent charity affiliated with the YMCA Federation of England & Wales devoted to the training and education of youth workers from pre- to post-graduate levels. More recently, the College broadened its offer to draw on the principles of relational practice to support and develop all practitioners working with and for young people. The College merged with the Centre for Youth Impact in April 2022, combining expertise in understanding and improving quality and impact through the training and development of practitioners. The College closed in 2025.

Lead contact: Bethia McNeil, Director of the Centre for Youth Impact,  
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## **Deprivation.org**

Deprivation.org is an independent, not-for-profit, research organisation specialising in the analysis of poverty, deprivation and inequality. We have a particular focus on neighbourhood-level analyses, and we have extensive experience of negotiating access to and working with large scale administrative datasets (often in secure data environments), including over 25 years of working with geocoded police data. We have worked on a number of large programme evaluations, such as the New Deal for Communities programme and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Our members have also been commissioned to produce each iteration of the official English Indices of Deprivation since the year 2000, and we are currently finalising the production of the forthcoming English Indices of Deprivation 2025.

Lead contact: Dr. David McLennan, Executive Director [david.mclennan@deprivation.org](mailto:david.mclennan@deprivation.org)

### The project

Detached youth work aims to engage with children and young people ‘where they are at’, providing youth work in non-institutional settings. These settings are usually places where children and young people choose to be, such as on the street, in parks, shopping centres, fast food outlets or other community spaces. Rather than serving children and young people in a youth club, school, or college, detached youth work meets them out in the community. The frequency and duration of detached youth work can vary, and activities may include building relationships with children and 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 and young people.

The flexible and youth-centred nature of detached youth work may present significant challenges for robust quantitative evaluation. For instance, the approach often aims to target disengaged and vulnerable children and young people and works hard to build relationships with them. Attempts to engage these young people in additional evaluation activities could jeopardise relationship building. Detached youth work also rarely has fixed eligibility criteria for involvement; the resulting variation in context and background of the children and young people involved may make it challenging to establish a baseline from which to measure impact. Detached youth work is also non-programmatic, and is unlikely to consist of a clear, common journey for children and young people. Therefore, although several studies have illuminated the nature of detached youth work and explored children and young people’s experiences and perspectives of it, we do not yet have robust quantitative evidence regarding impact, and we need further exploration of whether robust impact evaluation is feasible.

Consequently, YEF initially funded a feasibility study (Hall et al., 2024) to explore the nature of detached youth work, what models of detached youth work exist and how widely they are used, whether it is distinct enough from other activities for evaluation, and to establish the research questions that a robust evaluation of detached youth work could answer. The feasibility study also aimed to ascertain what methods could be used to robustly evaluate the impact of detached youth work, and the risks (and mitigations) to such an evaluation. The study identified a potentially feasible study design for a proposed Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). The study proposed an 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. However, the feasibility study also identified further areas of work to address before initiating the delivery of a study.

This scoping study, undertaken between November 2024 and April 2025, aimed to address these areas and, specifically,

- test whether it is possible to map detached youth work geographical ‘patches’ to publicly available (anonymised) police data.
- Undertake a retrospective quasi-experimental design (QED) to assess the impact of detached youth work in patches where it had previously been undertaken compared with matched comparison areas.
- Consult further on the feasibility of a trial, through ten interviews with larger detached youth work providers and other stakeholders, most of which had taken part in the prior feasibility study.

Table 1 presents the findings to the scoping study's research questions. It is important to note, that throughout the rest of the report, the term 'young people' is used to refer to children and young people aged 8-24.

**Table 1: Summary of scoping study findings**

| Research Question:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RQ1: Is it feasible to map police data on crime rates on to detached youth work patches?                                                                                                                                                                                   | Yes, this is feasible. It was feasible for detached youth work providers to hand-draw the boundaries of their patches on maps, to draw those boundaries within GIS software, and to attach geo-referenced police data to patches. However, this required a lot of management time to follow up on requests to youth agencies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| RQ2: What size of effect does detached youth work have on total police incident statistics?                                                                                                                                                                                | The estimated size of effect varied between +0.05 and -0.15 based on different cuts of the data. Taking the largest effect size, the implication is that the number of patches required in an efficacy trial is at least 300 (150 patches per arm, if the largest effect size is taken), and potentially much larger. A larger effect size might be observed if the police data could be restricted to youth-related crime, but this cannot be tested using publicly available police.uk data.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| RQ2b (additional question): Which data set/s should be used in a pilot trial?                                                                                                                                                                                              | The best dataset for a pilot trial would be bespoke police force extracts of geocoded data, or bespoke pre-aggregated statistics from selected police forces. These datasets provide the greatest geographic accuracy and <i>may</i> allow youth-related crime to be identified <i>if</i> relevant flags are used <i>with sufficient consistency</i> in the data, but this needs to be explored further. Agreement to provide access would need to be a requirement of police as partners in regional consortia. The next best options would be geocoded recorded crime data held on the Home Office Data Hub (although not all police forces currently submit data, and it excludes antisocial behaviour, it <i>may</i> again be possible to identify youth related crime), or the less reliable 'raw' geocoded recorded crime and anti-social behaviour data submitted to Police.uk (here, it would certainly not be possible to identify youth related crime). Access to either would need to be negotiated. The final option would be to use the publicly available (anonymised) Police.uk data (as used in the current scoping exercise) which includes anti-social behaviour but where youth related crime could not be identified. |
| RQ3: Which agencies would need to be represented in regional consortia, and which organisations should lead them, in a pilot trial?                                                                                                                                        | Local authorities, local police forces, voluntary sector detached youth work providers, centre-based youth work providers, violence reduction units / partnerships, community safety partnerships and relevant umbrella organisations for local youth services would need to be represented. The lead should be the agency with an established reputation for delivering or supporting detached youth work and the strongest relationships with these partners.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| RQ4: What criteria should be used in the selection of regional consortia e.g. experience of detached youth work implementation; knowledge, skills and ability to engage in the co-design process; ability to influence service delivery in patches randomised to control)? | Regional consortia would need to demonstrate ability and capacity to undertake high-quality detached youth work in line with the shared practice model, existing strong multi-agency relationships, influence over where detached youth work does and does not take place, knowledge of the local area, and a need for detached youth work in specific locations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



| Research Question:                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RQ5: Is it likely to be feasible for regional consortia to secure matched funding for delivery in the pilot trial?                                                                                                             | This is not likely to be feasible for all potential regional consortia and would undermine the ability of consortia to keep control areas free of detached youth work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| RQ6: What criteria should be used in the selection of patches (e.g. rates of violence, population size, length of time since last delivery of detached youth work)                                                             | Patches need to have a demonstrated level of need (i.e. evidence of a current or emerging challenge for young people's wellbeing and/or youth violence and that young people could benefit from detached youth work, typically identified through police data and local knowledge), a sufficient reachable population of young people actively present, and to be small enough for intensive detached youth work delivery.                                                                                                                       |
| RQ7: Can we be confident that detached youth work will not be delivered in control areas? How would non-intervention delivery be monitored and how would this risk be minimised or accounted for in analysis in a pilot trial? | We cannot be confident of this, and it presents a significant challenge to the feasibility of an efficacy trial. Non-intervention delivery would need to be monitored through intensive ongoing liaison with regional consortia. A pilot trial would not be designed to allow analysis of impact, and it would not be feasible to account for contamination in analysis.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| RQ8: What would Business-As-Usual look like in control areas?                                                                                                                                                                  | Business-as-usual would involve other youth work including centre-based and short-term street-based; usual and additional targeted police activity including routine patrols, stop and search, hot spot policing, ad hoc investigations, arrest and criminal proceedings with individual suspected offenders, and focused deterrence.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| RQ9: Are any modifications or additions recommended to the overall pilot trial study process, timelines and plan proposed by YEF?                                                                                              | No modifications to the pilot trial design were identified. However, the findings from this scoping study led us to recommend against a pilot trial, unless prior testing of effect size using police force data filtered down to youth-related incidents demonstrates a significantly larger effect than shown by the analyses undertaken for this study.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| RQ10: Are there any further risks not identified in the feasibility study report, and how should they be addressed?                                                                                                            | The work undertaken reinforces and scales up the risks identified in the feasibility trial beyond the point where they can reasonably be mitigated. In addition, despite a consistent interest in generating robust evidence for detached youth work, there is significant concern among detached youth work providers about the consequences of a trial that is perceived not to be a fair test of detached youth work and that does not find an impact of detached youth work for the future of detached youth work commissioning and funding. |

## Introduction

This report sets out findings from a scoping study undertaken to further explore the feasibility of a randomised controlled trial (RCT) of detached youth work. It builds on an earlier feasibility study (Hall et al., 2024<sup>1</sup>) which explored the nature and consistency of detached youth work across the country, examined possible approaches to evaluating its impact, developed a shared practice model and theory of change, and set out a proposed approach for an RCT and implementation and process evaluation (IPE). The prior feasibility study was undertaken by a team of researchers from the Centre for Evidence and Implementation, Bryson Purdon Social Research and the Centre for Youth Impact at YMCA George Williams College. For this scoping study, the same team, with the addition of an expert in accessing and analysing police data, was commissioned to further test aspects of the proposed approach.

## Background

### Detached youth work

The term ‘detached youth work’ covers a range of practices for working with young people, with strong unifying features (Dowling, 2020). The key features of detached youth work are that it takes place in young people’s territory – in public spaces which are usually outside, such as parks or streets – and that it centres authentic trust building, both with individuals and the community (Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unity, 2024). This location means that detached youth work is exceptionally flexible and that detached youth workers continually negotiate their relationship with young people. In the prior feasibility study, participants described how the more typical power dynamic of power residing with adults delivering a youth service is blurred, which means that detached youth work is exceptionally youth-centred, and strengths-based, prioritising on the needs and interests of youth people rather than working to an explicit and agreed set of activities (Sonneveld et al., 2021). A priority of practitioners we spoke to was to ensure that the interaction between young people and youth workers is entirely voluntary and negotiated.

Relationship building is thus central to quality detached youth work. Other key features highlighted by Hall et al. (2024) in the prior feasibility report are that detached youth work is strengths-based, supports young people’s agency, and recognises their right to be in public spaces.

In line with these principles, in the prior feasibility study detached youth work providers described their work as addressing the issues that young people want to cover, rather than specific predetermined outcomes. The aspects of young people’s lives that participants in the prior feasibility study described their work as addressing were broad ranging, including wellbeing, confidence and mental health; anti-social behaviour; staying safe, gang exploitation and involvement in youth violence; substance misuse; social and emotional learning skills; engagement with other support agencies; relationships with peers and families; sexual health, and engagement in education, training and work. The activities they described providing as part of their detached youth work practice are also broad-ranging and include befriending and relationship

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<sup>1</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/YEF.-detached-youth-work-Feasibility.-July-2024.pdf>

building; providing information, advice and guidance; signposting to services; sport, cultural and other street-based activities; intervening to defuse conflict or respond to potential or actual violence; engaging with peers; mentoring and being a role model; facilitating youth-led projects; and engaging with families. Youth workers also described advocating to other community members on behalf of youth people.

While detached youth work in the UK has previously been evaluated using various methods (Clements et al., 2025; Crimmens et al., 2004, 2010; Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unity, 2024; Tiffany, 2007), to our knowledge it has never been evaluated using experimental methods.

### **The approach to evaluation proposed in the feasibility study**

The feasibility study team developed an initial design for an impact evaluation, consulted with detached youth work providers in interviews and workshops, and set out a refined design in the feasibility study report, along with a theory of change and shared practice model (Hall et al., 2024). The consultation highlighted that individual randomisation of young people to receive, or not receive, detached youth work was unlikely to be feasible due to the gradual, group-based, inconsistent and informal nature of interactions with individual young people – it would not be possible to record or determine which young people engage with the practitioners (see page 48 of the feasibility report for more detail). We also heard that it would be challenging to collect data from young people systematically using survey approaches (particularly at baseline before detached youth workers had established trusting relationships with them).

In outline, the impact evaluation design proposed was:

- A two-year hyper-local ('patch') efficacy RCT, with random allocation of patches to intervention and control, and the unit of analysis being the patch, using patch-level outcomes (rather than individual young person-level outcomes)
- Local consortia would be commissioned to identify around ten patches, which would be randomly assigned to intervention or control; the expectation (calculated in the prior feasibility study, based on preliminary sample size calculations, assuming fairly high pre-post correlation and low-medium effect size; see page 53 of the feasibility report for more detail) was that a trial of around 150 patches in total would be sufficient based on some crude assumptions about a plausible effect size
- Prior to randomisation, baseline data would be collected which (subject to co-design and piloting) would involve police administrative data on recorded crime, observational data, and surveys with the local community (i.e. residents within the prescribed areas) to understand feelings of local safety and community cohesion, attitudes towards youth people and of young people, as well as community awareness of detached youth work and perceived its benefits.
- Delivery would involve a six-month period of reconnaissance followed by 18 months of delivery of detached youth work
- Follow-up outcomes data on outcomes one year and two years after baseline

The shared practice model outlined the following key features of how detached youth work would be carried out in a trial, based on discussions with detached youth work providers about the detached youth work they considered best practice and most likely to achieve positive outcomes for young people, and aiming to allow flexibility in the specific content of detached youth work:

- Detached youth work is youth-centred, based on relationships of trust and respect, includes work with local stakeholders and young people towards community integration, and involves engaging young people through informal education. Advocacy, outreach and other activities are optional.
- Project leads use local data and knowledge and community engagement in selecting areas and undertake initial reconnaissance
- Detached youth work teams include at least two experienced (minimum two years' experience) detached youth workers plus a supervisor or manager providing supervision at least monthly.
- Detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working to a level 2 certificate in youth work training and hold a defined set of skills
- Detached youth work involves detached youth workers being present for at least four hours a week in each patch
- Detached youth work will be provided for a minimum of two years including reconnaissance work, and the ending of the project will be planned

Alongside the RCT, the feasibility study report recommended an IPE to monitor reach, delivery, fidelity to the shared practice model, contamination and business as usual in control areas, acceptability and feasibility of detached youth work and of the RCT, and youth worker and young people's perceptions of the impacts of detached youth work. The methods recommended were programme monitoring data, regular liaison with consortia, interviews with delivery staff, surveys and qualitative research with local community members, and creative participatory methods and, if possible, surveys with young people.

The feasibility study report described the RCT approach as potentially feasible but challenging, and recommended further analysis to help establish likely effect sizes and a small pilot trial, preceded by a detailed co-design phase. YEF wish to proceed with a pilot trial to test processes and methods for randomisation and methods for randomisation and data collection for a full efficacy trial, and to assess whether there is sufficient evidence of promise for a full trial. The pilot trial would follow the model set out in the feasibility study report for an internal pilot, involving selecting three regional consortia who would each identify ten 'patches', with five patches in each consortium randomised to receive detached youth work and five randomised to be control areas. It is envisaged that, if feasible, each consortium would be asked to bring matched funding of around £100,000-150,000.

