

## EVALUATION PROTOCOL

**Toward Sport – A randomised multi-site trial to evaluate a sports-based intervention aiming to enhance positive outcomes for children and young people in the context of youth offending.**

**Alma Economics**

Principal investigator: Nick Spyropoulos

# Toward Sport – A randomised multi-site trial to evaluate a sports-based intervention aiming to enhance positive outcomes for children and young people in the context of youth offending.



Evaluating institution: Alma Economics  
Principal investigator(s): Nick Spyropoulos

## YEF trial protocol for efficacy and effectiveness studies

<b>Project title<sup>1</sup></b>	<i>Toward Sport – A randomised multi-site trial to evaluate a sports-based intervention aiming to enhance positive outcomes for children and young people in the context of youth offending.</i>
<b>Developer (Institution)</b>	<i>StreetGames</i>
<b>Evaluator (Institution)</b>	<i>Alma Economics</i>
<b>Principal investigator(s)</b>	<i>Nick Spyropoulos</i>
<b>Protocol author(s)</b>	<i>Nick Spyropoulos, Elisabetta Pasini, Lucille McKnight</i>
<b>Trial design</b>	<i>Multi-site trial: two-arm individual-level randomisation of CYP within each local authority (9 local authorities). The intervention will take place across multiple (~50) Delivery Partner Organisations, which will adhere to a Shared Practice Model, ensuring a consistent intervention across sites.</i>
<b>Trial type</b>	<i>Efficacy trial with internal pilot</i>

Evaluation setting	9 Local Authorities and 50 Delivery Partner Organisations (DPOs)
Target group	10 to 17-year-olds at a tertiary and secondary level of risk of offending (see detailed criteria below)
Number of participants randomised	1,134 CYP
Number of participants included in analysis	1,077 CYP
Primary outcome and data source	Offending (violent and non-violent, source = Police National Computer)
Secondary outcome and data source	<p>Conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire self-rated version for 11-17-year-olds)* The outcome measure will be the total score, as well as each of the following subscales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct problems subscale.</li> <li>• Hyperactivity/inattention subscale.</li> <li>• Peer relationships problem subscale.</li> <li>• Prosocial behaviour subscale.</li> </ul> <p>Wellbeing as measured by the ONS 4 questions</p> <p>Physical Activity Participation**</p> <p>Transferable Skills and Knowledge***</p> <p>* Goodman R, Ford T, Corbin T, Meltzer H. Using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) multi-informant algorithm to screen looked-after children for psychiatric disorders. <i>Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry.</i> 2004;13 Suppl 2:1125-31. doi: 10.1007/s00787-004-2005-3. PMID: 15243783. For those aged 10 in the study sample, the caseworker will instruct and work with the parent of the CYP to implement the One-sided SDQ for parents or teachers of 4-17-year-olds, found on the SDQ tool site here.</p> <p>**As measured by Milton K, Bull FC, Bauman A. Reliability and validity</p>

testing of a single-item physical activity measure. *Br J Sports Med.* 2011 Mar;45(3):203-8. doi: 10.1136/bjism.2009.068395. Epub 2010 May 19. PMID: 20484314.

\*\*\*As measured by the National Citizen Service Evaluation by DCMS or the Youth Rating of Socio-emotional Skills (see 'Outcome measures' section for items and references)

## Protocol version history

Version	Date	Reason for revision
<b>1.2 [latest]</b>	18th March 2026	Change to sample size, inclusion of additional referral routes and amendments for the number of weekly sessions for CYP recruited later in the trial.
<b>1.1</b>		
<b>1.0 [original]</b>		

## Contents

Protocol version history .....	3
Study rationale and background.....	7
Intervention .....	12
Support provided to practitioners .....	18
Support provided to DPOs .....	18
Control group and business-as-usual.....	19
Theory of Change .....	19
Why do young people offend? .....	21
Toward Sport Theory of Change Diagram .....	23
Toward Sport Theory of Change Diagram – Supporting Evidence .....	24
The role of sport in reducing offending.....	28
Who is the intervention aimed at? .....	29
How will the intervention lead to the intended outcomes? .....	32
Mechanisms of change .....	35
Intervention duration .....	36
What are the primary and secondary outcomes? .....	38
Theory of Change assumptions.....	40
Theory of Change risks.....	42
When will the intervention be delivered? .....	43
Impact evaluation .....	44
Research questions or study objectives .....	44
Design.....	45
Randomisation .....	47
Resentful demoralisation.....	48

Participants .....	49
Incentives for CYP to participate in the evaluation .....	49
Sample size calculations.....	49
Outcome measures.....	53
Data collection timelines .....	55
Demographic data.....	55
Compliance .....	56
Internal pilot evaluation and progress criteria .....	56
Progress Criteria.....	57
Implementation and process evaluation .....	61
Research questions .....	61
Research methods .....	63
Analysis .....	65
Cost data reporting and collecting.....	67
Diversity, equity and inclusion.....	68
Recruitment of a diverse sample of young people.....	68
Engaging with CYP.....	69
Inclusivity and suitability of research materials and activities .....	69
Experience of the evaluation team in working with CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds.....	70
Ethics and registration .....	71
Data protection .....	71
GDPR compliance.....	71
Approach to sensitive data handling .....	72
Data storage, transfers, handling, and disposal .....	72
Stakeholders and interests .....	74

StreetGames: .....	74
Alma Economics: .....	74
Ecorys: .....	75
Loughborough University: .....	75
Activating Creative Talent CIC: .....	75
Risks .....	76
Timeline.....	84
Survey items.....	84

## Study rationale and background

This efficacy trial aims to contribute to the limited evidence base on the impact of sports programmes on youth offending.<sup>2</sup> Sports programmes are regularly delivered through community organisations, adapting approaches and practices to local needs and contexts. This trial is designed as a multi-site trial to (i) leverage the large networks of Delivery Partner Organisations (DPOs) delivering sports programmes with at-risk cohorts of Children and Young People (CYP), providing sufficient sample sizes for the efficacy trial, and reflecting a delivery model consistent with widespread practice; and (ii) working with an Umbrella Organisation (StreetGames) to ensure a consistent model of delivery is being tested against business-as-usual across sites.

**Why do CYP offend?** There are many factors that influence young people's behaviour and contribute to an increased likelihood of offending. Offending is typically associated with exposure to a range of individualised 'psychosocial' risk factors, such as family environment, including parental supervision, history of conflict and dysfunction, and domestic abuse in the home<sup>3</sup>; educational factors, such as academic performance, attendance issues, lack of engagement or interest; peer relationships, such as association with peers with anti-social behaviours, loneliness, experience of bullying<sup>4</sup>; behavioural and mental health factors, such as attitudes towards authority, levels of confidence and self-esteem; community factors, such as rates of gang activity and crime activity in the neighbourhood, access to recreational activities, quality of housing, availability of community support; and previous legal involvement, including prior arrests or involvement with the criminal justice system<sup>5</sup>. For the majority of young people, offending is transient and declines as they mature. For these young people, the best response will be minimal intervention and engagement with diversionary activities outside the youth system that are meaningful, productive and relevant to the child's needs<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> YEF Toolkit on Sports Programmes: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/sports-programmes/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-youth-offending-services/specific-areas-of-delivery/family-relationships/>

<sup>4</sup> Vaswani, N. (2019) Bullying behaviours: adverse experiences for all involved?: [https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/69561/1/Vaswani\\_CYCJ\\_2019\\_Bullying\\_behaviours\\_adverse\\_experiences\\_for\\_all\\_involved.pdf](https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/69561/1/Vaswani_CYCJ_2019_Bullying_behaviours_adverse_experiences_for_all_involved.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Youth Endowment Fund (2020) What works: Preventing children and young people from becoming involved in violence: [https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/10/YEF\\_What\\_Works\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/10/YEF_What_Works_Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Mason, C., Walpole, C., and Case, S. (2020) Using Sport to Enhance Positive Outcome for Young People in the

**Context and system-level factors relate to the higher rates of arrests and offending among CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds**, as observed in official statistics (see section ‘Why do young people offend’ for statistics and further detail). These factors motivate this trial’s focus on CYP from such backgrounds, including a commitment to sampling a sufficiently large proportion of CYP from such backgrounds in the evaluation and targeting specific research questions to assess differential experiences and efficacies in the impact evaluation and the IPE, discussed below.