This scoping study was commissioned to include the further analysis recommended, as well as to test aspects of the proposed design further.

## **Study components and research questions**

The scoping study, developed through consultation and discussion with YEF, involved three distinct components:

### **Component 1: Testing mapping detached youth work patches to police data**

The first component tested whether it is feasible to map the localities or 'patches' where detached youth work takes place to police data, since this approach would be used in the pilot trial.

## Component 2: Retrospective secondary data analysis and police data set assessment

The second component involved a quasi-experimental design (QED) to assess the impact of detached youth work in patches where it had previously taken place, compared with matched comparison areas, using secondary analysis of police data to estimate the likely effect size. We also collected high-level data on the nature of the detached youth work intervention.

## Component 3: Further consultation

In order to address remaining and specific questions following on from the prior feasibility study, we carried out further consultation with detached youth work providers, commissioners and other stakeholders. This component explored questions relevant to the feasibility of a pilot trial, in terms of the delivery model (i.e. working to a shared model of practice) and the proposed evaluation methods/research design.

This consultation was conducted through 11 individual and paired semi-structured interviews with practitioners and managers from the organisations that participated in components 1 and 2, as well as some key leading figures in the sector.

In collaboration with the YEF, we identified specific elements of the delivery and evaluation approach that required refinement in order to fully understand what it would take to deliver a successful pilot trial. The eight research questions addressed through this component of work were developed to expand on challenges and fill in gaps identified in the prior feasibility study.

Together, these components addressed the following research questions.

## Research questions

**Table 2: Research questions**

| Research Question:                                                                                  | Component 1:<br>Matching | Component 2:<br>Retrospective<br>analysis and<br>dataset<br>assessment | Component 3:<br>Consultation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| RQ1: Is it feasible to map police data on crime rates on to detached youth work patches?            | ✓                        |                                                                        |                              |
| RQ2a: What size of effect does detached youth work have on police incident statistics? <sup>2</sup> |                          | ✓                                                                      |                              |
| RQ2b: RQ2b: Which data set/s should be used in a pilot trial?                                       |                          | ✓                                                                      |                              |

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<sup>2</sup> The wording of RQ2 has been amended from the proposed research question 'Is the proposed pilot trial scale suitable (30 patches/3 regional consortia) to produce 'promise of impact' findings?' to be more suitable for the analysis conducted as part of this scoping work.

| Research Question:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Component 1:<br>Matching | Component 2:<br>Retrospective<br>analysis and<br>dataset<br>assessment | Component 3:<br>Consultation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| RQ3: Which agencies would need to be represented in regional consortia, and which organisations should lead them, in a pilot trial?                                                                                                                                        |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ4: What criteria should be used in the selection of regional consortia e.g. experience of detached youth work implementation; knowledge, skills and ability to engage in the co-design process; ability to influence service delivery in patches randomised to control)? |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ5: Is it likely to be feasible for regional consortia to secure matched funding for delivery in the pilot trial?                                                                                                                                                         |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ6: What criteria should be used in the selection of patches (e.g. rates of violence, population size, length of time since last delivery of detached youth work)                                                                                                         |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ7: Can we be confident that detached youth work will not be delivered in control areas? How would non-intervention delivery be monitored and how would this risk be minimised or accounted for in analysis in a pilot trial?                                             |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ8: What would Business-As-Usual look like in control areas?                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ9: Are any modifications or additions recommended to the overall pilot trial study process, timelines and plan proposed by YEF?                                                                                                                                          |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |
| RQ10: Are there any further risks not identified in the feasibility study report, and how should they be addressed?                                                                                                                                                        |                          |                                                                        | ✓                            |

## Ethical review

The present scoping work was conducted in accordance with the Social Research Association Research Ethics Guidance (SRA, 2021)

Formal ethics approval for the analysis of area-level administrative data and consultation interviews was not sought for two reasons. 1) A risk assessment was carried out at the proposal stage and determined that the primary data collection of this project incurs minimal risk (Oates et al., 2021). 2) All consultation participants were engaged in a professional capacity to provide their opinion on the proposed study design. Therefore, in line with the Health Research Authority tool (NHS Health Research Authority, 2025), this consultation is considered involvement activity rather than research. We did not collect personal data apart from for the purposes of contacting individuals for the work, and present findings at a high-level abstraction with no reference to individual young people or staff.

## **Data protection**

Data protection was overseen by CEI's independent Data Protection Officer. A Data Privacy Notice was shared with interviewees. Participants were informed prior to data collection that data would be stored by CEI 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 CEI and YMCA George Williams College for the purposes of the study.

## **Project team / stakeholders**

Dr Susan Purdon, BPSR, undertook and reported the analysis involved in Component 1 and Component 2. Amy Hall (CEI) managed youth agency recruitment and communication and collected high-level delivery data for Component 2. David McLellan wrote the section on available police datasets. Amy Hall and Dom Weinberg (YMCA GWC) carried out the consultation interviews and analysis for Component 3 and Amy Hall led on reporting this element. Jane Lewis provided overall oversight 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 and data collection

The study was undertaken as follows:

### Component 1: Testing mapping detached youth work patches to publicly available police data

The first component of the study tested whether it is feasible to map publicly available police data onto the localities or 'patches' where detached youth work takes place. If it proved feasible this would allow for Component 2 of the project, a retrospective QED analysis of DWY based on this police data, to go ahead.

To facilitate this initial test, four detached youth work providers were approached with a request that they supply information for two patches where they had recently undertaken detached youth work. The hope was that two would agree to take part, but in the event three did, so information on six patches in total was gained.

For each patch, the youth agencies were asked to provide information on the approximate area of the patch (such as a central postcode), and we then provided them with OpenStreetMap maps covering those locations and asked that they draw the boundaries of their patches onto those maps. The patches were subsequently drawn within the geographic information system (GIS) software package QGIS and saved as shapefiles<sup>3</sup>.

We then tested whether it was feasible to attach publicly available police.uk data to those shapefile via the longitude and latitude of each police incident. Police.uk data covers police ASB and crime incidents per month, with each incident being listed separately. Almost all incidents have a longitude and latitude recorded, which should allow for the mapping of these incidents onto the detached youth work patches.

Publicly available police.uk data is not a perfect dataset but was the most pragmatic choice for the Component 2 analysis given the timetable for the study. The two main issues with the dataset relevant for the evaluation of detached youth work are as follows:

1. **Longitude and Latitude are not recorded accurately.** To preserve the privacy of victims, the longitude and latitudes recorded in the data are based on 'snap points'. The 'snap points' are a finite number of locations in England and Wales, and each incident is mapped to its nearest snap point. The implication is that for the incidents counted per detached youth work patch, some may have occurred outside of the patch (if the closest snap point for an incident is within the patch), and some incidents that occurred within the patch may not be counted (if the closest snap point for an incident is outside of the patch).
2. **The publicly available police.uk data is not comprehensively validated,** and it is not clear whether all incidents are recorded and classified correctly. The publicly available police.uk data is, we understand, primarily produced to increase police accountability to the public. Greater Manchester Police do not submit data at all because of a change in their IT systems.

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<sup>3</sup> A shapefile is a digital file format used in Geographic Information Systems to identify areas



The first of these issues (the use of snap points) has simply to be acknowledged in any analysis using publicly available police.uk data for analysis of crime within localities, although in Component 2 the detached youth work patches were drawn as very slightly larger than the actual patches to try and capture all incidents taking place within the patches. However, analysis by Thompson et al in 2014<sup>4</sup>, where West Midlands police.uk data was compared to police data with the original grid references, concluded that for large areal units, such as MSOAs, the spatial accuracy of the data is very good and that the same is true for the slightly smaller lower super output area (LSOA) unit of geography. Our Component 2 study, where 52 detached youth work patches were identified, found most of these to be larger than the median size of an LSOA, so for most detached youth work patches the publicly available police.uk data should be reasonably accurate.

To address the second issue, analysis was undertaken to identify police force areas (PFAs) where the publicly available police.uk data *may* not be accurate enough for the Component 2 analysis. For Component 2, the recruitment of youth agencies that provide detached youth work would then be restricted to those who had eligible patches outside of those PFAs. PFAs were identified as potentially inaccurate if:

1. The total number of non-ASB incidents over the course of a year (July 2022 to June 23) did not closely match HO published aggregate statistics for the same year. A large mismatch would suggest over or under-reporting in the publicly available police.uk data. PFAs where the ratio of incidents between the two data sources was outside of the range 0.9 to 1.1 were marked as potentially inaccurate.
2. The number of incidents included in the publicly available police.uk data had changed by a large percentage over a short period of time. This *could* suggest a real change in crime rates, but could also be a change in the recording of data. To test for this, police.uk counts per PFA were compiled for every October between 2021 and 2014. The ratio between the maximum and minimum count was calculated, and any PFAs where the ratio was greater than 1.25 were marked as potentially inaccurate.
3. The percentage of incidents with missing longitude and latitude was high. PFAs where the percentage missing was 10% or above for any October between 2021 and 2024 were marked as potentially inaccurate.

## **Component 2: Retrospective secondary data analysis**

### **Youth agency selection**

Youth agencies were selected from the sample of 63 organisations identified in the prior feasibility study (see Hall et al., 2024 for sampling approaches) and supplemented with additional contacts identified by the evaluation team. As well as providers of detached youth work, this initial list included individuals and organisations representing national bodies, umbrella organisations, and evaluators who were excluded from this phase of work. Only youth agencies actively delivering detached youth work were invited to this phase of work. We also only included organisations working in geographic areas for which the police data used in

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson et al (2014) UK Open-Source crime data: accuracy and possibilities for research. Cartography and Geographic Information Science, 42:2, 97-111 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15230406.2014.972456>)

Component 1 was not complete or accurate enough for inclusion, or whose feasibility study survey responses showed they deliver detached youth work on a very small scale (i.e. they make contact with give young people or fewer per month). We sent an invitation to participate to the remaining 31 organisations, plus a further eight identified by the evaluation team and chased a minimum of two times.

Organisations were asked to provide details of the geographical areas ('patches') in which they had delivered detached youth work between 2020 and 2023, following these criteria:

*"For your agency to take part we will need you to be able to identify at least three (but preferably five to ten) patches that meet the following criteria:*

- Intensive detached youth work was delivered in the patch for a duration of at least 12 months between 2020-2023. (Patches are still eligible if detached youth work was delivered after 2023 or is still ongoing).*
- By intensive we mean detached youth workers were/are present for at least four hours a week for all or most weeks during that 12-month period.*
- No detached youth work was delivered in the patch between 2018-2020 (to the best of your knowledge)*
- The patch covers a small geographical area"*

The invitation material explained the activities that they would be asked to complete and explained that participating organisations would be paid £1000 in return for their contribution to the work.

The activities were described as follows:

*"If you would like to take part and can identify at least three patches that meet these criteria, we will ask you to participate in these tasks in February and March 2025:*

- Provide us with information about where your patches are. We will send you a map of the local area per patch for you to hand-draw the approximate boundary of the patch*
- Complete a short form for each patch outlining the detached youth work carried out. This will include questions about when the detached youth work started and ended in each patch, the number of youth workers in the patch, how often there is/was detached youth work in each patch*
- We will identify a set of comparison areas. We don't need your help with this except that we will ask you to check whether you, or another agency (so far as you know) carried out any detached youth work there since 2018*
- We may also ask you to take part in a short online interview to discuss the pilot trial requirements further"*

A total of 25 organisations initially responded to the invitation, 15 of whom returned a completed form providing information about detached youth work patches. We assessed each organisation's response based on the patches they had described and selected the ten organisations that best fit the criteria outlined above and provided the most useable patches for the analysis. All ten organisations then provided further information about patches as requested.

The ten organisations were based across England, in the East of England, Greater London, the Midlands, the North East, the West midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside. They represent a variety of delivery contexts and geographical remits, including delivery in highly urban parts of London, delivery covering most of a large town, and delivery across several smaller towns or villages.

### **Retrospective data collection**

Although the prior feasibility study described an RCT approach as potentially feasible for the evaluation of detached youth work using police incident statistics as the primary outcome, in the absence of any data on the size of likely impacts on police incident statistics it is very difficult to determine how large such a trial would need to be. The feasibility study suggested that a trial involving around 150 patches *might* be sufficient, and would allow for an effect size of around 0.2 standard deviations to be detected, but this was not based on any data. Component 2 of this study aimed to address this lack of a prior estimate using a retrospective quasi-experimental design (QED).

For the QED, as described above, 10 providers of detached youth work were recruited who had undertaken detached youth work in a number of patches for at least a year over the period 2001 to 2023. Between them, these youth agencies identified 52 in-scope patches. Comparison areas from the same PFAs (LSOAs) were selected that had similar levels of police incidents per hectare in 2019 and similar trends in incidents over the period 2016 to 2019. Two comparison areas were selected per detached youth work patch, to give a total of 104 comparison areas in total.

The outcome variable used for the study was ‘police incidents per hectare’ in 2024. The difference in this rate for the detached youth work patch and comparison areas (and hence the effect size) was estimated, having controlled for the rate in 2019 and the trend in the rate for the period 2016 to 2019 in a linear regression.

The detached youth work patches identified by the 10 youth agencies had to meet a number of criteria:

- ‘Intensive’ detached youth work was delivered in the patch for a duration of at least 12 months between 2020-2023. (Patches were still eligible if detached youth work was delivered after 2023 or is ongoing).
- ‘Intensive’ was defined as detached youth workers being present for at least four hours a week for all or most weeks during that 12-month period.
- No detached youth work was to have been delivered in the patch between 2018-2020 (to the best of the knowledge of the provider)
- The patch covered a small geographical area so that change in police incidents attributable to detached youth work might reasonably be detected.

The Component 1 analysis led to eight PFAs (of 43 in England and Wales) being excluded, so detached youth work patches needed to be outside of these areas:

- Greater Manchester;
- Cheshire;

- City of London;
- Devon and Cornwall;
- Dyfed-Powys;
- Gwent;
- West Mercia;
- Gloucestershire.

The youth agencies identified between two and 10 patches each, giving a total of 52. The distribution of the 52 patches by PFA was as shown below.

| <b>PFA</b>             | <b>Number of patches</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>South Yorkshire</b> | 2                        |
| <b>West Yorkshire</b>  | 3                        |
| <b>Essex</b>           | 4                        |
| <b>West Midlands</b>   | 6                        |
| <b>Humberside</b>      | 2                        |
| <b>Met Police</b>      | 16                       |
| <b>Nottinghamshire</b> | 3                        |
| <b>Derbyshire</b>      | 8                        |
| <b>Northumbria</b>     | 8                        |
| <b>Staffordshire</b>   | 2                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           | 52                       |

For each patch the youth agency was asked to provide a roughly central postcode, and they were then sent an OpenStreetMap map covering the approximate location. Youth agencies were asked to hand-draw the boundaries of their patches onto those maps. The patches were subsequently re-drawn within QGIS and saved as shapefiles. The shape file areas were drawn as very slightly larger than the hand-drawn boundaries

to try and capture incidents in the publicly available police.uk data that are geo-coded as outside of the patch because of the use of snap points (see Component 1 methods).