**The role of sport in reducing offending:** For young people who have offended or are at risk of offending, sport can provide the opportunity to engage and build relationships and provide a valuable medium through which young people can develop social capital and pro-social identities. Sport plays a useful role in developing the resilience of children and young people and enhances protective factors against offending.<sup>7</sup>

**There is currently positive but low-quality evidence on the impact of sport:** Sport-based interventions have been found to have meaningful impacts on offending rates. The mean effect size in the literature suggests an approximate halving of the offending rate of youth participating in sports programmes, but the quality of the evidence is rated at 2 out of 3, based on an adapted version of the AMSTAR evidence rating, due to the small number of evaluations and high levels of variation in estimates.<sup>8</sup> There is an even smaller body of high-quality evidence around the impact of sport for CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities. While some evaluations included in the YEF toolkit on sports programmes include programmes with a high proportion of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities, very few of them conduct sub-group analyses by ethnicity or race. Further, in their review of the social impacts of culture and sport, Taylor et al. (2015)<sup>9</sup> found that some studies identify different effects of sport for young people of different ethnicities. This

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Context of Serious Youth Violence: <https://www.sasp.co.uk/uploads/theory-of-change-using-sport-to-enhance-positive-outcomes.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Sokol-Katz J, Kelley M, Basinger-Fleischmann, L. and Braddock II, H. (2006) Re-examining the Relationship between Interscholastic Sport Participation and Delinquency: Type of Sport Matters Sociological Focus 39:3 173-192

Youth Endowment Fund Sports Programmes Toolkit Technical report: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sports-Programmes-Technical-Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, P., Davies, L., Wells, P., Gilbertson, J, and Tayleur, W (2015) A review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport. Accessed at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74a738ed915d0e8bf1a0d6/A\\_review\\_of\\_the\\_Social\\_Impacts\\_of\\_Culture\\_and\\_Sport.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74a738ed915d0e8bf1a0d6/A_review_of_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf)

indicates that more research is needed into whether and how sport programmes specifically lead to positive outcomes and a reduction in reoffending for CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities. The evidence suggests that it is key for the sports offer to be aligned with the identity of the child or young person, taking into account the key risks identified by the Youth Offending Teams and caseworkers.<sup>10</sup>

**As a contribution to this evidence base, the primary aims of this trial are:**

- To estimate the impact of participation in voluntary sports programmes on youth offending rates (violent and non-violent offending).
- To estimate the impact of participation in voluntary sports programmes on secondary outcomes, such as emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties tool), wellbeing, participation in physical activity, and transferable skills and knowledge, to assess the mechanisms underlying the efficacy of the intervention.

An additional aim of this trial is to contribute to the evidence gap (described above) on the efficacy of such positive activities on offending and reoffending for children and young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds.

**The impact evaluation is designed as a multi-site trial, delivered across 9 local authority areas and approximately 50 DPOs, with 567 individual CYP randomised into treatment at referral** (~567 offered the opportunity to participate in the sports programme) and control (~567 not offered the opportunity to participate in the sports programme and offered business-as-usual support – detailed in the section ‘Control group and business-as-usual’) with 538 CYP expected to complete the sports programme and the data collection within the treatment group, based on 5% attrition from follow-up data collection.<sup>11</sup> The delivery of the evaluation will be conducted through Local Authority teams, with the data team in the local authority supporting data-sharing and the identification of eligible CYP, and the practitioners working in Youth Justice and Early Help settings, Pupil Referral Units, and Alternative

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<sup>10</sup> Nichols, G. (2007) *Sport and Crime Reduction: The role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*. London: Routledge

Stansfield, A. (2017) Teen Involvement in Sports and Risky behaviour: A cross-national and gendered analysis *British Journal of Criminology* 57 172-193

Stephenson, M, Giller, H. and Brown, S. (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice* Routledge: Abingdon

<sup>11</sup> While the randomisation does not exactly take place at the site, for ethical and evaluation quality and fidelity reasons, the approach is equivalent to randomisation at the DPO site. See below for further details on the referrals and randomisation approach.

Provision settings engaging with CYP to assess interest in sports and consent to participate in the evaluation. CYP will be identified by Local Authority teams based on eligibility criteria that are linked to the Supporting Families Outcome Framework.

**Race, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI) considerations are central to the sampling and recruitment approach for this evaluation.** To achieve the additional aim of the trial, the target sample includes at least 30% of CYP participating in the evaluation who are from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. StreetGames' past work with the Youth Justice Sport Fund, working with a significant proportion of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities, suggests that the network, operating areas, and programme offerings are aligned with the areas and interests of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds (further detail on the areas and the representativeness of CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds are presented in the section 'Recruitment of a diverse sample of young people'). Many of the DPOs onboarded as part of Toward Sport have an existing relationship with StreetGames, with an overlap between organisations delivering Toward Sport, and those who have previously delivered the Youth Justice Sport Fund. Part of achieving the representativeness of CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds also relates to recruiting DPOs with leadership from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. Through the Ministry of Justice Youth Sport Programme, 50% of the smaller community organisations (with an income between £10,000 and £200,000) engaged by StreetGames identified as having 50% of their leadership as Black, Asian, or minority ethnic, meaning that additional recruitment of DPOs with Black, Asian, or minority ethnic leadership will be required. Evidence from DCMS (2025)<sup>12</sup> suggests that individuals from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to engage with voluntary organisations when the leadership of those organisations reflects the community they serve, as participants feel less isolated and more connected as a result. StreetGames conducts regular network surveys and has strong relationships with a large range of community organisations to support more targeted recruitment efforts.

**Approximately 50 DPOs will be recruited across 9 local authority areas<sup>13</sup>, with StreetGames leveraging their network of community organisations and a system of expressions-of-interest, similar to the process used in the Youth Justice Sport Fund programme to recruit eligible DPOs and a distribution that ensures that at least 60% of DPOs are led by individuals from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds (see section 'Intervention' for further details). This targeted recruitment will ensure that a large proportion of Black, Asian, and**

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<sup>12</sup> Promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in volunteering, Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, (2025). See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-volunteering/promoting-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-volunteering>

<sup>13</sup> The nine sites where delivery is expected are Bradford, Manchester, Bolton, Leicester, Walsall, Warrington, Hull, Milton Keynes, and Sheffield.

minority ethnic-led DPOs are included in the impact evaluation and the resulting contribution to the evidence base, and improves the range and quality of support offerings for CYP from diverse backgrounds. In addition, this DPO recruitment strategy is an important component of increasing participation and retention of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds in the evaluation.

The DPOs will agree to implement sports sessions with a set of agreed core elements, as set out in the Shared Practice Model detailed in the section 'Intervention', to ensure a level of consistent intervention (treatment) across sites while allowing DPOs the flexibility to tailor certain components to the local needs and interests of CYP. DPOs will be provided support by StreetGames and by the evaluation team to ensure that they have the information, understanding, and resources that they need to meet the requirements of the evaluation and delivery model.

**With these sample sizes, for the estimate of the efficacy of Toward Sport on offending, we will be able to detect standardised effect sizes of at least 0.17 in terms of Cohen's  $h$ <sup>14</sup> (Cohen, 1988).** Further details on the calculations are presented in the section 'Sample size calculations', and more detail on previous literature can be found in the section 'Theory of Change'. The sports programme lasts 24 weeks. Data on primary and secondary CYP outcomes will be collected at three points in time: at baseline, at the end of the 24-week period, and 6 months after the 24-week period (24 weeks plus 6 months after referral). The primary outcome of the impact evaluation is the rate of youth offending (violent and non-violent), which will be collected through Police National Computer (PNC) data (we have applied for access to the PNC). The secondary outcomes are emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, prosocial behaviour (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire), wellbeing (as measured by the ONS4), participation in physical activity.<sup>15</sup>, and transferable skills and knowledge<sup>16</sup>, which will be collected through surveys.

To support the design of the full impact evaluation, an internal pilot trial was implemented between November 2024 and May 2025, with a review point in February 2025 to assess lessons and inform the delivery of the full efficacy trial. The pilot trial took place in one local

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<sup>14</sup> The Statistical Analysis Plan (SAP) provides more detail on the use of Cohen's  $h$  as a measurement of effect size.

<sup>15</sup> As measured by Milton K, Bull FC, Bauman A. Reliability and validity testing of a single-item physical activity measure. *Br J Sports Med.* 2011 Mar;45(3):203-8. doi: 10.1136/bjsm.2009.068395. Epub 2010 May 19. PMID: 20484314.