For each patch, publicly available police.uk data for the period Jan 2016 to Dec 2024 was attached and saved. From this data three statistics were generated per patch:

- Number of police incidents in 2024 per hectare (the outcome variable);
- Number of police incidents in 2019 per hectare;
- The linear trend in the number of police incidents per hectare between 2016 and 2019.

For each of the 52 patches, two LSOAs from the same PFA were selected as comparison areas. LSOAs were used as a geographical unit for the comparison firstly because they are included in the publicly available police.uk data files as standard, but also because they were expected to be of a similar size to the sizes of the patches. This proved broadly correct, although on average the selected LSOAs were somewhat smaller. The detached youth work patches did prove to be of very variable size (from three hectares to almost 400 hectares, median=51 hectares), but the LSOAs selected also ranged from seven hectares to 321 hectares, median=23).

For each LSOA in England, the same three statistics were generated as for the patches:

- Number of police incidents in 2024 per hectare (the outcome variable);
- Number of police incidents in 2019 per hectare
- The linear trend in the number of police incidents per hectare between 2016 and 2019.

The two LSOAs selected per detached youth work patch were identified in three stages:

- The list of LSOAs was reduced to those in the same PFA as the patch;
- The full list of LSOAs was reduced to those where the number of police incidents in 2019 per hectare was within between 0.9 and 1.1 times the equivalent detached youth work rate;
- Within this reduced list, the two LSOAs that were closest to the detached youth work patch on the linear trend between 2016 and 2019 were selected.

This process gives comparison areas that closely match the detached youth work patches firstly in terms of their 'baseline' level of police incidents, with 2019 being selected so as to avoid the main covid years when there may have been anomalies in the data, and secondly in terms of the trend in the three years prior to that. That is, the detached youth work patches and the comparison areas are matched in terms of their pre-detached youth work level of crime and in terms of the trajectories the areas were on.

Prior to the matching, any LSOAs that overlapped with the detached youth work patches in the PFA were excluded. After selecting the two comparison LSOAs, any that were found to directly border onto a detached youth work patch were excluded and replaced with another LSOA, following the same rules of selection. These exclusions were made to avoid any risk of spillover of the detached youth work into the comparison areas.

Having selected the comparison areas, maps of those areas were sent out to most<sup>5</sup> of the 10 youth agencies to ask them to check that they had not delivered detached youth work in any of those areas since 2000 or knew of other providers that had. Not all youth agencies responded<sup>6</sup>, but of those that did just one comparison LSOA was identified as having 'possibly had detached youth work'.

### **Delivery survey**

To understand the nature of the detached youth work undertaken in each of the analysis patches, we asked each detached youth work provider to complete an Excel spreadsheet which captured information about each patch:

- The nature of the locality (e.g. park, housing estate, street corner)
- The start and end months of detached youth work delivery and whether it was intermittent
- The frequency of detached youth work sessions and average number of hours per session
- The number of detached youth workers typically present at each session
- The activities delivered
- The aspects of young people's lives addressed
- The costs involved in set up; project management and supervision; direct delivery, and other costs.

### **Component 3: Further consultation**

We undertook targeted semi-structured interviews with individuals representing ten organisations to further explore key aspects of feasibility of the proposed trial design as per the Research Questions:

- The feasibility of establishing regional consortia, leadership and criteria (RQs 2, 3 and 4)
- The feasibility of securing matched funding (RQ 5)
- Criteria for selection of patches (RQ 6)
- Feasibility of non-use of detached youth work in control areas and what business-as-usual would involve (RQs 7 and 8)
- Any other considerations in taking forward a pilot trial.

All ten organisations participating in Component 2 were invited to take part in an interview, plus a further four individuals who represent leading organisations in the detached youth work sector, as providers or umbrella organisations. All consultation interview participants signed and returned a consent form,

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<sup>5</sup> The tight timetable for the study meant that one youth agency had to be excluded. The two London-based providers were not included because the comparison areas selected were generally at some considerable distance from the areas the provider focussed on.

<sup>6</sup> Of the seven who were asked to check their comparison areas, six did so.

confirming they had read the stakeholder information sheet and consenting to take part. The information sheet provided context for the work, described what would be involved, and provided information about data management and protection (see Appendix A).

Interviews took place with seven of the participating organisations and three of the additional contacts. Three of the interviews with participating organisations were attended by more than one representative from the organisation.

Interviews were undertaken virtually on Microsoft Teams and were recorded and transcribed using the platform recording facility.

### Component 1: Testing mapping detached youth work patches to police data

The analysis undertaken for Component 1 consisted primarily of a comparison between publicly available police.uk data and aggregate HO published statistics for each PFA for the period 2021 to 2023<sup>7</sup> to establish whether the police.uk data looked potentially unreliable or inconsistent for a PFA. Any PFAs where the data looked to be *possibly* unreliable were excluded from the Component 2 QED. This was done to help ensure that any observed change in police incident rates over time in detached youth work patches or comparison patches over time was genuine rather than partially attributable to changes in how the data in police.uk is recorded.

For this analysis, aggregated counts were generated from the publicly available police.uk data per PFA per month. These counts were then compared across time or with HO published statistics, and any PFAs where large discrepancies or anomalies were found were excluded. The threshold rules used were necessarily subjective, the intention being to exclude PFAs where there was room for doubt rather than to make any definitive statement about the data quality. The rules applied are detailed in the methods section for Component 1.

### Component 2: Retrospective secondary data analysis

The aim of the retrospective secondary data analysis (the QED) was to generate an estimate of the effect size of detached youth work on the outcome 'police incidents per hectare in 2024'. This estimate, even if crude, would then allow for a reasonable estimate to be made of the sample size that might be needed for an efficacy RCT of detached youth work.

To estimate the effect size of detached youth work on the outcome, a linear regression model was fitted to the data:

$$\begin{aligned} (\text{incidents per hectare 2024})_i \\ = \alpha + \beta_1(DYW) + \beta_2(\text{incidents per hectare 2019})_i + \beta_3(\text{linear trend 19 to 24}) \\ + \beta_4(\text{hectares}) + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

where  $i = \text{patch/LSOA}$ ; detached youth work is set equal to 1 for the detached youth work patches and 0 for the comparison areas, and  $\varepsilon_i$  is the individual level error.

This model was fitted across all 52 patches/104 comparison areas. Each area counts equally in the model irrespective of its geographical size, and rates per hectare are used (rather than counts of incidents) to make areas more comparable.

Effect sizes were calculated using Hedges'  $g$ , as specified in the following equation:

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/police-recorded-crime-and-outcomes-open-data-tables#police-record-crime-open-data-police-force-area-tables>



$$ES = \frac{\beta_1}{s^2}$$

where  $s^2$  is the pooled unconditional variables of the two groups, detached youth work and comparison. YEF's preferred measure of effect size for place-based initiatives is the Relative Incidence Rate Ratio (RIRR) which, in this context, would be calculated as the ratio of the total number of incidents in 2024 to the total number of incidents in 2019 for detached youth work areas, divided by the equivalent ratio for the control areas. However, this measure would give an overall estimate of effect that is driven by the effects within those areas with the largest number of incidents. Given that the size distribution of patches in an efficacy trial may be very different to the size distribution in the QED, we judge that Hedges'  $g$ , which gives an average effect across all patches irrespective of their incident counts, gives the most generalisable estimates of effect.

As well as running this 'main' model, a range of other models were run to test the sensitivity of the estimate to the inclusion or exclusion of some detached youth work patches. These sensitivity analyses generate a range of effect sizes and together give a reasonably plausible range within which the effect size for an efficacy trial may fall.

- A model was fitted that included 'provider' (i.e. youth agency that delivers detached youth work) as an independent variable and an interaction term between provider and detached youth work, the intention being to establish where there was any evidence of variation in the effect size across providers, whilst recognizing that this was based on very small sample sizes. This analysis did suggest that the average effect size might vary across providers and/or areas, with some fairly strong evidence that the effect size for London was markedly different to the effect size outside London. In light of this a separate estimate regression was run for the detached youth work patches outside of London.
- Information was collected from each provider on the details of how they worked in each of their patches. This was used to identify the patches where the work was similar to that described under the 'shared practice model', which is the approach to detached youth work that would be tested in an efficacy trial. A regression model based just on those patches that were identified as 'SPM-similar' was run, for all areas and separately outside of London, given the issues identified in the previous paragraph.
- We had anticipated that most of the detached youth work patches identified by providers would be fairly small, and had specified this in the list of criteria. This was because we would not expect detached youth work to be delivered with sufficient intensity in large areas for there to be detectable effects unless the number of youth workers employed was also very large. Furthermore, we would not expect there to be any very large patches in an efficacy trial. However, a number of the patches identified were large, so we conducted a sensitivity analysis excluding patches that were greater than 100 hectares. Again, this model was run for all areas and separately outside of London.
- Irrespective of patch size, it is reasonable to expect that detached youth work will only have a positive effect on police incident rates if it is introduced into areas where those rates are fairly high to begin with. To test this, the data was restricted to detached youth work patches with a police incident rate of at least five per hectare in 2019, with this necessarily being a somewhat arbitrary

threshold. As with the other analysis, two models were run: one for all areas and one for areas outside of London.

- Finally, we ran models that combined the last two criteria, excluding the largest detached youth work patches and restricting the rest to patches where the police incident rate in 2019 was five or more incidents per hectare. This combination gives the closest match to the types of patches that an efficacy trial might use. Once again, two models were run: one for all areas and one for areas outside of London.

The descriptive information about detached youth work provision was collected in Excel and data were analysed descriptively.

### Component 3: Further consultation

Interview data were reviewed and summarised in Microsoft Word. Due to the targeted nature of this consultation, a high-level approach to analysis was taken, focused on answering the eight specific research questions. Each transcript was analysed for responses relevant to each of the research questions, then responses per research question were summarised, noting areas of reinforcement and divergence across interviews.

### Timeline

**Table 3. Timeline**

| Date             | Activity                                                                                                                         |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nov – Dec 2024   | Recruitment of Component 1 youth agencies, identification of patches, mapping to police data, note to YEF confirming feasibility |
| Jan – March 2025 | Recruitment of Component 2 youth agencies, identification of patches and postcodes                                               |
| Mar – April 2025 | Identification of comparison patches, check whether had received detached youth work, analysis of impact                         |
| Mar – April 2025 | Analysis of Component 2 police data, collection of implementation data, analysis of impact                                       |
| Mar – April 2025 | Component 3 consultation interviews and analysis                                                                                 |
| Mid-April 2025   | Note to YEF on Component 2 effect size                                                                                           |
| April 2025       | Drafting of study report                                                                                                         |

### Component 1: Testing mapping detached youth work patches to police data

#### RQ1: Is it feasible to map police data on crime rates on to detached youth work patches?

Research Component 1 demonstrated that it is feasible for detached youth work providers to hand-draw the boundaries of their patches onto maps. From there it is relatively straightforward to draw those boundaries within GIS software such as QGIS, and then to attach geo-referenced police data to those patches. The process was tested on a larger scale for Component 2, and we anticipate no difficulties in using the same approach for a pilot or efficacy trial.

The tests undertaken on the publicly available police.uk data did identify a number of PFAs (eight from a total of 43, 18.6%) where the data looks to be *potentially* unreliable, with these PFAs then being excluded from the Component 2 study. If the publicly available police.uk data was to be relied on for a pilot or efficacy trial then further, more thorough, tests might be needed before any decision was taken on whether or not to include particular PFAs, alongside consultation with individual PFAs on whether there are any known local issues with the data. Three tests were used:

- A test of whether aggregated counts from publicly available police.uk were a close match to HO published statistics, large differences suggesting the police.uk data may be unreliable;
- A test of whether there was a lot of variation in the aggregated police.uk counts over time, which *might* imply changes in reporting and hence unreliability;
- A check on the number of recorded incidents where longitude and latitude were missing, with large percentages missing being problematic for a study that relies on mapping police incidents to local areas.

In more detail:

- The ratios between aggregated counts for non-ASB incidents for the year ending June 2023 in the publicly available police.uk data, and the counts from HO published statistics per police force for the same period were calculated. Police.uk data for PFAs were judged to be potentially unreliable if the ratio was outside of the range 0.9 to 1.1. This, somewhat arbitrary, rule led to the following PFAs being excluded:
  - Cheshire;
  - City of London;
  - Devon and Cornwall;
  - Dyfed-Powys.
- The counts from the publicly available police.uk data for every October from 2021 to 2024 were compared, and the ratio between the maximum and minimum computed. A large ratio would suggest either a genuine change in crime rates or a change in reporting. PFAs where the ratio was greater than 1.25 were judged to be potentially unreliable. This led to the following PFAs being excluded:

- Cheshire;
  - Devon and Cornwall;
  - Dyfed-Powys;
  - Gwent;
  - West Mercia.
- Finally, for any October between 2021 and 2024, PFAs were excluded if the percentage of incidents where latitude and longitude was not recorded was 10% or greater. This led to the following PFAs being excluded:
    - City of London;
    - Dyfed-Powys;
    - Gloucestershire.

Across the three criteria, the excluded PFAs were:

- Greater Manchester (GMP do not submit data to police.uk because of a change to their IT system);
- Cheshire;
- City of London;
- Devon and Cornwall;
- Dyfed-Powys;
- Gwent;
- West Mercia;
- Gloucestershire.

## Component 2: Retrospective secondary data analysis

### **RQ2: What size of effect does detached youth work have on police incident statistics?**

#### *Effect size estimates*

Ten youth agencies took part in the Component 2 QED, between them identifying 52 patches that met our criteria. These were each matched to two comparison LSOAs, giving 104 comparison areas in total.

The detached youth work patches varied quite considerably in size, from just three hectares to 384 hectares although most (77%) were in the range 10 to 100 hectares, the median being 51 hectares. The comparison LSOAs selected were almost as variable, ranging from seven hectares to 321 hectares, but with 87% being within the 10-to-100-hectare range, and with a median of 23 hectares. Comparing these medians, on average the comparison areas were somewhat smaller than the detached youth work patches.

In terms of police incident rates, for the 52 detached youth work patches the average rate of incidents per hectare in 2019 was 13.4. By design<sup>8</sup>, the rate was very similar in the comparison areas at 13.1 per hectare. These rates are much higher than the national rates per hectare: across all LSOAs in England and Wales the average per LSOA was 2.8 incidents per hectare. As would be expected, these differences do suggest that detached youth work is being adopted in areas where crime rates are considerably above the average.

By 2024, the average rate of incidents per hectare for the detached youth work patches had risen slightly to 13.5 (with a standard deviation of 11.0) whereas the average rate in the comparison LSOAs had slightly fallen to 12.2 (with a standard deviation of 9.8).