<sup>16</sup> As measured by the National Citizen Service Evaluation by DCMS or the Youth Rating of Socio-emotional Skills (see 'Outcome measures' section for items and references)

authority (Bradford), with 5 DPOs and a target of 80 CYP (40 in treatment and 40 in control). The pilot was assessed through a set of clear progress criteria, which were reported on at the checkpoint in February. Alongside the pilot trial, we conducted an implementation and process evaluation involving interviews with practitioners and service managers in the local authority, DPO leaders and coaches, and CYP. The IPE provided additional information on how participants and delivery partners felt about the trial's design and identified potential challenges and areas for improvement.

## Intervention

**The Shared Practice Model, detailed below, was developed in collaboration between the evaluation team and the project team.** The model has been designed to ensure sufficient consistency across sites to allow for a trial of a consistent intervention (ensuring sufficient sample sizes), but that will not significantly interrupt DPOs' usual practice (allowing some flexibility to tailor the programme to the local context and needs). The shared practice model was developed through a targeted review of the literature, in conjunction with in-depth conversations with StreetGames throughout several workshops, leveraging past programmes and learnings.

**The nine sites where delivery is expected are Bradford, Manchester, Bolton, Leicester, Walsall, Warrington, Hull, Milton Keynes, and Sheffield.**

**The core components of the Shared Practice Model are summarised below;** these components have been designed to align with evidence-based practice on sports-based interventions and with operational feasibility for the DPOs in mind. StreetGames supports DPOs to operate non-competitive sports sessions, with a focus on participatory and inclusive elements to engage CYP.

- The programme will be available for 24 sessions for each participating young person.
- Weekly sessions lasting two hours. Some CYP offered the programme in the later stages of the trial will be offered more than one session as week, to ensure they have the opportunity to attend the full 24 sessions.
- Adult coaches who are paid (rather than volunteers) and recruited by the DPO
- Group-based sessions fostering pro-social relationships with other young people and opportunities for reflection.
- Voluntary participation of young people.
- CYP aged 10-17 years old within the secondary and tertiary level of need will be eligible for this programme.
- Agreed minimum and maximum CYP per session (see Shared Practice Model for details).
- DPOs already working with vulnerable or at-risk children aged 10-17 years old with

advanced safeguarding practices and risk assessments in place, or familiar with embedding them.

- Delivery staff will have specified skills, qualifications and experience for the coaches leading the sessions (detailed below).
- Delivery staff will have a young person-centred approach to sports delivery (detailed below).
- DPO staff will have a good awareness of the value of an evidence-based approach and be committed to supporting the successful implementation of the evaluation.
- DPOs will ensure sustained delivery over the intervention period (i.e. to include school holidays and adequate provision for inclement weather if outdoor facilities are utilised).
- Activities will take a child-first approach – being inclusive, participatory, and child-centred.
- Activity sessions are supervised and ‘structured’, in terms of being coach-led, with set start and finish times, clear rules and boundaries.
- Delivery staff will have experience engaging CYP from minoritised communities and be trained in cultural sensitivity and race equity. As part of StreetGames’ onboarding process for DPOs, they are assessed on a range of criteria related to their experience engaging minoritised communities. This includes the demographic makeup of their current cohort, the makeup and qualifications of the staff team, the organisation’s reach into the community, and details about any wider networks they are involved in or contribute to.

The following table shows key practice elements organised within the main structure of the shared practice model: recruitment and eligibility, training, activities, and closure.

### Recruitment and eligibility

- Children and young people aged between 10-17 years within the secondary and tertiary level of need will be eligible for this programme.
- At least 30% of young people engaging with the programme will be from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Our primary definition of minority ethnic includes white minority ethnic groups, such as Polish, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller. We will collect data on the sub-groups and our study will also focus on the differences in experiences across race, comparing CYP from white backgrounds with those from Black, Asian, Arab, and mixed groups. Our approach to sub-group analysis is detailed in the Statistical Analysis Plan for the trial.

- At least 60% of DPOs will be led by individuals from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. *The definition of a Black, Asian, or minority ethnic-led organisation is where at least 50% of the senior leadership of the DPO (including Board Members and Trustees) is from a Black, Asian, or minority background.*
- Practitioners will undertake risk assessments of CYP on a case-by-case basis and identify eligible CYP for referral based on the agreed criteria outlined below in the section 'Who is the intervention aimed at?' (i.e., tertiary and secondary eligibility based on Supporting Families outcomes). The caseworker will discuss whether the CYP consents to participate in the evaluation. For those who consent to participate, the referrals into the offer of the sports-based intervention would be randomised within local authorities at the level of the CYP. Further details on this process are presented in the sections 'Randomisation' and 'Outcome measures'.
- DPOs will be recruited in areas where Local Authority teams can identify groups of eligible children and young people of adequate size for the evaluation.
- DPOs will already be working with vulnerable or at-risk children aged 10-17 years old.
- DPOs have advanced safeguarding practices and risk assessments in place or are familiar with embedding them, including how to deal with incidents and experiences of stigmatisation and racism.

### Training and staffing

- Sessions will be led by adults (rather than peers) who are paid (rather than volunteers).
- Staff will be those who have (i) a young person-centred approach to sports delivery which prioritises and responds to the needs of the targeted young people, (ii) a strong passion and commitment for the role that sport can play for young people, and (iii) good knowledge and understanding of criminal and youth justice services, with an ability to develop good relationships with young people.
- Delivery staff and coaches will have specified skills, qualifications and experience, including a minimum of two years of delivery experience, previous experience working with similar cohorts of CYP, having attended all StreetGames minimum standards training (e.g., ACES training, training on trauma-informed practice, understanding of complex safeguarding mental health first aid, monitoring and evaluation, 10 principles, managing challenging behaviour, cultural sensitivity and race equity). Similar cohorts of CYP include CYP with similar risk profiles and experiences of the criminal justice system, as well as CYP from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- DPO staff will have a good awareness of the value of an evidence-based approach and be committed to supporting the successful implementation of the evaluation

(including collecting data on programme engagement).

## Activities

- Toward Sport is a sports-based intervention that includes the delivery of weekly sports sessions by 50 local youth organisations and sports clubs (Delivery Partner Organisations) across a range of areas in England.
- All DPOs will be funded to deliver one 2-hour sports session per week.
- The 24-week programme will be implemented and available for one full year, with sustained delivery over the year (i.e. to include school holidays and adequate provision for inclement weather if outdoor facilities are utilised). Delivery runs every week for a year, and CYP can join at different points, on a rolling basis, with the Toward Sport intervention defined as 24 weeks after their individual start.
- Some CYP recruited in the later stages of the trial will be offered more than one session a week to ensure they have the opportunity to attend the full 24 sessions. While referrals into the trial will stop approximately 6 months before the end of delivery, it may take some CYP as many as 8 weeks after being referred to attend their first session<sup>18</sup>, meaning that with only one session per week, they could not attend the full 24 sessions before the end of the delivery period.
- Activities will take a child-first approach – being inclusive, participatory, and child-centred.
- Activity sessions are supervised and ‘structured’, in terms of being coach-led, with set start and finish times, clear rules and boundaries.
- The intervention will be available for 24 sessions for each participant, with the expectation that CYP will be expected to attend for the full 24 sessions made clear at referral, and support provided to CYP to ensure this is the case. Information will be included within programme delivery guidance produced by StreetGames to help minimise drop-out /non-attendance and ensure a consistent approach by DPOs.
  - For example, attendance data will be closely monitored to identify non-attendance and trigger follow-up contact with the young person (YP)/family/carer contact/family support worker to understand reasons for non-attendance and what support/adjustments may be required to encourage return (e.g., transport, change of activity, language support).
  - DPOs will build in regular rewards and celebration of achievement ‘moments’, but

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<sup>18</sup> The delay between referral and attendance at the first session varies based on the CYP, and may be longer or shorter based on (i) the practitioner needing to provide the DPO with background information on the young person, (ii) the willingness of the family to participate in the programme, and (iii) DPOs needing to carry out risk-assessments and ensuring there is an appropriate place for the CYP within their provision.

most importantly, it will be about regular support and communication - each DPO will meet with the YP prior to starting delivery (to explain the process and answer any questions). This will also enable them to ensure suitability of the offer, risk assess, and start to build familiarity/relationship. All of these increase the likelihood of YP feeling engaged in the process, suitability of the chosen activity, and ultimately attendance and retention.