To recap, the aim of the retrospective secondary data analysis (the QED) was to generate an estimate of the effect size of detached youth work on the outcome 'police incidents per hectare in 2024. This estimate, even if crude, would then allow for a reasonable estimate to be made of the sample size that might be needed for an efficacy RCT of detached youth work. To estimate the effect size of detached youth work on this outcome, a linear regression model was fitted to the data with four predictors: a binary for detached youth work compared to comparison areas, the number of police incidents per hectare in 2019, the linear trend in the numbers per hectare between 2016 and 2019, and hectares. The effect size is derived from the coefficient associated with the binary 'detached youth work v. comparison' variable. For any given effect size, it is then possible to estimate how large an efficacy trial would need to be to detect an effect of that size with (for the examples used in this paper) 80% power.

### Overall effect size estimate

Running the regression model using all 52 patches, and 104 comparison areas<sup>9</sup>, gives an estimated effect size of +0.05 standard deviations. This suggests that detached youth work has a *negative* effect on police incidents. That is, police incidents per hectare in 2024 are *higher* in areas with detached youth work than in the matched comparison areas. However, the estimate is not significantly different to zero (p-value=0.519) and the 95% confidence interval around the estimate is very wide, at -0.12 to 0.23.

This result implies that the effect of detached youth work on police incidents (as recorded in the publicly available police.uk data) is probably very close to zero but is at best -0.12. Clearly, if the effect is genuinely zero or negative then no efficacy trial, irrespective of size, can be expected to generate a positive effect. If, however, the effect was as large as -0.12 then an efficacy trial could be run, but it would need to be very large, with an estimated 460<sup>10</sup> patches in total (230 per arm). In our feasibility study report we suggested that a trial with around 150 patches might be needed (75 patches randomised to detached youth work; 75

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<sup>8</sup> Comparison LSOAs were matched to detached youth work patches on this statistic

<sup>9</sup> One of the 104 comparison LSOAs was identified by a detached youth work provider as having possibly had detached youth work in the last few years. Excluding this LSOA (and weighting up the second comparison LSOA for that patch by a factor of 2) does not change the estimated effect size.

<sup>10</sup> The calculation of the sample size takes into account the correlation between the dependent variable (incidents in 2024) and the three independent regression variables (incidents in 2019, the trend between 2016 and 2019, and hectares). The correlation is 0.89. It assumes 80% power.

to control), with this being sufficient to detect an effect size of around 0.2. A trial with 460 patches would be a very considerable increase on that.

This central estimate of an effect size of very close to zero is concerning. However, the sensitivity analysis we have conducted suggests that the very low estimate may be being driven by a 'London effect'. Sixteen of the 52 detached youth work patches are in London, and for some of these there has been a very large increase in police incidents between 2019 and 2024 according to the publicly available police.uk data. The London patches are typically very large (in terms of their hectare size) and a similar large increase in police incidents does not appear to be replicated in the much smaller LSOA comparison areas we have selected. It seems unlikely that these very large increases in incidents can be attributed the detached youth work in those areas. It is likely that there are other factors at play, but we do not have information on what these factors might be.

To check whether the data supports the hypothesis of a London effect, a model was fitted that included 'provider' (i.e. youth agency that delivers detached youth work) as an independent variable and an interaction term between provider and detached youth work, the intention being to establish where there was any evidence of variation in the effect size across providers, whilst recognizing that this based on very small sample sizes. This analysis did suggest that the average effect size might vary across providers and/or areas, although the interaction term does not reach significance ( $p=0.08$ ). The coefficients suggest that the effect size for the two London providers was markedly different to the effect size outside London.

In light of this, a separate estimate regression was run for the detached youth work patches outside of London.

#### Estimated effect size for detached youth work providers outside of London

Restricting the data to the detached youth work patches and comparison LSOAs outside of London reduces the data to 36 detached youth work patches and 72 comparison areas. Running the regression model on this data gives an estimated effect size of -0.09 standard deviations, with a p-value of 0.380.

If this estimated effect size of -0.09 is a good reflection of the true detached youth work effect size, then the implication is that an efficacy trial of around 820 patches would be needed (410 per arm). Again, this is very considerably larger than we suggested in the feasibility report.

As set out in the analysis section of this report, we have completed a range of other sensitivity analyses to establish if, and how, the estimated effect size changes under different sub-groups of detached youth work patches, especially those sub-groups that most closely reflect the type of patches that might be used in an efficacy trial.

**Sensitivity test A:** Restricting the detached youth work patches to those where the detached youth work was similar to the shared practice model approach described in the feasibility report.

Information was collected from each youth agency on the details of how they worked in each of their patches. This was used to identify the patches where the work was broadly similar to that described under the 'shared practice model', which is the approach to detached youth work that would be tested in an efficacy trial. This analysis is described in more detail in the section: Fit to shared practice model. The assessments per patch were, however, done on fairly broad criteria, so the classification to SPM/not is

necessarily crude and probably not very accurate<sup>11</sup>. A regression model based just on those patches that were identified as 'SPM-similar' was run, for all areas and separately outside of London.

Including London, 43 of the 52 patches were scored as following the SPM model. The estimated effect size for these patches was still negative, at +0.07 (p-value=0.419).

Excluding London, 28 of the 36 patches were scored as following the SPM model. The estimated effect size for these patches was positive but, surprisingly, somewhat smaller than the effect size for all 36 patches, at -0.06. This did not reach significance (p-value=0.419). To detect an effect size of -0.06 an efficacy trial would need 1,600 patches (800 per arm).

**Sensitivity test B:** Restricting the data to reasonably small detached youth work patches

We had anticipated that most of the detached youth work patches identified by youth agencies would be fairly small, and had specified this in the list of criteria. This was because we would not expect detached youth work to be delivered with sufficient intensity in large areas for there to be detectable effects unless the number of youth workers employed was also very large. Nevertheless, a number of the patches identified were large, and the data was restricted to those of less than 100 hectares to test whether this would change the effect size estimate.

Including London, 45 of the 52 patches were of less than 100 hectares. The estimated effect size for these patches was still negative, at +0.05 (p-value=0.587).

Excluding London, 34 of the 36 patches were smaller than 100 hectares. The estimated effect size for these patches was positive at -0.11 (p-value=0.282). To detect an effect size of -0.11 an efficacy trial would need 580 patches (290 per arm).

**Sensitivity test C:** Restricting the data to patches starting with high police incident rates

Irrespective of patch size, it is reasonable to expect that detached youth work will only have a positive effect on police incident rates if it is introduced into areas where those rates are fairly high to begin with. To test this, the data was restricted to detached youth work patches with a police incident rate of at least five per hectare in 2019.

Including London, 42 of the 52 patches had a police incident rate of at least five per hectare in 2019. The estimated effect size for these patches was still negative, at +0.04 (p-value=0.709).

Excluding London, 26 of the 36 patches had a police incident rate of at least five per hectare in 2019. The estimated effect size for these patches was greater than that seen in the previous analyses, at -0.14, but still not significant (p-value=0.324). To detect an effect size of -0.14 an efficacy trial would need 350 patches (175 per arm).

**Sensitivity test D:** Restricting the data to reasonably small detached youth work patches and patches starting with high police incident rates

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<sup>11</sup> More detailed work with each youth agency would be needed for a definitive classification

Finally, we ran models that combined the last two criteria, excluding the largest detached youth work patches and restricting the rest to patches where the police incident rate in 2019 was five or more incidents per hectare. This combination is the closest match to the types of patches that an efficacy trial might use.

Including London, 35 of the 52 patches met these two criteria. Nevertheless, the estimated effect size for these patches was still negative, although somewhat smaller, at +0.02 (p-value=0.867).

Excluding London, 24 of the 36 patches met the two criteria. This gave the largest estimated effect size of all the analyses conducted, at -0.15, but was not significant (p-value=0.306). To detect an effect size of -0.15 an efficacy trial would need 300 patches (150 per arm).

Table 4 gives the effect sizes, and the implications for the size of an efficacy trial, across all of the analyses conducted.

**Table 4: Estimated effect sizes for different sub-sets of detached youth work patches**

| Detached youth work patches included/excluded                                                     | Analysis including London |                                                         | Analysis excluding London |                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                   | Estimated effect size     | Size of efficacy trial needed (total number of patches) | Estimated effect size     | Size of efficacy trial needed (total number of patches) |
| <b>All patches</b>                                                                                | +0.05                     | -                                                       | -0.09                     | 820                                                     |
| <b>Patches broadly following the SPM model</b>                                                    | +0.07                     | -                                                       | -0.06                     | 1,600                                                   |
| <b>Patches less than 100 hectares</b>                                                             | +0.05                     | -                                                       | -0.11                     | 580                                                     |
| <b>Patches with police incident rates of 5+ per hectare in 2019</b>                               | +0.04                     | -                                                       | -0.14                     | 350                                                     |
| <b>Patches of less than 100 hectares and with police incident rates of 5+ per hectare in 2019</b> | +0.02                     | -                                                       | -0.15                     | 300                                                     |

In summary, the analyses conducted do not allow for a definitive estimate of the true effect size of detached youth work, the range of possible estimates being too wide. Furthermore, none of the estimates are significantly different to zero. However, if the 'London effect' is accepted, then the analyses suggest that, using publicly available police.uk data, the effect size of detached youth work is *probably* above zero but is at most -0.15 standard deviations. And the implication is that an efficacy trial of detached youth work may need to have a sample size of *at least* 300 patches (150 per arm) unless evidence can be generated from a pilot study that this is estimate is an under-estimate.

There are, of course, a number of reasons why the QED study may have led to an underestimate of effect size. We outline some of them below. If further analysis, or a pilot trial, can demonstrate that larger reductions in police incidents are seen if different data sources are used, especially if those datasets allow



for filtering down to youth-related incidents, or if the detached youth work follows a standardised, and fairly intensive, model of delivery in patches that are relatively small and with high starting incident rates, then the conclusion reached may well be that a smaller efficacy trial is sufficient.

### *Reasons why the QED may under-estimate effect sizes*

There are several reasons why the QED study may have under-estimated effect sizes. These include the data used, the selection of the comparison areas, the nature of the patches, and the nature of the delivery.

**Data issues:** As discussed earlier, the publicly available police.uk data is not a perfect dataset and is not comprehensively validated. Some of the observed changes in the incident rates per area (detached youth work patch or comparison LSOA) may be attributable to errors in the data. Alternative sources of police data that might be used in a pilot and efficacy trial are discussed in the findings section for RQ2b: Which data set/s should be used in a pilot trial?

Related to this, there are, in addition, the problems related to the use of snap points. Some of the incidents attributed to detached youth work or comparison LSOAs may have taken place outside those areas, and some that have been counted as within the area may have occurred outside. However, this is unlikely to have affected the effect size estimates greatly, because the detached youth work patches are typically larger than LSOAs and at that level of geography the area counts of incidents will be fairly accurate, albeit not perfect (see Thompson et al 2014).

Perhaps most importantly, over and above any issues around the quality of the data, the publicly available police.uk data does not allow for incidents to be reduced to those that are related to young people. This reduces the likelihood that detached youth work would lead to sufficient change to be detected in this analysis. Some of the changes in incidents seen in some areas may be driven by other changes in crime that are unrelated to young people, masking the true effect of detached youth work on young people's outcomes. Section RQ2b of this report discusses alternative sources of police data that might be used in a pilot and efficacy trial. Of most importance, it appears that some police forces do add flags to their data for youth-related crime and ASB, and if it was possible to repeat the QED analysis using those flags, we might reach a different conclusion on the effect size of detached youth work. We come back to this further below.

**The selection of comparison areas:** LSOAs were selected as the geographical unit for the comparison areas partly because they are recorded in the police.uk data, but also because they were expected to be of broadly the same size as detached youth work patches. In the QED, however, we found the detached youth work patches to be, on average, somewhat larger. The regression models control for the differences in size, but if there is an underlying relationship between area size and change in police incident rates between 2019 and 2024 that we have not fully controlled for, then there is possibility of some bias in the estimates of effect.

Over and above these size differences, the analysis relies on an assumption that, in the absence of detached youth work, the two sets of areas (detached youth work and comparison) would have followed the same trajectory between 2019 and 2024. We have tried to make this assumption plausible by controlling for the linear trend in incidents between 2016 and 2019. That is, we make the assumption that if the trend in the two sets of areas prior to 2019 was the same, then it is reasonable to expect the trend to be the same post 2019 in the absence of detached youth work. Nevertheless, detached youth work patches have been selected for detached youth work for a reason, and if part of that reason was that there was local intelligence

that the trend was accelerating (or likely to accelerate), then it is feasible that an increase in incidents might be seen in detached youth work patches that is not replicated in comparison areas. This might, for example, explain some of the very large increases seen in a few of the London patches. If this was to happen, the effect size we have calculated would be an underestimate. Likewise, for some of our comparison areas, the reason detached youth work was not used may relate to local intelligence that the issues in those areas are of a different nature or that the trajectory was already decelerating.

**The nature of the patches and the nature of the delivery:** The QED is a pragmatic, retrospective study. Although criteria were set for the detached youth work patches that were used, there is likely to have been considerable variation in the nature of the detached youth work delivered. There is certainly a lot of variation in the size of the patches. A pilot or efficacy trial would set much firmer rules around what is within scope, with the intention of testing the intervention under ideal circumstances. We have tried to estimate the effect size for those patches that we believe are probably closest to the trial criteria, but this is necessarily a fairly crude exercise. If the intervention was fairly weak in some of the patches, for instance, if only a small number of youth workers were used to cover a large area or delivery took place for fewer than four hours per week, it would lead to the effect being underestimated.

For all of these reasons, we believe that the effect size estimates derived from the QED may be somewhat underestimated, but we cannot establish by how much. However, unless the underestimation was very considerable, we now believe that an efficacy trial of far more than 150 patches will be needed, which would be an extremely challenging, and probably unfeasible, enterprise.

#### *A potential way forward*

Given all the uncertainties about the effect size and the fact that with our current most optimistic estimate an efficacy trial looks unfeasible, the natural next step would be to conduct some further analysis before moving to a pilot trial. For this analysis we would take all, or a large subset of the QED patches and comparison areas and attach local police force data to those patches, together with their youth-related flags. The estimates of effect would then be re-calculated using this data.

This exercise would take time and effort, but it would be considerably less expensive than a pilot trial. Access to local police data would need to be negotiated with each of the PFAs that were covered by the retrospective QED. Time would need to be allowed for negotiating access to data, liaison and follow up, and for accessing the data. Given the level of expertise needed, the exercise would be led by David McLennan.

#### *Retrospective analysis of detached youth work delivery: Survey findings*

To complement and contextualise the retrospective analysis of past detached youth work in the selected patches, we collected light-touch implementation data to understand what was delivered in each patch during the analysed period of delivery. We have then explored how closely this delivery matches on to the shared practice model developed in the prior feasibility study, to assess the intensity of prior delivery and suitability of the shared practice model.

In the form, we asked the youth agencies to complete each of the items *per patch* to capture variance across and within delivery agencies and inform the impact analysis.

This data was completed by nine of the ten participating youth agencies, with responses for 51 patches in total.

### Fit to shared practice model

The first analysis was to establish how similar the delivery between 2020-2023 was to the proposed shared practice model. This has two purposes; to validate the model and understand how closely it matches existing practice, and to inform the effect size analysis described in the previous section (i.e. to explore whether areas that most closely matched the practice model saw bigger effects).

The analysis of fit to the shared practice model was necessarily fairly crude due to the retrospective nature of data collection and the patch sizes provided by the youth agencies. We were also only able to assess more quantitative elements of the practice model. This means that we cannot guarantee that a good match in this analysis indicates high quality, intensive delivery.

We assessed this on five points, against which each patch was given a 1 (meets the criteria) or a 0 (does not meet the criteria):

**Table 5. Implementation data summary**

|          | <b>Survey item</b>                                         | <b>SPM requirement</b>                     | <b>Assessment criteria</b>                                                 | <b>Number of patches that meet the criteria (of 51)</b> |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | What was the longest period of consistent delivery?        | A minimum of two years engagement in total | Minimum 12 months                                                          | 42                                                      |
| <b>2</b> | How often were sessions held?                              | Sessions should be held weekly             | Minimum weekly                                                             | 48                                                      |
| <b>3</b> | How many hours a week were delivered?                      | Four hours per week                        | Minimum of four hours per week                                             | 34                                                      |
| <b>4</b> | How many detached youth workers were present per session?  | Minimum of two youth workers               | Minimum of two youth workers                                               | 44                                                      |
| <b>5</b> | Was the delivery during the period described intermittent? | Consistent delivery                        | No significant gaps in delivery (i.e. no more than one month in 12 months) | 46                                                      |

The duration of delivery was amended for these purposes based on feedback and learning from the consultative interviews, in which participants reported that two years of consistent delivery within the small

patches defined was uncommon. See the section on RQ9 for more detail. A revised criteria of twelve months was therefore used in this analysis.

Across most criteria, there was a high degree of consistency between the delivery model described in the shared practice model and what was delivered in the patches. Both the frequency and consistency of delivery saw agreement in more than 90% of the patches identified. The number of hours delivered per week matched the least to the practice model – 66% of patches involved delivery for four hours or more per week.

Overall, most patches – 86% – met four or more of the five criteria, demonstrating that the shared practice model describes existing detached youth work delivery mostly accurately.

**Table 6. Shared practice model scoring summary**

|                                       |    |     |
|---------------------------------------|----|-----|
| <b>Patches meeting five criteria</b>  | 19 | 37% |
| <b>Patches meeting four criteria</b>  | 25 | 49% |
| <b>Patches meeting three criteria</b> | 6  | 12% |
| <b>Patches meeting two criteria</b>   | 0  | 0%  |
| <b>Patches meeting one criterion</b>  | 1  | 2%  |

#### Detached youth work delivery

We sought to understand the essence of the work that had taken place in the patches described.

**Type of area:** We asked youth agencies to describe the type of area represented by each patch. The resulted in a range of responses, from a street corner or basketball court to whole parks or residential estates or even larger areas that encompass a town centre including high street and a bus station. This variety in the geographical scope was reflected in the geographical size of patches, as reported in the findings section for Component 2, and demonstrates the need for careful consideration of how a ‘patch’ should be defined within the co-design phase of the pilot trial.

**Activities undertaken in detached youth work:** We asked youth agencies to identify which activities had taken place in each of the patches during the defined period. We offered a list of activities that had been used in the survey in the feasibility study (based on initial consultation with youth agencies) and asked agencies to indicate, for each patch, which activities had taken place in each patch. Agencies did so in ways that were not consistent, and quantification would be unreliable, but across the board, youth agencies reported that all or most of the listed activities had taken place in each patch. These activities were:

- Getting to know young people, befriending, relationship building
- Doing sport, cultural or other street-based activities
- Providing information, advice or guidance
- Providing mentoring or being a role model
- Engaging with young people's peers

- Engaging with young people's families
- Engaging with the community
- Simply being a presence on the street
- Engaging young people with other services your organisation provides
- Signposting to services that other organisations provide
- Intervening to defuse conflict or responding to potential/actual violence
- Facilitating youth-led projects

Respondents noted a range of additional and specific activities: building new youth-led projects and providing education based on young people's requests (such as cooking classes, budgeting, drugs and alcohol awareness and grooming), working from a vehicle, arranging work experience or providing help for finding employment, supporting young people to engage with young leaders panels and local events, facilitating youth-led trips, mediating relationships between young people and the police, and providing referrals to children's services.

These responses demonstrate again the wide range of activities that are delivered as part of detached youth work and emphasises the flexible, relational and youth-led nature of the work. The pilot trial will include robust monitoring and implementation process evaluation activities to ensure that this variance is fully described.

**Outcomes in focus in detached youth work:** We asked youth agencies to identify which outcomes the work in each patch has addressed, again using categories established as part of the prior feasibility work. Again, most participants included most categories across the patches, and it was not possible to quantify responses. The range of outcomes selected emphasises the wide-ranging impacts of detached youth work on young people's lives discussed in the feasibility study. These potential outcomes range from mental health and relationship building, to engagement in their communities and with education, employment and training, to reduced risk of gang exploitation and involvement in youth violence, and depend on the young people and their needs.

Some organisations emphasised particular areas of their work as important, namely child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, and antisocial behaviour.

Participants in the consultation had concerns that an evaluation should be designed to capture this range of outcomes, and should not be restricted in its ability to show impact by focusing only on police crime data. See the section on RQ9 for more detail.

**Costs of delivery:** We asked youth agencies to provide cost data to get an early indication of the possible costs of delivery. We asked agencies to provide this per patch across four categories: Set up of the project, Project management, oversight and supervision, Direct delivery, Other (e.g. volunteer payments, travel expenses)

Due to the historic nature of the delivery we were referring to and changes in staff in many delivery organisations in the intervening years, three of the nine organisations who completed the form were not

provide cost data and one organisation provided just an overall estimate for each patch. The figures provided below should therefore be interpreted as indicative only.

Set up of the project: This cost was thought to vary depending on the level of reconnaissance required. Data were provided for 26 patches. The estimates provided range from under £1,000 per year to £2,500 per year per patch. These costs are likely to be reduced where the same team works across multiple patches, for example, as fewer phones and identifiable clothing would be required. The average (mean) set up cost per patch was estimated at £1,498 per year.

Project management, oversight and supervision: These costs varied significantly, with estimates between £750 and £15,000 per patch per year. Data were provided for 30 patches. No pattern in the variation could be identified based on the information provided, but this disparity may be due to different organisations recording costs differently from the categories we requested. On average (mean), project management costs were estimated at £3,790 per year.

Direct delivery: These data were provided for 32 delivery patches. The estimated costs of delivery per patch ranged between £3,430 and £40,000 per year with a mean of £16,247. This variation in delivery costs cited is likely to be due to different approaches to calculating costs, as well as reflecting differences in use of volunteer youth workers across organisations and differences in the intensity of provision, i.e. the number of hours and sessions being delivered per week and how many youth workers are involved.

Other costs: These data were provided for 32 delivery patches and ranged between £500 to £4,000 per year.

Total costs: The range of delivery costs reported were between £6,680 and £59,500, with a mean of £21,220 per patch per year.

### **RQ2b: Which data set/s should be used in a pilot trial?**

As part of this scoping study, we have reviewed a range of different options for sourcing geocoded police administrative data on recorded crime and incidents of anti-social behaviour. If a potential future pilot evaluation (and indeed full evaluation) is to use police data as the basis for key outcome measures, then it is vital that the respective strengths and weaknesses of different sources of police data are documented and acknowledged.

Although all sources of police crime and antisocial behaviour data essentially relate to the same events that happen 'on the ground', the processes through which these police data are recorded, managed and (potentially) made available for analytical use can vary quite substantially. This can lead to notable differences in the resultant data resources, which can have implications for their use for evaluation purposes.

Here we briefly itemise five potential options for sourcing police data that might be available to inform a future pilot evaluation. The five sources were identified by David McLennan based on his prior experience of negotiating access to datasets with police forces across the country as well as exploring how publicly available datasets could be utilised for the purposes of this study. These five sources are listed in descending order of preference, with option 1 being the most optimal solution (although highly dependent upon local police force support), through to option 4 which would be the fall-back position should all other options fail to prove feasible.

## **1. Negotiate bespoke police force extracts of geocoded data**

The optimal solution would be to negotiate bespoke extracts of geocoded data from the police forces covering the selected detached youth work patches. This approach would have the advantage of being designed specifically for the purpose of evaluating the detached youth work patches, such as: ensuring the constituent variable list allows us to identify the specific crime type(s) of interest (out of a list of c. 130 separate notifiable offence types); allowing us to identify the specific dates and times of the crime or incident occurrence, so that this can be related to detached youth work activity in the intervention areas; maximising accuracy in the geographical location assigned to each crime and incident (drawing upon actual eastings and northings or, if these are not recorded for some reason, the full postcode); ensuring the data is the most up-to-date possible (reflecting, for instance, changes and reclassifications of crimes and incidents in the days, weeks and sometimes months following the initial report); allowing the research team to query any unusual data features with the local police force experts; and potentially opening up the opportunity to include relevant 'flags' or 'markers' (i.e. 'qualifiers') in the dataset that might help to identify crimes or incidents that are youth-related and/or have youth involvement. We understand that some (likely many, possibly all) police forces do attach a qualifier to indicate an incident is 'youth related', although there is no statutory guidance on how this qualifier should be applied, hence there is likely to be variation in coding approach between different police forces. Nevertheless, option 1, as set out here, would provide opportunity to work closely with police data analysts to understand how the qualifiers are applied in the respective police forces, and how best they could be used within a pilot evaluation outcome assessment. Data provided through this approach would be available for the researchers in the pilot evaluation to analyse flexibly as required.

There are numerous precedents for this type of approach at local level (e.g. where researchers work closely with police analysts for a particular project in a particular police force; see Brennan et al, 2024), but there is also a precedent for national level coverage of this type of approach (covering all 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales; McLennan, 2022). The recommended approach to pursuing this option would be to first identify the target police forces that contain the pilot detached youth work patches, and then reach out to the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) to request NPCC support for the pilot evaluation. Should this support be forthcoming, then targeted requests can then be directed to the requisite police forces (initially at Chief Constable level) to seek local level support of police analysts and data sharing.

The existence of precedents should not be interpreted as a guarantee that this approach would be achievable for a detached youth work pilot study. The major risks of this option are that NPCC will not feel able to support the request, or that any of the selected police forces declines to support the request. An important constraint of this approach is that the sensitivity of the data would require all storage and processing to be undertaken within a secure data environment, which may require one of the local police forces agreeing to physically host the researcher(s) for the duration of the work. Again, there is precedent for this type of working arrangement with police forces, but again there is no guarantee that the same arrangements would be approved for the detached youth work pilot, so this is also a risk that should be acknowledged.

## **2. Request bespoke pre-aggregated statistics from selected police forces**

This second option has many of the advantages of option 1, in that it is based on collaborative workings with local data experts in the selected police forces, meaning that the integrity of the source data can hopefully

be maximised. The difference is that, in option 2, the police analysts aggregate the data from geocoded record-level to detached youth work patch-level to generate detached youth work patch-level crime statistics. The major limitation of option 2 is the lack of flexibility available to the pilot evaluation research team upon taking receipt of the data, as it will not be possible to re-interrogate the source geocoded data.

The likelihood of detached youth work patches containing relatively low numbers of crimes and antisocial behaviour incidents for any particular temporal period (especially if short temporal periods are used to better track the relationship between intervention and outcome) might mean that these pre-aggregated police statistics might still be deemed to be disclosive, and therefore might still need to be stored and processed in a secure data environment (as per option 1 above).

Furthermore, option 2 also has the added risk of increasing the resource burden placed on police analysts, as they will be asked to perform the aggregation and subsequent quality assurance, whereas for option 1 the police analyst is simply asked to produce a download of record-level data and provide that, without any subsequent police processing. We recommend that option 2 is only pursued if option 1 is rejected due to data sharing concerns regarding the record-level data.

### **3. Negotiate access to the geocoded recorded crime data (excludes antisocial behaviour) held on the Home Office Data Hub (HODH)**

The HODH is the Home Office's centralised national repository of recorded crime data, supplied by the police forces at record level and collated into a relational database. The HODH is the basis for the published recorded crime statistics at Police Force Area (PFA) and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) levels.

An advantage of using the HODH would be that a single data request could, in theory, be submitted to cover all police forces that contain a pilot evaluation detached youth work patch. However, it is important to note that not all police forces currently submit data to the HODH, and there are periods when some forces temporarily suspend data uploads to the HODH for locally specific reasons (often related to IT systems change in the force in question).

The HODH contains an expansive suite of variables concerning the crimes recorded. Like in option 1 (and maybe option 2), it would, for instance, be possible to track crime occurrence in detached youth work patches by day of the week and time of the day, should this be deemed important for measuring outcomes of detached youth work intervention. It would also be possible to focus on specific crime types, as each record is assigned to one of the c. 130 different notifiable offence codes. Furthermore, it might be possible to extract information that would indicate whether the crime had an element of youth involvement, although this cannot be guaranteed without data exploration and liaison with the HODH team. The HODH also has the strength that it is retrospectively updated by police forces should changes need to be made, such as updates due to events subsequently being 'no crimed'. The HODH is, therefore, like option 1, a 'live' data source.

Although there is a recent precedent for the HODH being approved for use for third party analysis (McLennan et al, in press), there is no guarantee that such approval would be forthcoming for a detached youth work pilot evaluation. This, therefore, must be acknowledged as a risk associated with option 3. Furthermore, as is the case with option 1 (and possibly option 2), the sensitivity of the geocoded microdata contained within the HODH would mean that the storage and processing would have to be undertaken



within a secure data environment. If this involves being hosted physically by a police force, this is also a risk associated with option 3 as there is no guarantee that a suitable host could be found.

The other major limitation of the HODH is that it does not contain any information on anti-social behaviour. We understand the Home Office is currently embarking on an internal study to enhance the collation of anti-social behaviour data, but we are unsure what the outcome of that work will be or when it will be completed. As such, if option 3 is pursued for recorded crime data, then an alternative option must be pursued for anti-social behaviour data.

#### **4. Negotiate access to the 'raw' (non-anonymised) geocoded recorded crime and anti-social behaviour data that police forces submit monthly for the purpose of Police.uk**

Police.uk is, like the HODH, a national repository of geocoded police data. However, the two repositories serve different purposes. Whereas a primary motivation for the HODH is the derivation of the official PFA and CSP level recorded crime statistics, the primary motivation the Police.uk repository is the sharing of anonymised crime and antisocial behaviour data into the public domain. Option 5, below, discusses the publicly available Police.uk data that has been subjected to anonymisation prior to release to the public. For option 4, the approach would be to utilise the *raw* police crime and antisocial behaviour data *prior to* any anonymisation.