- Participation is voluntary.
- Participants will be able to start attending sessions once referred to DPOs (identified by the practitioners as eligible based on the agreed criteria, referred for the programme/evaluation by the case worker, consenting to participating in the evaluation and sharing data, and randomised into the treatment group to receive sports support).
- This means that participants will enrol and complete their 24 sessions at different points in time (as participants exit after completion or drop out, newcomers will take their place). A clear exit plan will be developed and tailored for each CYP. This will depend on their needs, interests, and level on the engagement matrix. Exit paths will include:
  - Transitioning into similar universal sports sessions provided by the same DPO, with support provided by DPO staff to identify the most appropriate sessions and groups.
  - Taking on volunteering and leadership roles with the DPO and within the local community.
  - Transitioning into sport offerings at other local venues, such as leisure centres, with support provided by DPO staff to identify the most appropriate venues, sessions, and groups.
- Each DPO will be able to support a minimum and maximum number of participants at any one time (detailed in the Shared Practice Model).
- Over the 12-month delivery period for DPOs (where DPOs deliver the 24-week Toward Sport intervention over the 12 months), each DPO is expected to deliver the intervention to an average of approximately 30 children and young people.

**The components that are expected to differ across sites (non-core) include:**

***DPO-specific implementation choices:***

- The venue where delivery takes place – this will be a safe, accessible community setting (not open access such as a park), but the setting ‘type’ may vary between sites.
- DPO type (e.g., whether the DPO is a Community Interest Company), the turnover and size of the DPO, and the capacity and workforce of the DPO.

- The time of day and day of week of the sessions.
- Whether the sessions are single-gender or mixed-gender.
- The gender of the staff.

***Site-specific operational variants:***

- Group size and CYP to staff ratio (within the minimum and maximum bounds set out in the Shared Practice Model).
- The support offered as part of business-as-usual, which is discussed in further detail in the section ‘Control group and business-as-usual’
- The type of sport activities offered to CYP.

**Support provided to practitioners**

The evaluation team will develop joint training sessions with the project team for the practitioners in each local authority. The sessions will be online and will be recorded for staff to revisit if needed, with one session targeted at the data teams and another session targeted at the case workers. The trainings will cover: the value of rigorous evaluations and Randomised Control Trials (RCTs); the consent and randomisation procedures; the data-collection activities and timelines; and the roles of the different teams (project and evaluation teams) and of the local authority teams (e.g., the data lead and the caseworkers). The training will also cover the important role of the local authority teams in implementing and adhering to the evaluation protocol and communicating with the evaluation team any concerns or information on deviations from intended operating models. The sessions will also include information on racially equitable approaches and considerations, including support on the adaptation of evaluation materials, language support, and discussing the sensitivity of obtaining consent for asking about behavioural and demographic topics in the survey. The training materials were informed by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Experts during the pilot phase. The training will also include a lengthy Q&A session to ensure everyone is fully informed and address any concerns.

At the end of the training sessions, the local authority teams will receive information on the weekly online drop-in sessions to discuss any training content (or other items of concern). There will also be a designated inbox for local authority teams to contact the evaluation team anytime.

**Support provided to DPOs**

DPOs will be supported by StreetGames Area Teams throughout the delivery period. Additional resources and support will be made available in the form of training, guides, and videos. DPOs will be invited to attend regular networking, information sharing, and community of learning events. As part of StreetGames’ onboarding process, all DPOs complete a robust safeguarding questionnaire, where DPOs provide information on what

safeguarding training their staff engage in, the process organisations follow when reporting and managing a safeguarding incident, their harm disclosure policy, as well as open-ended questions about safeguarding culture. This ensures only DPOs with robust safeguarding procedures are involved in the programme and the evaluation.

The evaluation team will develop a joint training session with the project team for the DPOs on the value of rigorous evaluations and RCTs. This session will be an online training offered to all DPOs and will be recorded for DPO staff to revisit if needed. The training will cover the important role of the DPOs in adhering to the evaluation protocol and communicating with the evaluation team with any concerns or information on deviations from intended operating models or potential concerns related to CYP participation and engagement. This training will also include information on racially equitable approaches, cultural sensitivity considerations, and the evaluation's focus on racial equity, diversity and inclusion. Topics will include adapting activities and approaches, considering and providing language support, and recording and sharing engagement data and perceptions of the programme with the evaluation team. The training materials were informed by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Experts during the pilot phase. The training will also include a lengthy Q&A session to ensure everyone is fully informed and address any concerns.

DPOs, in collaboration with StreetGames, will be provided with clear guidance and assistance in relation to monitoring data requirements and will be asked to contribute to the collection of primary data on children and young people, and to support the recruitment of children and young people for interviews and workshops at various stages of the evaluation. The evaluation team and the project team will develop the materials and provide support for the DPOs jointly.

At the end of the training sessions, the DPO teams will receive information on the weekly online drop-in sessions to discuss any of the training content (or other items of concern). There will also be a designated inbox for teams to reach out to the evaluation team anytime.

### **Control group and business-as-usual**

Services delivered as part of the Early Help programme, Pupil Referral Unit, or Alternative Provision setting within the local authority will be our business-as-usual. These are likely to vary across eligible individuals' levels of need and across sites as well. The approach is designed to ensure that business-as-usual activities delivered by the local authority do not include sports-related activities. This requirement acts to ensure that the treatment group CYP are not being compared to a control group CYP that has been influenced to participate in sports as a result of the trial (diluting the measured effect of Toward Sport). While young people will not be offered sport-based support through the local authority, they are free to participate in sports independently of the evaluation. This would only be considered a case of non-compliance when the control group CYP seek to increase their participation in sport

as a result of taking part in the trial. Examples of this could include a caseworker registering a young person in the control group with a DPO or a young person in the control group registering with a DPO only after hearing about the opportunity in the trial when they would not have otherwise. Caseworkers will also receive training informing them of the rationale and importance of this condition for the trial.

Children and young people in the treatment group (offered Toward Sport sessions) will be provided with the same support programmes as those under business-as-usual, with the only difference between CYP in the treatment group and the control group being that those in the treatment group will have access to Toward Sport in addition.

Support for families and CYP within these complex groups of risk and vulnerability requires a tailored response. The number of different interventions and length of interventions provided through business-as-usual support will, therefore, vary depending on the needs of the young person when considered within the wider family's context. There are a wide range of awareness programmes, skill development programmes, programmes with mentoring, empowerment, self-identity, and other support offers; each is tailored to the 10 headline outcomes of the Supporting Families programme (see the [Supporting Families Outcomes Framework](#)). Examples of interventions as part of business-as-usual will vary widely, depending on local need and each local authority's available budget and services. The evidence base that supports practitioners working on this programme can be found [here](#).

There is variation in the length of time practitioners typically work with young people, with some young people only working with the local authority for 1-2 weeks. As a result, what business-as-usual activities young people participate in during the trial will not be able to be routinely collected and shared by caseworkers. Instead, the follow-up survey of secondary outcomes administered to all CYP will include a question asking what additional services or supports they have received in the 6-month period.

Specifically, young people will first be asked a multiple-choice question about the activities they have been offered by the local authority over the last 6 months, with organised sport as one answer choice option. If the young person selects that they have participated in sport, they will be prompted to answer two additional questions. The first will ask the name of the organisation they are participating with (to understand if any funded DPOs are offering provision to control group participants), and the second will ask what their motivation was for participating in this activity, to understand if they were motivated by the trial, or encouragement by their caseworker. Sensitivity analysis, taking into account different business-as-usual conditions, will be conducted subject to the quality of the data received through the survey.

### **Why do young people offend?**

There were 54,592 [arrests](#) of children aged 10-17 years old for notifiable offences between 2021 and 2022, which represents 8% of all arrests. Of these arrests, 38% are arrests of children from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds.<sup>19</sup> Over the same period, there were 33,000 proven offences by children aged 10-17 years old, of which [28%](#) were from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups. Violent offending accounts for 35% of all proven offences

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<sup>19</sup> Even though approximately one-fifth of children and young people are from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds (21% of 5-16 years old are from such backgrounds, Office for National Statistics data source [here](#))

among this age group, with non-violent offenses accounting for 65%. While the number of violent offences has been decreasing (a reduction from 17,501 in 2019 to 11,471 in 2022), the proportion of violent offences of all offences committed has been increasing (up from 25% in 2019 to 35% in 2022). The number of non-violent offences has also been decreasing, from 52,848 in 2019, to 21,550 in 2022, with the proportion of non-violent offences decreasing from 75% in 2019 to 65% in 2022.