Each month police analysts upload datasets of recorded crime and antisocial behaviour to a secure server for the purpose of Police.uk. The data uploaded should cover all crimes and incidents of antisocial behaviour so, in theory, the volumes (of crime) should match the volumes in the HODH. However, for various reasons, there are often mismatches between the data held by HODH and the data held by Police.uk. One of the main factors is that Police.uk is typically *not* updated retrospectively by the police forces, and so any changes to crime classifications (or 'no criming') will not be reflected on the Police.uk repository, whereas it should be reflected in the HODH. Overall, the data submitted to Police.uk are likely to be less reliable than the data submitted to the HODH, due to the different purposes behind the two repositories.

The data submitted by police forces for the purpose of Police.uk do contain locational grid references and/or postcodes. The data also contain information on the date the crime/incident was recorded. Most forces also include information on the detailed crime type (although in varying degrees of conformity to the HO standard), but some forces only provide a broad description of crime type (as noted below, the publicly available Police.uk data are coded into 13 types of crime, plus anti-social behaviour, and some police forces only upload this coarse level of crime coding in their Police.uk uploads, which limits the flexibility of analytical application). It is uncertain whether the data would allow analysis by time of day, although this would be explored should option 4 be pursued. The data submitted to Police.uk do not contain any 'flags' or 'markers' that might be used to ascertain whether there was any youth involvement, so this could not be explored in the pilot analysis.

As is the case for options 1, 2 and 3 above, the sensitivity of the raw geocoded data would require data processing agreements to be put in place, and the data storage and analysis would have to take place in a secure data environment.

Whilst there is a precedent for this approach (McLennan et al. 2019), there is no guarantee that this would be approved for the detached youth work pilot trial, and therefore this is a risk for option 4.

## **5. Use the publicly available (anonymised) Police.uk data on recorded crime and anti-social behaviour**

The publicly available Police.uk data are available to all users, but it is likely to be the least reliable of all the datasets discussed here. Prior to publication, the data are anonymised. This means this option does not require negotiating any data sharing arrangements, and the data do not need to be stored or analysed in a secure data environment.

The anonymisation is applied through three primary ways: (i) only providing generalised information on the type of crime; (ii) only providing generalised information on the month in which the crime was recorded; and (iii) only providing generalised geographical information, via the use of geographic ‘snap-points’ rather than actual grid reference/postcode of occurrence.

With regards to the first of these points, the publicly available data are coded into thirteen broad categories of recorded crime, plus incidents of anti-social behaviour. The thirteen categories of recorded crime are: Violence and sexual offences; Robbery; Burglary; Vehicle crime; Theft from the person; Bicycle theft; Shoplifting; Other theft; Criminal damage and arson; Drug trafficking and possession; Possession of weapons; Public order; and Other crime. Whilst these fourteen categories of crime and anti-social behaviour will be sufficient for many external users, this represents a constraint on what might need to be analysed for the purpose of a pilot evaluation of detached youth work. Furthermore, there are no offence flags/markers/qualifiers contained within the publicly available data, and so it would not be possible to explore ‘youth-related’ crimes or incidents of anti-social behaviour.

With regards to the second point, the publicly available data do not provide any information on the date or time of occurrence, which may limit analytical opportunities for temporal analysis. However, the data do contain information on the month the crime or incident was recorded, which is likely, in most cases, to correspond closely with the month in which the crime or incident occurred.

With regards to the third point, the use of ‘snap-point anonymisation’ means that the geographical coordinates provided in the publicly available data will not accord with the actual location of occurrence, but rather will give a generalised indication of the area in which the crime or incident was recorded as occurring. Whilst this issue is unlikely to be problematic for large geographical areas, such as local authorities etc, attempts to map the publicly available data to small geographical areas (as is the case for many of the detached youth work patches) raises the risk of systematically over- or under-counting the true level of crimes/incidents in the geographical area, simply due to the spatial configuration of the ‘snap point’ locations used for the anonymisation.

### **Summary of police dataset options**

Overall, option 5, of using the publicly available Police.uk data, should only be adopted if none of options 1 through 4 are feasible. If option 5 is pursued, then careful consideration will need to be given to the spatial configuration of the snap-point locations in relation to the digitised boundaries of the detached youth work patches. The lack of flags for youth involvement is a severe limitation. A summary of the five options is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Summary of available police datasets**

| Option                                                     | Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 – bespoke police force extract of geocoded data</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies specific crime/incident types (130 offence codes)</li> <li>• Identifies dates and times of incidents</li> <li>• Good location accuracy</li> <li>• Most up-to-date data</li> <li>• Ability to query data</li> <li>• Ability to include ‘flags’ indicating youth involvement</li> <li>• Includes anti-social behaviour</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires negotiation with each police force</li> <li>• Some forces may not comply</li> <li>• Storage and analysis would need to take place in on-site secure locations</li> </ul>                                                                                                                    |
| <b>2 – bespoke pre-aggregated police force data</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies specific crime/incident types (130 offence codes)</li> <li>• Identifies dates and times of incidents</li> <li>• Most up-to-date data</li> <li>• Ability to query data</li> <li>• Ability to include ‘flags’ indicating youth involvement</li> <li>• Includes anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires negotiation with each police force</li> <li>• Increased burden on police forces means some forces may not comply</li> <li>• Storage and analysis would need to take place in on-site secure locations</li> <li>• Lack of flexibility in analysis of incidents regarding location</li> </ul> |
| <b>3 – access Home Office Data Hub geocoded data</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a single data request for all areas</li> <li>• Identifies specific crime/incident types (130 offence codes)</li> <li>• Identifies dates and times of incidents</li> <li>• Up-to-date data (retrospectively updated)</li> <li>• Potential to include ‘flags’ indicating youth involvement but not guaranteed</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storage and analysis would need to take place in on-site secure locations, hosted by a police force</li> <li>• May not be approved for a pilot evaluation</li> <li>• Does not include anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>                                                                               |
| <b>4 – access raw geocoded data submitted to Police.uk</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a single data request for all areas</li> <li>• Identifies broad crime/incident types (13 codes)</li> <li>• Identifies dates of incidents</li> <li>• Includes anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not retrospectively updated</li> <li>• Less specific in terms of crime type and time of incident</li> <li>• No ‘flags’ indicating youth involvement</li> <li>• May not be approved for a pilot evaluation</li> </ul>                                                                                 |

| Option                                | Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                              | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 – publicly available Police.uk data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a single data request for all areas</li> <li>• Identifies broad crime/incident types (13 codes)</li> <li>• Includes anti-social behaviour</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less specific in terms of the date of incidents</li> <li>• Less specific in terms of location of incidents</li> <li>• No 'flags' indicating youth involvement</li> </ul> |

### Component 3: Further consultation

Throughout the consultation with youth agencies, they revoiced issues that had been raised during the prior feasibility study work, and provided more depth to their concerns. We found that the process of grounding the discussions in *actual* rather than *theoretical* plans brought out more significant push-back founded in on-the-ground delivery practicalities than in the previous phase of exploration.

It is important to note that the sample of youth agencies who participated in this scoping are likely to represent a more positive view of evaluation – we intentionally selected larger organisations who had previously been very engaged in the feasibility work. This group being more inclined to take part in a study of this kind adds weight to the challenges outlined throughout this section.

#### **RQ3: Which agencies would need to be represented in regional consortia and which organisations should lead them, in a pilot trial?**

Based on the consultation interviews, the agencies that would need to be included in a regional consortium in a pilot trial are:

- the local authority/ies, representing management and delivery of youth services (including any detached youth work delivery), youth offending teams and community safety teams
- the local police force/s
- voluntary sector detached and outreach youth work providers
- voluntary sector centre-based youth work providers
- Violence Reduction Units/Partnerships
- Community Safety Partnerships
- any umbrella organisations for local youth services (such as the North East Youth Alliance or Essex Council Voluntary Youth Services).

Other roles and teams mentioned in interviews that were seen to have an interest in local youth work are housing teams or resident development officers, schools, education leads, Integrated Care Boards, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and other community organisations such as faith groups. The implication is that these organisations would need to be informed about the local area's involvement in a pilot trial and may be consulted throughout delivery, but would not necessarily need to be members of a consortium.

In many areas partnerships are already established that involve the key partners listed, and come together to decide where detached youth work is most needed, based on crime statistics, community reports and observations by relevant youth work professionals and the police. This was particularly the case where there is a local authority youth service with a detached youth work offer. However, in other areas there were weaker relationships between the local authority and detached youth work, and no recent history of the local authority funding or supporting detached youth work. There was some uncertainty here whether local authorities could be engaged for a pilot trial, although YEF's involvement was seen as a potential catalyst for provoking interest.

In larger geographic areas, urban areas and those with more local authority interest and mature detached youth work services, there were generally more organisations that would need to be involved. For example, in Essex there is an established and well-connected detached youth work provision, and the dispersed nature of the towns means that to cover enough geographical area to identify ten new patches, several councils and delivery organisations would need to be involved.

There were different views among those we consulted about which agency would be the most appropriate lead organisation for a regional consortium. The conclusion was that it should be those with strongest relationships with other partners, which might be local authority youth services, larger and more established detached youth work delivery organisations, youth service infrastructure organisations, or Violence Reduction Units/Partnerships. Such organisations do not exist in all regions of England which may lead to challenges in attracting appropriate partnerships to apply to take part.

#### **RQ4: What criteria should be used in the selection of regional consortia?**

Interviewees had fairly consistent views of what characteristics a successful consortium would demonstrate. The recurrent criteria discussed were:

- a demonstrated ability and capacity to deliver high-quality detached youth work that is in line with or consistent with the shared practice model
- existing strong multiagency partnerships or relationships
- sufficient influence to determine where detached youth work does and does not take place
- established knowledge of the local area
- able to demonstrate credible need in specific locations
- delivery organisations are sufficiently large and stable that the project would not destabilise or distort their provision.

There was a consistent view that the delivery organisations involved should have significant experience in delivering detached work that is similar to the shared practice model. While teams are likely to need to expand to meet the additional delivery requirements of the intervention into five new patches, these should be closely linked with an existing core team with the relevant skills and experience as well as the required infrastructure. For this reason, there was some hesitation regarding delivery in new areas, as it is likely to require new staff with the relevant lived and professional experience to meet the local needs of each area. The qualifications of youth workers were very important to interviewees – several spoke about the importance of at least one youth worker per session having the Level 2 certificate in youth work. This reinforces the findings of the feasibility study which informed this element of the shared practice model:

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

Regional consortia should be already well-established in an area and have existing strong relationships or formal partnerships, rather than seeking to establish these for the purposes of the trial. As noted above, these relationships were already present in the majority of areas explored through the interviews. Related

to this, they should have deep local knowledge of the area and be able to demonstrate how their area could benefit from additional detached youth work funding.

Furthermore, delivery agencies should be demonstrably stable enough that the scale of the work required for the trial would not destabilise their organisation or distort their offer.

The ability of a consortium to influence where and how detached youth work happens is the most challenging criterion to meet. This is a major barrier to successfully identifying sufficient numbers of regional consortia to operate at the scale required for an efficacy trial, although we are more optimistic that three consortia could be identified for a pilot trial.

This was thought to be challenging for two reasons. The first is getting the full commitment from all partners not to use detached youth work in control areas. Local authorities and police forces were thought to be particularly likely to want to override trial commitments if they felt the need was there. The second reason is that consortia would have minimal influence over the work of other actors not involved in the partnership. For example, if a new or existing organisation sets up a detached or outreach project in a control area to address emerging concerns. These topics are explored in more depth in the findings for RQ7.

Clearly consortia will need to be willing to be part of an RCT, to understand the rationale for the RCT design and to commit to using all possible endeavours to ensure that detached youth work does not take place in control areas. Experience of delivery as part of an evaluation with control groups or other rigorous evaluation will also be helpful.

Though several consortia with the attributes described here are thought to exist (for example, enough for a pilot trial), there remain challenges to making a trial of this kind attractive to potential partnerships, particularly given the anticipated scale of an efficacy trial. These challenges are discussed throughout the following sections.

#### **RQ5: Is it likely to be feasible for regional consortia to secure matched funding for delivery in the pilot trial?**

Based on the consultation interviews, there is considerable doubt about the feasibility of securing matched funding, although it may be possible for some consortia. The level of matched funding proposed by YEF was seen as significant – in some cases equalling or exceeding organisations' annual detached youth work budget. Securing matched funding would also have implications for the ability to determine where detached work does and does not take place.

Interviewees in some areas had previous experience with acquiring matched funding or could offer existing youth work budgets. The most likely sources of matched funding were seen as local authorities and violence reduction units/partnerships, with careful negotiation. Interviewees felt that the credibility and influence of the YEF would facilitate this. Matched funding opportunities will also depend on how the project timeline aligns with existing funding periods and new funding rounds. These cycles dictate how projects are funded and whether this work would be additional or part of their existing funded work.

Other organisations did not see it as feasible to secure matched funding and said it was unlikely they could take part in a pilot trial if this was a requirement, although there were proactive suggestions for in-kind contributions such as the training and supervision of volunteers, use of existing facilities and resources, use of established systems and infrastructure, and support from their core team.

It is also important to note that matched funding is likely to have consequences for the work that takes place within control areas. It was anticipated that if a local authority or other organisation provided matched funding, they would expect to have a say over what was delivered and where it was delivered. For example, if arising need was identified in a control area or a significant incident occurred, a funder might expect to be able to direct delivery capacity there, overriding the trial requirements. It was also anticipated they might expect the delivery format or model to align with existing projects and delivery practices rather than committing to the shared practice model. These issues would have consequences for fidelity to the shared practice model and consistency of delivery, as well as potential contamination in control areas.

Overall, our conclusion is that requiring matched funding would likely reduce the number of potential regional consortia for the pilot trial and would also put further pressure on the trial design.

#### **RQ6: What criteria should be used in the selection of patches?**

Typically, the decisions regarding where detached youth work should take place use police and community safety data to look at patterns of youth crime and anti-social behaviour combined with youth worker knowledge of the community. When selecting potential patches, the consultation interviews emphasise that the criteria for the selection of patches for a pilot trial should be:

- a demonstrable level of need
- a sufficient *reachable* population (i.e. young people who are actively present)
- a clearly defined geographical area that is small enough to facilitate meaningful ongoing contact with young people.

A question raised by the consultation interviews was whether patches should be large enough to enable consistent work with young people as they move locations throughout the seasons (e.g. between a park in summer and a fast-food restaurant in the winter). For example, there could be a 'core' area with pre-defined buffer zone into which they could move if necessary.

Levels and patterns of youth violence and antisocial behaviour, as understood through police or community safety data, were described as central to decision making for where detached youth work is focused. Decision makers consider areas where there are high or rising incidents of youth violence or antisocial behaviour and explore whether and how a detached youth work project could support those young people. This presents a challenge for evaluation – if incidents are anticipated to rise but instead stay constant after the introduction of an intervention, no statistical effect will be found. This emphasises the importance of randomisation, promoting minimal contamination in control areas, and the consistency of decision making by regional consortia.

Local context was deemed essential to guiding these decisions. Interviewees noted that there is often a disconnect between police statistics, community perceptions of young people, and the experiences of young people themselves. For example, several interviewees described situations where there had been community reports of young people's anti-social behaviour, but on exploration the issue was simply young people congregating. Certainly, a demonstrable level of need should be present in the areas to ensure that the detached youth work has the potential to help the young people who could most benefit, but this cannot



be established through data alone. The QED analysis lends support to this point, with the highest effect sizes being seen for smaller patches that start with fairly high levels of police incident rates.

As in the feasibility study, some further challenges to the idea of intervention and control patches were raised. First, the mobility of young people was considered a significant challenge to the design, particularly in urban areas where there are well connected public transport routes. Consulted interviewees described how young people's preferred locations change depending on social dynamics, age, and the season. There were concerns that having defined geographical patches would limit their ability to deliver continuous work if a group of young people changed their preferred locations even by a few streets, since typically, the youth workers would follow them to continue the engagement.

The proposal that trial patches should have had no detached youth work for the previous two years was seen as potentially challenging on two grounds. First, there was some doubt whether there are large numbers of areas where there is a high and evidenced need for detached youth work but where it has not been recently delivered. This is somewhat at odds with the feasibility study (Hall et al., 2024), which had suggested that detached youth work is under-funded and absent from areas that would benefit from it but may reflect the prevalence of shorter-term engagement which moves frequently and thus may be present in more geographic areas. Carefully defining what is considered previous delivery will therefore be important in the consortium recruitment materials. It may also be that the organisations involved in the scoping interviews had somewhat limited knowledge of need in areas outside their current operation. The second challenge was that a two-year gap was longer than necessary and that the emergence of a new group or issue in an area might mean a year's break would be sufficient to start meaningful work with a new cohort.

Certainly, it is clear that some intensive reconnaissance work would be required to identify suitable patches prior to randomisation, with further reconnaissance and scoping work undertaken in intervention group patches.

Overall, the scoping study suggests it is likely to be challenging for some potential regional consortia to identify as many as 10 patches (as per the proposed trial design) and it may be necessary to recruit additional consortia to the pilot trial to allow for this. This would also allow for consortia falling away during the co-design or trial process if the trial requirements prove impossible for them (see further RQ7). The consultation also highlights that it would be extremely challenging to recruit the number of regional consortia, and identify the number of patches, required for a larger scale impact trial.

**RQ7: Can we be confident that detached youth work will not be delivered in control areas? How would non-intervention delivery be monitored and how would this risk be minimised or accounted for in analysis in a pilot trial?**

The question of control areas stood out as the most challenging element of the trial design across interviews. The requirement that consortia commit to not using detached youth work in control areas is likely to significantly reduce the number of consortia applications and would make it very challenging to operate at the scale required for an efficacy trial. In addition, confidence among consultation interviewees that control areas could be kept 'clear' of detached youth work was low. They expressed ethical, reputational and practical concerns, as in the feasibility study.

In the feasibility study, we highlighted that preventing and monitoring contamination and non-compliance would be two key challenges to this evaluation and that flexibility would be needed (see page 54 of the [feasibility report](#)). The consultation work has reinforced this.

Although there was a strong desire for more robust evidence for the effectiveness of detached youth work and its effectiveness, it was the view of several interviewees that their organisation would not be able to commit to keeping control areas free of detached youth work and would find it very challenging to convince the relevant local organisations to take part on this basis. Consulted interviewees were concerned about committing to withholding detached youth work services in areas with identified arising need. Some felt this was at odds with the principles at the core of detached youth work, which underscore the importance of responding to local needs through collaboration with the community and taking a strengths-based approach, rather than imposing pre-defined approaches and assumptions on participants.

Consultation interviewees also anticipated that consortium partners – particularly local authorities and police forces – would be averse to committing to control areas. Existing decision-making partnerships were described as having established processes for determining where detached youth work takes place, and there were concerns that interfering in these processes might have negative consequences for interagency relationships, particularly in areas where there are high levels of youth violence.

These concerns about control areas remained even when we emphasised that any other additional interventions apart from detached youth work could be used in the control areas. In the interviews we also explored the notion that a trial would enable youth agencies to *expand* their delivery of detached youth work to additional areas, rather than framing it as *withholding* work from areas. However, this framing did not particularly alter perspectives, as the concerns appeared to revolve around the exclusion of areas from any potential work within the trial period.

The risk of contamination could be minimised through clear, consistent and repeated communication about the rationale for control areas and the importance of keeping them free of detached youth work throughout the trial period. Many of the individuals who participated in the consultation are very driven to improve the evidence base for detached youth work. It would also be important to repeatedly emphasise that any other interventions would be in scope. It would be essential to get key national bodies (such as the National Police Chief's Council and the Association of Directors of Children's Services) on board. The involvement of high-profile organisations (e.g. YEF or the Home Office) in communication would assist in securing commitment. Regular meetings between the evaluation team and regional consortia will be important.

Concerns were also expressed by some interviewees about possible displacement of youth crime. Some felt that the presence of youth workers could lead the young people who are least inclined to engage with youth workers, or most distrustful of services, to move away from intervention areas, although other interviewees said they would not expect this. It would be important that intervention and control patches are not contiguous and are separate from known or anticipated group movements, and that there is some monitoring of crime levels in areas around intervention patches. Reviews of place-based approaches to addressing youth violence (Baidawi et al., 2023), focused deterrence (Braga et al., 2019a) and hot spot policing (Braga et al., 2019b, Gaffrey et al., 2022) find little evidence of displacement or diffusion, with the evidence tending to favour diffusion.

Some interviewees also identified the possibility that the presence of a detached youth work project could itself lead to more disclosure or reporting of crime, through relationships with trusted youth

workers. A detached youth work project might also lead to more young people congregating in an area which might lead to reports of crime or anti-social behaviour or attract others engaged in crime or exploitation such as drug dealers. However, interviewees distinguished these localised, temporally defined shifts in behaviour and reporting patterns from the longer-term positive changes that detached youth work can achieve.

In terms of monitoring of business-as-usual in intervention and control areas, and any use of detached youth work in control areas, this will be facilitated by ensuring that the selected consortia are well-functioning partnerships which come together regularly, where partners are sighted on each other's work as well as on the work of other local services and organisations. Each consortium will need to identify a project lead whose role it is to regularly contact relevant organisations to understand local provision. Monitoring will need to involve frequent (e.g. monthly) liaison and information gathering, led by this lead organisation within the consortium. The consulted youth agencies appear to have well established partnership arrangements, the effectiveness of which would be explored in the pilot.

The predominant view was that *some* detached youth work-like provision would inevitably be delivered within the prescribed period. How similar that is to the shared practice model would then need to be assessed – for example, short-term crisis response work, violence interruption, or outreach for centre-based activities.

In terms of how contamination would be accounted in analysis in a pilot trial, the objective of the pilot trial would be to test to robustness of approaches to minimising and monitoring contamination as well as predicting the likely level of contamination in a larger trial. The pilot trial would not be large enough to allow analysis of impacts and it would not be feasible to account for contamination in analysis.

#### **RQ8: What would business-as-usual look like in control areas?**

Business-as-usual would involve services delivered by a wide range of partners, particularly those represented in regional consortia. Consultation interviewees were not always fully sighted on this work but based on the interviewees and additional desk research reviewing evaluations of detached youth work, focused deterrence and hot-spot policing we would expect business-as-usual to involve:

- Other youth work, including centre-based activity and short-term street-based youth work: it will be important to define what is 'short-term' in the co-design work
- Usual and additional targeted police activity, including one-off or short-term youth engagement and outreach activity, hot spot policing, routine patrols, stop and search, rapid response, drug enforcement operations, ad hoc investigations, police interventions with individual suspected offenders including arrests, out of court disposal and criminal proceedings, and focused deterrence – the latter includes some support elements which come close to detached youth work and would ideally be avoided in control areas
- Projects initiated or funded by violence reduction units/partnerships such as mentoring, hospital-based interventions and education programmes

- School-based interventions as a response to crime or anti-social behaviour near schools or involving school students, including both group and individual interventions such as after school clubs, mentoring, restorative initiatives and in-school engagement by other agencies
- Multi-agency planning and information sharing.

**RQ9: Are any modifications or additions recommended to the overall pilot trial study process, timelines, and plan proposed by YEF?**

The sector consultation interviews reinforced several concerns that had been explored in the feasibility study and informed the proposed trial design. These suggestions predominantly came from the perspective of youth workers wishing to ensure that the flexible, youth-led nature of detached youth work is maintained and ensuring that delivery funds are well used.

*Trial design and timeline*

As in the feasibility study, consulted interviewees emphasised the importance of capturing outcomes that reflect the wide range of potential impacts of detached youth work on young people's lives. As discussed in the previous report, reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour are common outcomes of the work, but they are not the focus. Youth agencies were concerned that trial that focuses on crime and anti-social behaviour data would be limited in its ability to demonstrate the impact of detached youth work and, at worst, could present risks to the future funding and commissioning of detached youth work. To ensure the trial attracts sufficient numbers of consortia, they will need to feel confident that the trial will not take a narrow view on what makes detached youth work effective. This emphasises the importance of a rigorous implementation and process evaluation in the pilot trial, as we have proposed, that captures the perspectives of young people and youth workers.

Regarding the timeline, consulted participants reinforced that it will be important to ensure that there is sufficient time given to the recruitment and training of youth workers – time which is already built into the proposed trial design. While we will expect consortia to have the required experience and skills to deliver high-quality detached youth work within their core team, the scale of delivery is likely to necessitate expansion of their delivery teams. Some interviewees anticipated that this would require training due to limited availability of experienced youth workers in their local area – discussed further in RQ10.

*Modifications to the shared practice model*

Some suggestions were made regarding the required consistency and duration of delivery to ensure the best use of delivery funds. One suggestion was that there should be permitted variations in delivery consistency to be responsive to young people's changing habits in different seasons. For example, young people may not be present in a park during the winter months and the youth worker hours could be spent on longer sessions in warmer weather. The parameters of this variance would be determined in the co-design phase, to ensure that consistency – believed to be core to the effectiveness of relational youth work – is maintained to a sufficient level to have impact.

In a similar vein, several participants felt that the duration of delivery – prescribed as 18 months in the shared practice model, the first six of which are focussed on reconnaissance – should be flexible in case no young people are engaged within a specified patch or a project organically comes to a close earlier than

envisaged. Many shared that their work does not typically extend beyond 12 months. For this reason, the duration of delivery should be amended to 12 months. This could be addressed by introducing minimum requirements to be considered delivery is intended.

**RQ10: Are there any further risks not identified in the feasibility study report, and how should they be addressed?**

The risks (and mitigations) identified in the feasibility study were:

**Table 8. Feasibility study table of risks and mitigations**

| Risk                                                                                                                                    | Likelihood/Impact | Mitigation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Low engagement by detached youth work agencies and local consortia at the recruitment stage due to concerns about the evaluation</b> | Low/high          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of engagement in the feasibility study suggests sufficient interest, though not all agencies may choose to participate.</li> <li>• The evaluation team has excellent networks for the recruitment of agencies; other existing networks will also be used.</li> <li>• The co-design stage will support retention.</li> </ul> <p>Mitigations anticipated to be effective but would not completely eliminate this risk.</p> |
| <b>Outcome measurement: detached youth work agencies and local consortia are resistant</b>                                              | Medium/medium     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The invitation to form consortia will make the terms of engagement clear.</li> <li>• The co-design will ensure that all organisations have a voice within the terms of engagement; particularly regarding the outcome measures.</li> </ul> <p>This remains a risk which will require ongoing open conversation to reassure consortia of the value of their participation.</p>                                                      |
| <b>Insufficient patches identified by participating consortia</b>                                                                       | Medium/high       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More consortia are invited to take part. This mitigation is likely to be effective to ensure sufficient delivery patches for a pilot study.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| Risk                                                                    | Likelihood/Impact | Mitigation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Contamination: detached youth work delivered in control patches</b>  | Medium/high       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear expectations are set from the start about evaluation requirements, reinforced in a co-design with clear instructions.</li> <li>• There will be regular liaison with consortia to identify risks early.</li> <li>• It should be made clear what can be provided in control patches, including ‘light-touch’ detached youth work and business as usual.</li> </ul> <p>This risk remains significant, as described in section RQ7, and will form a key pilot study question.</p>                                                                                            |
| <b>Detached youth work in an intervention patch is terminated early</b> | Low/medium        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The feasibility study strongly suggests that a longer delivery period is needed and will be welcomed.</li> <li>• If delivery finishes early because the organisations feel the need has diminished, this should show through positive outcomes.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p>What and how it is delivered will form a pilot study question to understand this risk better.</p> |
| <b>Young people continue to gather but move out of their patches</b>    | Medium/medium     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p>This will be explored through the pilot study through careful monitoring and liaison with delivery consortia.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

| Risk                                                                                                    | Likelihood/Impact | Mitigation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Challenges in accessing police data</b>                                                              | Low/high          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police data sets have been assessed for priority as part of this work. We will establish a plan to give sufficient time to explore each option before moving to the next dataset in the hierarchy. The below mitigations apply to all options.</li> <li>• The evaluation team will offer their expertise and prior experience in accessing police data.</li> <li>• A sufficient timeframe will be allowed in set-up to negotiate access.</li> <li>• The police forces are included in the local consortia.</li> </ul> <p>These mitigations are expected to be quite effective. The evaluation team has partnered with an expert in negotiating access to police data to further reduce this risk.</p> |
| <b>Low response rates to community and young people surveys; low engagement in qualitative research</b> | High/medium       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The co-design phase will be used to develop high-quality, tailored research instruments and processes.</li> <li>• There will be an option not to proceed with these outcome measures after the pilot.</li> </ul> <p>The pilot will explore response rates and engagement. The evaluation team has partnered with a specialist community survey agency to address this risk.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

The scoping study reinforced these risks. Some further risks were also identified in this scoping study:

- Staff recruitment – concerns were expressed about the availability of delivery staff with the required skills and experience to deliver detached youth work in line with the shared practice model. Due to the reduction in detached youth work funding and provision over the last 15 years, there are fewer experienced practitioners with the specific skills required for high-quality delivery.
- Staff retention – consulted interviewees also described the challenges of retaining detached youth workers particularly if it was not feasible for youth workers to be employed full time.
- Apprehension about control areas and reputation and relationship risks – to mitigate the concerns described in RQ7, it would be necessary to provide very clear definitions of what detached youth work is compared to other street-based youth engagement activities and emphasise that other engagement to prevent harm and address emerging social issues may be implemented throughout the trial as necessary.