As the Children, Violence and Vulnerability report demonstrates, the immediate consequences of youth violent offences impact a large proportion of teenagers, with 16% of children having been a victim of violence (of which 68% had experienced physical injuries as a result), almost half of children having been a victim or witness to violent crime in the past 12 months, and 15% had reported committing violence. Such offences have important further effects, such as through school attendance and achievement, with 20% of teenagers having missed school due to feeling unsafe, and 47% reporting that violence and fear of violence impacted their day-to-day lives.

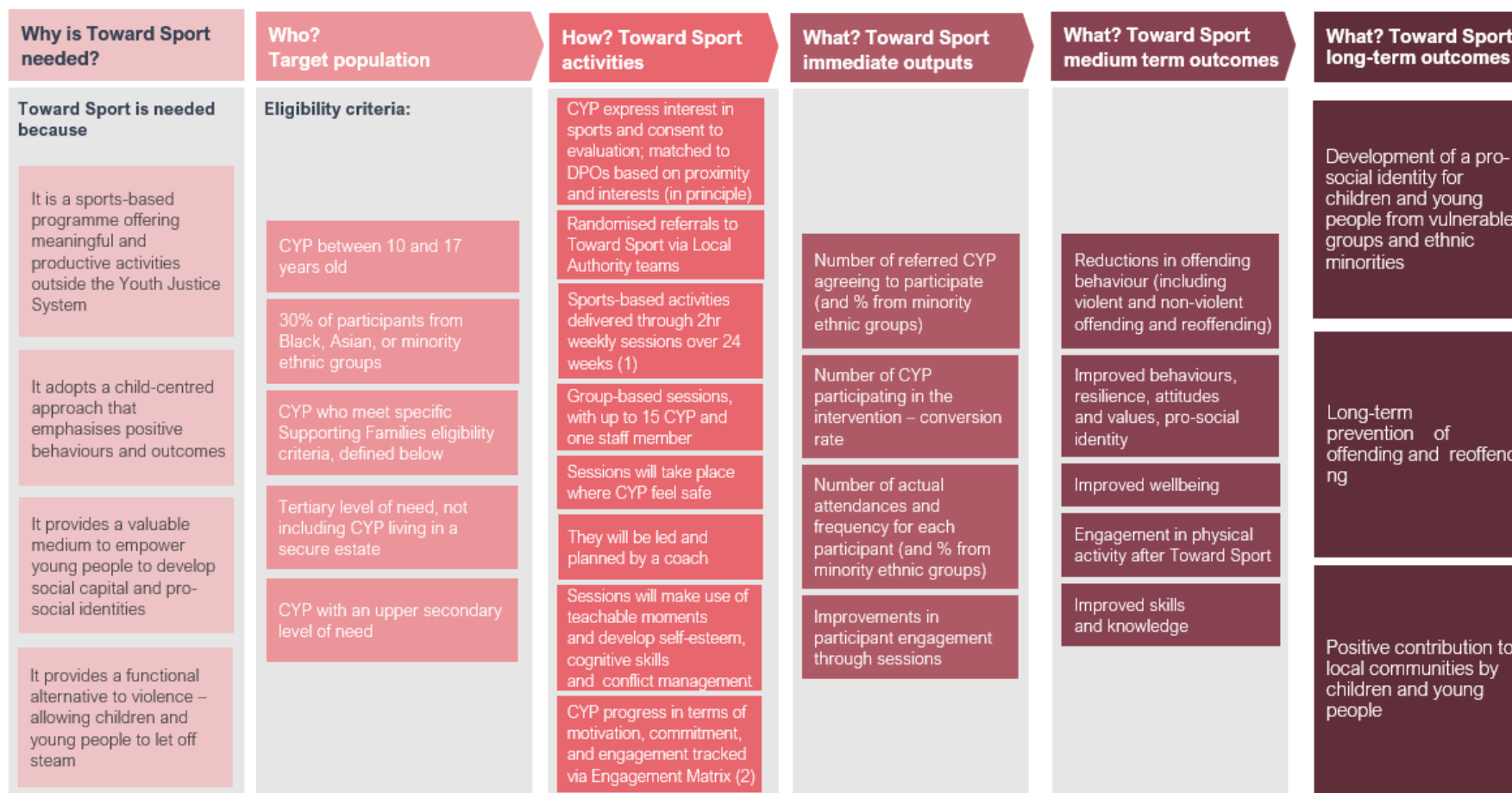
There are many factors that influence young people's behaviour and contribute to an increased likelihood of offending. These factors can be at the system level, institutional level, interpersonal level, and individual level and are described in further detail below.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Oishi, S., & Graham, J. (2010). Social Ecology: Lost and Found in Psychological Science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), 356-377. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610374588>

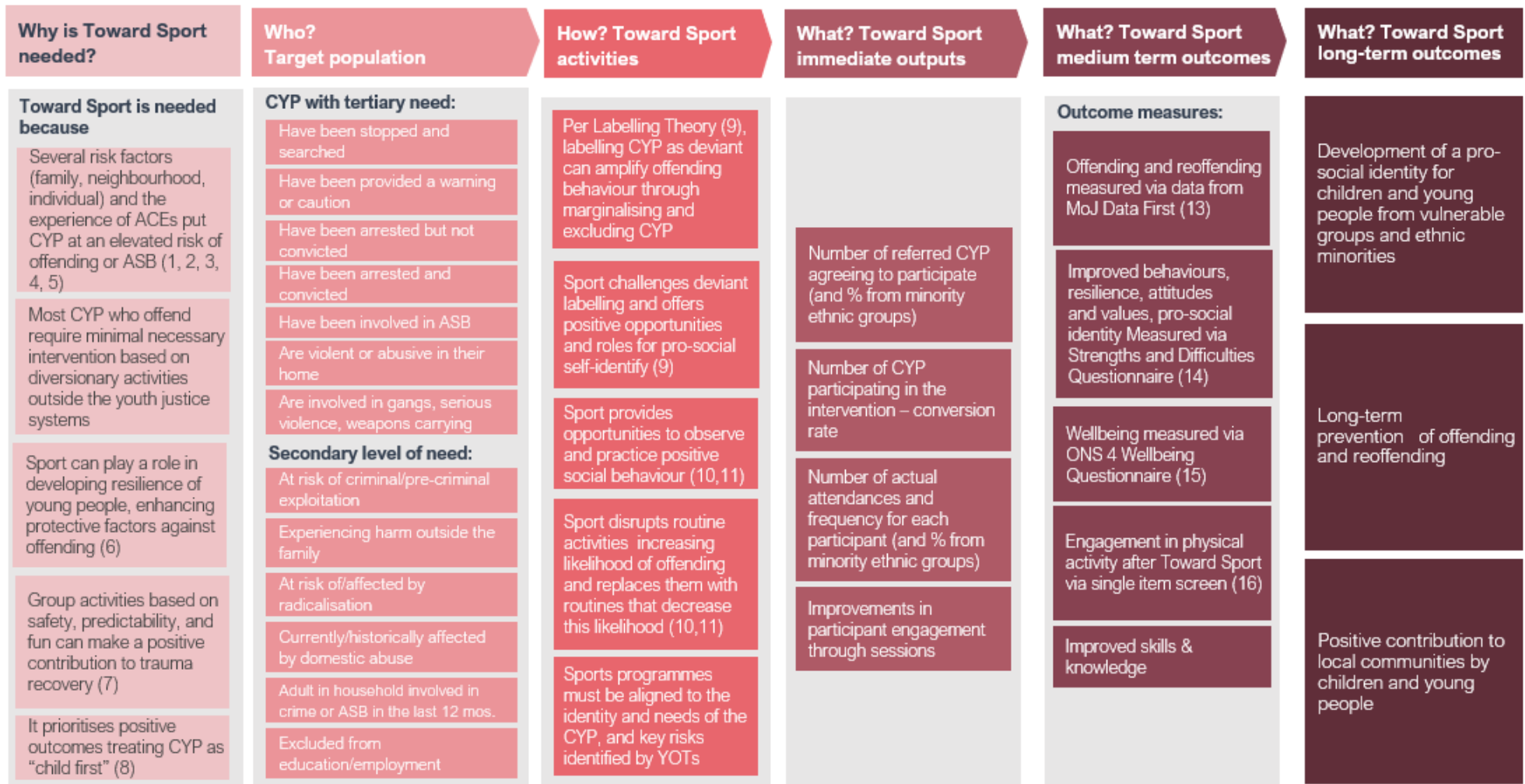
Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224-253. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224>

## Toward Sport Theory of Change Diagram



- The literature does not find consistent evidence linked to intervention duration. See: Gaffney, H, Jolliffe, D, and White, H. 2021. Sports Programmes Toolkit technical report. Youth Endowment Fund. Available at: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sports-Programmes-Technical-Report.pdf>; Yang Y, Zhu H, Chu K, Zheng Y, Zhu F. Effects of sports intervention on aggression in children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis. PeerJ. 2023 Jun 13;11:e15504. doi: 10.7717/peerj.15504; van der Sluys, M.E, Zijlmans, J, Ket, J.C.F. The efficacy of physical activity interventions in reducing anti-social behavior: a meta-analytic review. J Exp Criminol. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-022-09536-8>; Ouyang, N and Liu, J. Effect of physical activity interventions on aggressive behaviours for children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. 2023. Aggressive and Violent Behaviour
- Engagement Matrix was first developed by Substance as part of the Home Office Funded Positive Futures Fund.

## Toward Sport Theory of Change Diagram – Supporting Evidence



ACE refers to adverse childhood experience; CYP refers to child or young person; ASB refers to antisocial behaviour; YOT refers to Youth Offending Team; MoJ refers to Ministry of Justice; ONS refers to Office for National Statistics.

1. Farrington, D, Tofi, M, Piquero, A. 2015. Risk, Promotive, and Protective Factors in Youth Offending: Results from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development.
2. McVie, S and Norris, P. 2006. Neighbourhood Effects on Youth Delinquency and Crime. University of Edinburgh, Centre for Law and Society.
3. Chassin, L, Mansion, A. D, Nichter, B and Pandika, D. 2016. Substance use and substance use disorders as risk factors for juvenile offending. In Heilbrun, K, DeMatteo, D and Goldstein, N.E.S. APA handbook of psychology and juvenile justice (pp. 277–305). American Psychological Association.
4. Fox, B.H, Perez, N, Cass, E and Baglivio M.T and Epps N. 2015. Trauma changes everything: examining the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2015 Aug;46:163-73
5. Jackson D.B, Jones M.S, Semenza D.C and Testa A. 2023. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adolescent Delinquency: A Theoretically Informed Investigation of Mediators during Middle Childhood. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 2023 Feb 11;20(4):3202. doi: 10.3390/ijerph20043202. PMID: 36833897; PMCID: PMC9959059.
6. Home Office, Serious Violence Strategy. 2018.. Accessed via [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)
7. Van der Kolk, B.A. 2005. Developmental Trauma Disorder: Towards a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals* 35(5) 401-408.
8. Haines, K and Case, S. 2015. Positive youth justice: Children first, offenders second (1st ed.). Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t899qx>
9. Becker, H. 1997. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.* New York: Free press
10. Bandura, A. 1962. *Social Learning through Imitation.* Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press
11. Bandura, A. 1977. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change *Psychological Review*, 84 (2), 191-215
12. Nichols, G. 2007. *Sport and Crime Reduction: The role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime.* London: Routledge
13. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ministry-of-justice-data-first>
14. YEF Outcome Measures Guidance, accessed via <https://res.cloudinary.com/yef/images/v1623145463/cdn/20.-YEF-Outcomes-measurement-guidance/20.-YEF-Outcomes-measurement-guidance.pdf>
15. Public Health England, *Measuring Mental Wellbeing in Children and Young People.* 2015. Accessed via [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c2f66daed915d731281fdc2/Measuring\\_mental\\_wellbeing\\_in\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c2f66daed915d731281fdc2/Measuring_mental_wellbeing_in_children_and_young_people.pdf)
16. Milton, K, Bull, F.C, Bauman, A. 2011. Reliability and validity testing of a single-item physical activity measure. *Br J Sports Med.* 2011 Mar;45(3):203-8. doi: 10.1136/bjism.2009.068395. Epub 2010 May 19. PMID: 20484314.

For the majority of young people, offending is transient and declines as they mature. For these young people, the best response will be minimal intervention, and engagement with diversionary activities outside the youth system that are meaningful, productive and relevant to the child's needs. Young people's offending can include a range of behaviours that could be considered anti-social. Offending is typically associated with exposure to a range of individualised 'psychosocial' risk factors referring to psychological factors and immediate social factors, such as family, school, neighbourhood and lifestyle factors.

The interpersonal and institutional risk factors for offending include: (i) family factors, such as poor supervision, conflict, history of criminal activity, attitudes that condone anti-social behaviour, having lower income and poor housing; (ii) school factors, such as low achievement, aggressive behaviour, lack of engagement, and disruption; (iii) community factors, such as living in disadvantaged communities, availability of drugs, high population turnover and lack of attachment to the neighbourhood. Individual-level factors include immaturity, lack of self-control, excitement, money, inability to achieve goals through conventional means, and poor socialisation.<sup>21</sup> Other factors include drug use, anti-social behaviour, non-attendance at school, and breakdown in family relationships.<sup>22</sup> Individual factors also include personal factors, such as hyperactivity, and cognitive impairment, and interpersonal factors can include peers involved in crime and substance use, and attitudes that condone offending.<sup>23</sup> In addition, children and young people exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are more likely to commit anti-social behaviour, offending, and are more likely to be arrested.<sup>24</sup>

Most research into risk factors has focused mainly on psychological/individual factors<sup>25</sup> which include impulsivity, hyperactivity, low self-esteem, low social capital and negative self-

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<sup>21</sup> McMahon, G. and Jump, D. (2018) Starting to Stop: Young Offenders' Desistance from Crime Youth Justice, 18, 3-17

<sup>22</sup> Stout B, Dalby, H and Schraner, L. (2017) Measuring the Impact of Juvenile Justice Interventions: What Works, What Helps and What Matters? Youth Justice, 17 (3), 196-212

<sup>23</sup> Youth Justice Board (2005) risk and protective factors Youth Justice Board for England and Wales: London

<sup>24</sup> Wolff, K.T, Baglivio, M.T. and Piquero, A.R. (2015) The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and recidivism in a sample of juvenile offenders in community-based treatment, International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology

Fox, B.H, Perez, N, Baglivio, M.T. and Epps, N. (2015) Trauma changes everything: examining the relationship between childhood adverse experiences and serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders Child Abuse and Neglect (46) 163-173

<sup>25</sup> Farrington, D. Tofi, M. Piquero, A. (2015) Risk, Promotive, and Protective Factors in Youth Offending: Results from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development.

identity, whilst also examining other immediate social factors which are found in the context of the family (e.g., breakdown in family relationships, divorce), school (e.g., non-attendance, exclusion), neighbourhood<sup>26</sup> (e.g., lack of facilities, availability of drugs) and lifestyle<sup>27</sup> (e.g., drug and alcohol use).

Contemporary research has also focused on the potential role of ACEs as criminogenic<sup>28</sup> - that is to increase the likelihood of crime occurring. ACEs are individual, interrelated negative childhood events that have a cumulative effect on the individual<sup>29</sup> and they include abuse, neglect, household substance abuse and domestic violence, parental separation/divorce, household mental illness and a member of the household being in prison. ACEs can be considered an indicator of the young person's vulnerabilities and complex and challenging circumstances, with the idea that they are used to guide the level of support provided. However, ACEs are typically quantified and understood as predictors of future negative outcomes, similar to the concept of 'risk factors'.<sup>30</sup>

The dominance of psychosocial risk factors and individualised ACEs as explanatory concepts has led to the role of the 'context' or system-level factors being overlooked. The context can be thought of as increasing the likelihood of crime occurring in its own right and also in mediating and interacting with psychosocial risk factors. 'Context' can be understood as socio-structural (e.g., environmental, poverty, unemployment, social disadvantage, race and ethnicity), relational (e.g., relationships and interactions), and situational (e.g., immediate context), which can result in a lack of opportunities and positive activities for the young person. These factors relate to the higher rates of arrests and offending among CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, summarised above, motivating the importance of sampling a sufficiently large proportion of CYP from such backgrounds in the

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<sup>26</sup> McVie, Susan and Norris, Paul. 2006. Neighbourhood Effects on Youth Delinquency and Crime. *University of Edinburgh, Centre for Law and Society*.