- Finally, and very importantly, there were concerns that future commissioning of detached youth work could be undermined by a trial that focused narrowly on crime and anti-social behaviour and that does not reflect the wider range of outcomes that detached youth work addresses.



## Conclusion

**Table 9: Summary of feasibility study findings**

| Research Question:                                                                                                                                                             | Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RQ1: Is it feasible to map police data on crime rates on to detached youth work patches?                                                                                       | Yes, this is feasible. It was feasible for detached youth work providers to hand-draw the boundaries of their patches on maps, to draw those boundaries within GIS software, and to attach geo-referenced police data to patches. However, this required a lot of management time to follow up on requests to youth agencies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| RQ2: What size of effect does detached youth work have on total police incident statistics?                                                                                    | The estimated size of effect varied between +0.05 and -0.15 based on different cuts of the data. The implication is that the number of patches required in an efficacy trial is at least 300 (150 patches per arm), and potentially much larger. A larger effect size might be observed if the police data could be restricted to youth-related crime, but this cannot be tested using publicly available police.uk data.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| RQ2b: Which data set/s should be used in a pilot trial?                                                                                                                        | The best dataset for a pilot trial would be bespoke police force extracts of geocoded data, or bespoke pre-aggregated statistics from selected police forces. These datasets provide the greatest geographic accuracy and <i>may</i> allow youth-related crime to be identified <i>if</i> relevant flags are used <i>with sufficient consistency</i> in the data, but this needs to be explored further. Agreement to provide access would need to be a requirement of police as partners in regional consortia. The next best options would be geocoded recorded crime data held on the Home Office Data Hub (although not all police forces currently submit data, and it excludes antisocial behaviour, it <i>may</i> again be possible to identify youth related crime), or the less reliable 'raw' geocoded recorded crime and anti-social behaviour data submitted to Police.uk (here, it would certainly not be possible to identify youth related crime). Access to either would need to be negotiated. The final option would be to use the publicly available (anonymised) Police.uk data (as used in the current scoping exercise) which includes anti-social behaviour but where youth related crime could not be identified. |
| RQ3: Which agencies would need to be represented in regional consortia, and which organisations should lead them, in a pilot trial?                                            | Local authorities, local police forces, voluntary sector detached youth work providers, centre-based youth work providers, violence reduction units / partnerships, community safety partnerships and relevant umbrella organisations for local youth services would need to be represented. The lead should be the agency with an established reputation for delivering or supporting detached youth work and the strongest relationships with these partners.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| RQ4: What criteria should be used in the selection of regional consortia e.g. experience of detached youth work implementation; knowledge, skills and ability to engage in the | Regional consortia would need to demonstrate ability and capacity to undertake high-quality detached youth work in line with the shared practice model, existing strong multi-agency relationships, influence over                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| Research Question:                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| co-design process; ability to influence service delivery in patches randomised to control)?                                                                                                                                    | where detached youth work does and does not take place, knowledge of the local area, and a need for detached youth work in specific locations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| RQ5: Is it likely to be feasible for regional consortia to secure matched funding for delivery in the pilot trial?                                                                                                             | This is not likely to be feasible for all potential regional consortia and would undermine the ability of consortia to keep control areas free of detached youth work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| RQ6: What criteria should be used in the selection of patches (e.g. rates of violence, population size, length of time since last delivery of detached youth work)                                                             | Patches need to have a demonstrated level of need, a sufficient reachable population of young people actively present, and to be small enough for intensive detached youth work delivery.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| RQ7: Can we be confident that detached youth work will not be delivered in control areas? How would non-intervention delivery be monitored and how would this risk be minimised or accounted for in analysis in a pilot trial? | We cannot be confident of this, and it presents a significant challenge to the feasibility of a randomised controlled efficacy trial. Non-intervention delivery would need to be monitored through intensive ongoing liaison with regional consortia. A pilot trial would not be designed to allow analysis of impact, and it would not be feasible to account for contamination in analysis.                                                                                                                                     |
| RQ8: What would Business-As-Usual look like in control areas?                                                                                                                                                                  | Business-as-usual would involve other youth work including centre-based and short-term street-based; usual and additional targeted police activity including routine patrols, stop and search, hot spot policing, ad hoc investigations, arrest and criminal proceedings with individual suspected offenders, and focused deterrence.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| RQ9: Are any modifications or additions recommended to the overall pilot trial study process, timelines and plan proposed by YEF?                                                                                              | No modifications to the pilot trial design were identified. However, the findings from this study lead us to recommend against a pilot trial, unless prior testing of effect size using police force data filtered down to youth-related incidents demonstrates a significantly larger effect than shown by the analyses undertaken for this study.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| RQ10: Are there any further risks not identified in the feasibility study report, and how should they be addressed?                                                                                                            | The work undertaken reinforces and scales up the risks identified in the feasibility trial beyond the point where they can reasonably be mitigated. In addition, despite a consistent interest in generating robust evidence for detached youth work, there is significant concern among youth agencies about the consequences of a trial that is perceived not to be a fair test of detached youth work and that does not find an impact of detached youth work for the future of detached youth work commissioning and funding. |

## Interpretation and evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility

In the feasibility study report (Hall et al., 2024), we described a patch-based RCT as ‘potentially feasible but challenging’. In this scoping study we have further assessed the feasibility and challenges involved through:

- A retrospective QED analysis of the effect of previously undertaken detached youth work on police incident statistics and implications for the number of patches that would be required in an efficacy trial (Component 2)
- Further consultation with youth agencies on the feasibility and acceptability of aspects of the design of an efficacy trial (Component 3)

The results of both components imply lower feasibility and greater challenge than identified in the feasibility study.

The key reason for this is our assessment of the number of patches that would be required for an efficacy trial. In the feasibility study, we anticipated an impact trial of 15 consortia identifying 10 patches each (150 patches in total, 75 per arm of the trial) which we considered challenging but potentially feasible. For the reasons detailed in the Findings section relating to Component 2 and RQ2, the analyses conducted do not allow for a definitive estimate of the effect size of detached youth work and thus of the number of patches required. However, based on the available data, our analysis suggests that the number of patches that would be required in an efficacy trial is at least 300 and could be as high as 1,600. Our analysis suggests it is also possible that the effect size of DYW is zero or even negative, in which case no efficacy trial could be set large enough to detect a positive effect. Given this wide range, coupled with the fact that with our current most optimistic estimate an efficacy trial looks to be unfeasible, there would be considerable value in conducting further analysis repeating our Component 2 analysis with the bespoke police force data filtered down to youth-related incidents (see further below).

If this re-analysis points to a much larger effect size than the range of estimates from the current analysis implies, then a randomised controlled efficacy trial might be feasible. But if not, then an efficacy trial would need a much larger number of patches than was estimated in the feasibility study and we judge this would not be feasible to deliver. Apart from the question whether sufficient regional consortia would come forward, and sufficient patches identified (see next paragraph) working with youth agencies to identify and map detached youth work patches, plan, manage and monitor delivery at scale would be an extremely difficult task.

The consultation we carried out with youth agencies adds further to our judgement about the infeasibility of a large efficacy trial. It is important to note that the agencies we consulted are likely to be balanced towards those which have relatively favourable opinions about the feasibility and acceptability of a patch-level RCT – because they are particularly larger youth agencies, and because they were those that were most involved in the feasibility study. Their concerns about and challenges to a potential trial were greater than the concerns and challenges we heard in the feasibility study, and reduce our assessment of the feasibility of an efficacy trial in three key ways.

First, the consultation suggests that it is unlikely to be possible to attract enough regional consortia that are motivated to meet the requirements of an efficacy trial (particularly given the need for a greater number of patches than originally estimated) and for them to identify enough patches for a trial. Regional consortia need to consist of established partnerships with strong interagency working and experience of detached youth work. There is uncertainty that even larger delivery organisations would be able to identify as many as ten patches within their geographical remit where detached youth work is needed but has not been undertaken in the last two years. In addition, concerns about randomisation will limit the enthusiasm of agencies to join a regional consortium and put pressure on inter-agency relationships.

Secondly, even if consortia are committed to the principle of control areas which do not receive detached youth work, there is a widespread expectation that it will be very challenging to stick to that commitment for the trial duration, even when we emphasise that other interventions could be delivered in those areas. The possible scale of contamination is untested – but the sustained challenges we have heard, even from the more interested agencies points to a very significant risk that a trial would be compromised.

Thirdly, there remain significant concerns among youth agencies about a trial focused primarily on crime and anti-social behaviour outcomes. Our proposed design necessarily focuses on these area-level outcomes that can be measured using existing administrative data, because using young person-level survey data collection or administrative data is not feasible. Youth agencies are concerned that these area-level crime and ASB data do not capture the full range of outcomes from detached youth work and would not be a fair test of the impact of detached youth work. They are concerned about risks to future commissioning and funding of detached youth work if a trial found no impacts. Given that these concerns were raised by a group likely to be relatively favourably oriented towards a trial, we should expect significant challenge from the wider sector.

On the basis of our current most optimistic estimate of effect size and given the challenges we heard in the scoping study, an efficacy trial currently looks unfeasible. However, there remains uncertainty about the effect size, and it is possible that using police force data filtered down to youth-related incidents would yield a larger effect and make an efficacy trial feasible. Our recommended next step would be to conduct further analysis, taking a large subset of the QED (Component 2) patches and comparison areas, and using local police force data on youth-related incidents to recalculate the estimates of effect. This would not be a straightforward task but would be very worthwhile. As summarised in Table 7, access to the datasets would need to be negotiated with individual police forces (which would be time consuming) and an assessment made of whether youth-related flags are used with sufficient consistency and accuracy to make this worthwhile. If conducted, this exercise would be led by David McLennan. *If* this analysis pointed to a large enough effect size to make an efficacy trial feasible, a pilot trial could then be attempted.

An alternative approach would be to undertake this analysis as part of a pilot trial and using the pilot patches as the unit of analysis. We would make granting access to police force data, with the youth-related flags, a condition for regional consortia eligibility for the pilot. Such a pilot would provide the opportunity to test the trial processes, including risk of contamination, fully. However, a pilot trial would be a very much more significant and expensive endeavour than simply repeating the QED analysis with local police data and youth flags, and we would not recommend moving to a pilot trial without first repeating the QED analysis with the better data.

It is important to note the strong expectation that, even with a larger effect size, an efficacy trial would still be a very challenging and expensive endeavour and may still not be feasible in practice. There would be little value in undertaking the pilot unless there was a clear expectation that, if the pilot were successful, the efficacy trial would be attempted. Without this it would be difficult to incentivise regional consortia to come forward and to adhere to the trial requirements, and the ethical basis for a pilot trial would also be unclear.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to the work undertaken. The publicly available (anonymised) Police dataset used for Components 1 and 2 has some weaknesses, as longitude and latitude are anonymised and the data

are not validated, although we excluded PFAs where there was a particular concern about the accuracy of the data over time. Furthermore, there was considerable variation in the size of detached youth work patches used in the analysis, and perhaps in the intensity of detached youth work delivered. A potential, but unresolved, problem with detached youth work patches in London was identified. The sensitivity analyses we carried out produce a range of estimates of effect sizes, some positive and some negative, none of which are significantly different to zero, but with the largest (in absolute terms) being just -0.15 standard deviations. The QED analysis may under-estimate the effect size because of shortcomings in the dataset, including that we cannot identify incidents that are related to young people. The consultation exercise was relatively light touch, and is likely to be biased towards agencies with a relatively more positive orientation to an RCT.

Despite these shortcomings, we believe that the evidence from this scoping study is sufficiently robust to support the recommendations.

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# Detached Youth Work

## Stakeholder interviews

### Information sheet and consent form

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You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by The Centre for Evidence and Implementation, YMCA George Williams College and Bryson Purdon Social Research to understand the impact of detached youth work. The aim of this work is to prepare for a national pilot evaluation to measure the benefits and impacts of detached youth work for young people. The study is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund and builds on earlier consultation with youth sector practitioners. This current scoping study, which plays an important role in preparation for a pilot evaluation, is expected to run until April 2025.

#### What information is being collected?

We are inviting key stakeholders in the sector, namely professionals who work in an organisation that delivers, funds, or commissions detached youth work to be focussed interviewed. We will gather information about your views on the feasibility of our planned approach to evaluating the impact of detached youth work.

#### What the interview will involve

We are inviting you to participate in an interview with a member of the research team. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or telephone interview and will be recorded and transcribed securely. We anticipate interviews will take up to 60 minutes.

The interview is entirely voluntary and you can choose not to answer any of the questions or to stop the interview at any time, without consequence. If you have any questions or concerns about the information provided in this Participant Information Sheet, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Dom Weinberg [dom.weinberg@ymcageorgewilliams.uk](mailto:dom.weinberg@ymcageorgewilliams.uk) or Amy Hall [amy.hall@ceiglobal.org](mailto:amy.hall@ceiglobal.org)

#### How will data be protected?

Your data will be treated confidentially and will only be available to the study team. All data will be collected, stored and processed by the project team in accordance with GDPR with the legal basis of Legitimate Interest. We will include short unidentifiable quotes from interviews in an interim report to YEF but will not attribute any quotes or viewpoints to you as an individual, or to your organisation. With your permission, we will name your organisation in the report as having contributed to the work. Your data will be stored for up to 2 years after the final report is completed and will then be securely destroyed.

If you have any questions about the data privacy policy or data protection, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at: [dpo@theevidencequarter.com](mailto:dpo@theevidencequarter.com)

For more information about how we will protect your data and your data rights, please see our Data Privacy Notice: <https://www.ceiglobal.org/sites/default/files/uploads/files/DPN%20%231143%20-%20YEF%20DOYW%20Feasibility.pdf>



## Consent form

Before you consent to take part in the research, please make sure you read the Participant Information Sheet carefully and select each box below if you are happy. If you have any questions, please ask a member of the study team (Amy Hall: [amy.hall@ceiglobal.org](mailto:amy.hall@ceiglobal.org); Dr Dom Weinberg: [dom.weinberg@ymcageorgewilliams.uk](mailto:dom.weinberg@ymcageorgewilliams.uk)).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I confirm that I have read the above information sheet, I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and I understand the purpose of the research.                                                                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time or skip any questions, without giving any reason.                                                                                                                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I agree for my responses to be recorded. I understand that my responses will be kept within the research team.                                                                                                                                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that any information I provide will remain strictly anonymous, stored in line with the Data Protection Act.                                                                                                                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that the data collected will be treated confidentially and seen only by members of the project team at the Centre for Evidence and Implementation, YMCA George Williams College and Bryson Purdon Social Research and will not be shared with anyone outside of the project team. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand how my personal data will be stored.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I agree for the information I provide to be used as part of the research and for anonymised, unidentifiable quotes to be used in any published outputs, and understand that they will not be attributed to me or my organisation.                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am happy for my organisation to be named in the report as contributing to this work (optional)                                                                                                                                                                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_