<sup>27</sup> Chassin, L., Mansion, A. D., Nichter, B., & Pandika, D. (2016). Substance use and substance use disorders as risk factors for juvenile offending. In K. Heilbrun, D. DeMatteo, & N. E. S. Goldstein (Eds.), *APA handbook of psychology and juvenile justice* (pp. 277–305). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14643-013>

<sup>28</sup> Craig, J. M., & Zettler, H. R. (2021). Are the Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Violent Recidivism Offense-Specific? *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 19(1), 27-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204020939638>

<sup>29</sup> Fox BH, Perez N, Cass E, Baglivio MT, Epps N. Trauma changes everything: examining the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders. *Child Abuse Negl*. 2015 Aug;46:163-73. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.01.011

<sup>30</sup> Jackson DB, Jones MS, Semenza DC, Testa A. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adolescent Delinquency: A Theoretically Informed Investigation of Mediators during Middle Childhood. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2023 Feb 11;20(4):3202. doi: 10.3390/ijerph20043202. PMID: 36833897; PMCID: PMC9959059.

evaluation, and targeting specific research questions to assessing differential experiences and efficacies in the impact evaluation and the IPE.

Most young people who engage in offending or anti-social behaviour (ASB), require minimal necessary intervention and engagement with diversionary activities outside of the Youth Justice System. Where intervention is considered necessary and supportive, related activities should be meaningful, productive, and relevant to the young person's needs, to support the development of pro-social behaviours and identities.

Prioritising the needs of and positive outcomes for children and young people avoids a focus on risk factors, which results in negative, deficit views of young people. This also avoids adult-centric responses aimed almost exclusively at reducing negative outcomes<sup>31</sup> without prioritising child-friendly and positive behaviours and outcomes that treat the young person as a 'Child First'.

### **The role of sport in reducing offending**

For young people who have offended or are at risk of offending, sport can provide a twin-track approach that leads them out of or away from the Youth Justice System and towards activities that build strengths, capacities, and potential whilst emphasising positive behaviours and outcomes. In particular, the opportunity for young people to engage and build relationships in and through sport provides a valuable medium through which this twin-track approach empowers them to develop social capital and pro-social identities.

Sports, as an activity, supports development through positive influences and peer groups, leading to strengthened social skills and physical and mental health.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, by providing at-risk children and young people with alternative activities to spend their time on, participation in sports sessions directly impacts exposure to negative influences and opportunities to undertake risky behaviours. Participation in local sports sessions can also be a platform to engage children and young people in further helpful interventions, such as education services, counselling, and support for drug and alcohol misuse.<sup>33</sup> Sport also plays a useful role in developing the resilience of children and young people, and enhancing

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<sup>31</sup> Haines, K., & Case, S. (2015). *Positive youth justice: Children first, offenders second* (1st ed.). Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t899qx>

<sup>32</sup> Youth Endowment Fund Sports Programmes Toolkit Technical report: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sports-Programmes-Technical-Report.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Youth Endowment Fund Sports Programmes Toolkit Technical report: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sports-Programmes-Technical-Report.pdf>

protective factors against offending.<sup>34</sup> Group activities based on safety, predictability, and fun can positively contribute to trauma recovery.<sup>35</sup> Further detail on sports-based interventions and their role in reducing offending and violent offending among children and young people can be found in the literature reviews hosted [here](#).

Sport-based interventions have been found to have meaningful impacts on offending rates. The mean effect size in the literature suggests an approximate halving of the offending rate of youth participating in sports programmes (for example, the [Youth Endowment Fund Sports Programmes Toolkit](#) estimates an effect size of a 52% reduction from a control baseline offending rate of 25% and a 57% reduction from a control baseline offending rate of 10%).<sup>36</sup> However, it is critical for the sports offer to be aligned with the identity of the child or young person, taking into account the key risks identified by the Youth Offending Teams and case workers. The offer should also be challenging but realistic, include exposure to and reinforce pro-social values, and be delivered by staff who can adapt the programme to the needs of participants.<sup>37</sup>

### **Who is the intervention aimed at?**

The children and young people eligible for the StreetGames programme will be those with a tertiary or secondary level of need. Our criteria are based on and in line with the Supporting Families outcomes and eligibility criteria.<sup>38</sup> Definitions of each level of need are presented below. Based on referrals from the pilot, we anticipate that approximately 50% of CYP referred to the evaluation will have a tertiary level of need, while 50% will have a secondary level of need.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> van der Kolk, B. A. (2005). Developmental Trauma Disorder: Toward a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 401–408. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00485713-20050501-06>

<sup>36</sup> Sokol-Katz J., Kelley M, Basinger-Fleischmann L. and Henry Braddock 11, J. (2006) Re-examining the Relationship between Interscholastic Sport Participation and Delinquency: Type of Sport Matters *Sociological Focus* 39:3 173-192

Youth Endowment Fund Sports Programmes Toolkit Technical report:  
<https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sports-Programmes-Technical-Report.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Nichols, G. (2007) *Sport and Crime Reduction: The role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*. London: Routledge

Stansfield A. (2017) Teen Involvement in Sports and Risky behaviour: A cross-national and gendered analysis *British Journal of Criminology* 57 172-193

Stephenson M., Giller H. and Brown S. (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice* Routledge: Abingdon

<sup>38</sup> Supporting Families Programme Guidance, 2022-2025. Department for Education and Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities.

<sup>39</sup> The pilot included a small number of young people, and only took place in one Local Authority area, meaning

**Tertiary level of need:** young people who have already been involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. This does not include CYP living in the secure estate. This includes CYP aged 10-17 years who meet any of the following criteria:

- CYP who have been provided with a warning or caution.
- CYP who have been arrested but not convicted.
- CYP who have been arrested and convicted.
- CYP who have been involved in anti-social behaviour, defined as conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.
- CYP who are violent or abusive in their home, are involved in gangs, serious violence, weapons carrying, or other high risk-taking behaviour.

**Secondary level of need:** young people aged 10-17 years who meet any of the following criteria:

- At risk of or experiencing criminal or pre-criminal exploitation (e.g., County Lines<sup>40</sup>)
- Experiencing harm outside the family (e.g., peer-to-peer abuse, online harassment, or sexual harassment or offenses).
- Currently or historically affected by domestic abuse.
- Identified as being at risk of or affected by radicalisation.
- Lives with an adult (18+) who is involved in crime and/or ASB (at least one: offence/arrest/named as a suspect/ASB incident in the last 12 months).
- Excluded from school and not engaging in education (and not employed).

Local Authority teams will be provided with support and training materials that will include clear guidance around the eligibility criteria and the intended (primary and secondary) outcomes of the programme to ensure appropriate referrals.

Along with the criteria specified above, at least 30% of children and young people participating in Toward Sport will be from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. This is motivated by the disproportionately higher rates of offending and experience with the criminal justice system among CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, and the acknowledgement of key systemic risk factors in driving offending behaviours, discussed in the above section, which disproportionately affect these groups of young people.

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the proportion of referrals from CYP with secondary and tertiary level of need may be different in the full efficacy trial.

<sup>40</sup> County Lines involve illegal drugs being transported from one area to another, sometimes by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into the activity.

Due to the trial's focus on the participation and outcomes of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, additional resources and considerations have been dedicated to the recruitment and retention of these young people. These strategies include (i) training and ongoing support to Local Authority caseworkers to appropriately engage and retain CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds; and (ii) additional resources and support for caseworkers and DPOs to re-contact these CYP should they become disengaged from the evaluation. The study will provide evidence of the existence of differential non-participation rates and attrition rates across race and ethnic groups. Moreover, the experiences and perceptions of CYP from different groups will be assessed during the IPE, which will also allow further in-depth investigation into the potential causes of differential non-participation or attrition rates if they are found to exist.

The past experience of StreetGames' work with the Youth Justice Sport Fund, working with 7,832 CYP across 218 DPOs and with 44% of CYP from ethnically diverse backgrounds lends confidence to achieving this target and level of engagement through the existing network and practices.

At least 60% of the DPOs that deliver the Toward Sport programme will be Black, Asian, or minority ethnic-led organisations. The definition of a Black, Asian, or minority ethnic-led organisation is one where at least 50% of the senior leadership of the DPO (including Board Members and Trustees) is from a Black, Asian, or minority ethnic background. Through the Ministry of Justice Youth Sport Fund, 50% of the smaller community organisations (with annual income between £10,000 and £200,000) engaged by StreetGames identified as having 50% of their leadership as Black, Asian, or minority ethnic, meaning that further targeted recruitment of Black, Asian, or minority ethnic-led DPOs is required.

To achieve 60% of Toward Sport sessions being delivered by Black, Asian, and minority ethnic-led organisations, StreetGames will leverage existing relationships with locally trusted organisations (LTOs) and their knowledge of the distribution of DPOs across the delivery network. For example, 31% of LTOs stated that their leadership is from an ethnically diverse background in StreetGames' network survey. This 31% is based on responses by 212 LTOs, but the total network includes over 1,000 LTOs. These numbers of organisations suggest that recruiting at least 30 DPOs with leaders from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic Backgrounds (out of the targeted 50) should be achievable.

Young people will be referred to the programme by Early Help teams within multiple referral agencies within the Local Authority. Practitioners are well-versed in delivering direct support to families with complex interconnected problems, allowing them to appropriately assess the needs of the family and the young person.

In addition to recruiting young people through Early Help and Youth Justice pathways, additional referral routes were opened through Local Authority based Pupil Referral Units

(PRUs) and Alternative Provision (AP) settings, approximately halfway through the referral period. In these settings, the PRUs and APs ensure consent is obtained from parents and carers for all CYP approached to participate in the evaluation, and collect all the demographic data required for the referral. StreetGames coordinators then support by explaining the trial to the eligible young people, and helping them complete the survey with the secondary outcome data.

### **How will the intervention lead to the intended outcomes?**

Young people referred from Local Authority teams will participate in weekly two-hour group sports-based activity sessions over the course of 24 sessions. The Toward Sport programme offer will be available for one year (where each DPO will offer and deliver the support for one year, and each participating CYP will participate for 24 sessions), delivered to young people on a roll-on-roll-off basis. The sessions will have no more than 15 young people attending.

The sports programme will take place in locations where young people feel safe and comfortable. This includes their journey to and from the venue, meaning that locations close to where children or young people live or attend school should be prioritised (note that some children and young people will participate in sessions outside of their area due to Safeguarding Risk Assessments. In these instances, DPOs will be provided budget allocations to account for transport costs where necessary). They will also take place at a convenient time for the children and young people involved. The sessions will be tailored to the interests of the young people involved and will give them opportunities to co-create their experiences.

The sports sessions will be designed to be flexible to the needs of young people, supportive, and focused on achievements to encourage pro-social identity, provide opportunities to establish new pro-social friendships, and avoid opportunities for 'deviancy training'<sup>41</sup>. Sports sessions will also be designed to make use of 'teachable moments' and will be focused on giving young people the opportunity to reflect on their progress and achievements, develop self-esteem, cognitive skills, and conflict management and will provide them with tools for positive decision-making, and thinking about their future.

The CYP will not have a personal development plan due to the roll-on-roll-off nature of the programme. Still, their level of need will be closely measured and tracked through engagement with DPO staff and mapped to the StreetGames' engagement matrix. DPO staff will provide support to the CYP within the sports sessions to help them move up the engagement matrix during the intervention period.

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<sup>41</sup> 'Deviancy training' is the reinforcement of a young person's anti-social behaviours or actions by their peers.

The success of early intervention programmes, such as Toward Sport, is reliant on: (i) engagement, including CYP's motivation and commitment to the activities;<sup>42</sup> (ii) relationships with the practitioner, built through meaningful connections, teachable moments, role-modelling, encouragement, and a low ratio of staff to CYP;<sup>43</sup> and (iii) belief in CYP's ability to change. The engagement of individual CYP in the sessions will be closely monitored and tracked by DPOs using an engagement matrix. This engagement matrix was originally created and used as part of the Positive Futures programme, funded by the Home Office, and has also been used by StreetGames' in a range of projects, including the Youth Justice Sports Fund, as it provides useful monitoring information which is valued by both those in the sports and youth justice sector on CYP engagement and 'distance travelled'.

Coaches and leaders of the DPOs will engage and support CYP to move up the levels of the engagement matrix and track progress based on the behaviours mentioned under each level. The tracking and monitoring of CYP engagement and need through this matrix is part of StreetGames' monitoring system, going into their administrative data systems. All DPO staff will have training on this engagement matrix and will track key Monitoring Evaluation and Learning metrics as part of their Shared Practice Model.

This will be tracked at the individual CYP level to see the progress of individual CYP in terms of engagement and these behaviours. Towards the end of the 24-week intervention period, the coaches and leaders will look for 'exit routes' and pathways for the young person via pastoral support. This type of support will vary across sites and CYP, depending on need and availability, but examples include transitioning into primary 'universal' sports sessions that the DPO provides (outside of Toward Sport), signposting and support into other appropriate mainstream sporting activities in the area, and volunteering and youth leadership roles, among others.

All sessions will be led by a coach/leader who will plan and deliver the sessions, which will include in-built skill development (e.g. via a game-led approach) and a youth-led approach within sessions. An example of such a youth-led approach is to allow CYP the opportunity to share their views and shape the activities of the sessions and encourage CYP to support organisational activities – such as helping to set up/put away equipment, which can lead to volunteering and youth leadership roles and qualifications.

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<sup>42</sup> Youth Justice Board (2008) Engaging Young People who Offend Youth Justice Board for England and Wales: London

<sup>43</sup> Weaver B. (2011) Co-producing British Justice: The transformative potential of personalisation for penal sanctions British Journal of Social Work (41), 1038-1057

Rhodes J.E. (2004) The critical ingredient: Caring youth-staff relationships in after-school settings New Directions for Youth Development 101, 145-161

After assignment to the treatment group, a referral coordinator from StreetGames will assign each young person to an appropriate DPO. This choice will be informed by the data collected through the baseline survey, additional information provided by the practitioner, and a follow-up conversation if necessary. Once the young person is assigned to an appropriate DPO, the DPO reaches out to the family to arrange an initial meeting and invites them to participate in the first session.

There will be variation across sites in terms of whether the sessions are single-gender or mixed-gender, the group size, and the specific ratio of CYP to staff (within the minimum and maximum bounds set out within the shared practice model). The allocation of CYP to specific groups will be based on the needs and vulnerability of CYP.

The sports sessions will include 'teachable moments', such as:

- Encouraging positive communication and celebration amongst attendees.
- Learning to win and lose.
- Supporting CYP to manage conflict, deal with peer pressure and make the right choices.
- Providing praise and encouragement.
- Engendering mutual respect and fairness.
- The inclusion of rewards and incentives – to celebrate and recognise achievement (however small) and help build self-esteem.

This modality means that the CYP referred through this evaluation will potentially attend existing sessions with other CYP (CYP that are not referred to the DPO through this evaluation). This is expected, as referrals that come only through the evaluation will lead to cases with insufficient numbers for exclusive sessions and many small DPOs will be unable to accommodate parallel sessions. Where mixed sessions need to take place, DPOs will ensure that the sessions adhere to the requirements set out in the Shared Practice Model, described below. Participants in mixed sessions (whether referred through Toward Sport or existing participants) would have similar levels of vulnerability and need. Appropriate existing sessions are also identified by StreetGames' delivery framework based on elements such as the appropriateness of the existing group, a smaller group size, or a higher coach to CYP ratio, in line with the Shared Practice Model. The StreetGames team will work with DPOs during recruitment and training to establish a good understanding of this requirement by DPOs and will provide the necessary support to achieve this.

In cases where the mixing of sessions will not be appropriate for the CYP being referred and the existing attendees of the sports session, the DPO staff will work with the CYP to identify potential solutions (alternative sessions; rearranging the attendees of existing sessions; exploring nearby DPOs if needed) and ensure that the CYP can attend a funded sports session.

A key safeguarding practice will be to undertake ongoing risk assessments and enact the above potential solutions as and when session mixing is deemed high risk. This approach avoids the risk of bringing together only vulnerable and high-risk CYPs into a single session, which, based on the project teams and local authority teams' experience, can increase the risk of anti-social identities. This approach also follows a modality that is closer in practice to the existing system of referrals from statutory agencies and, therefore, is closer to the intervention design that would exist if it were rolled out as part of statutory services (i.e., this is a policy-relevant modality). Finally, this approach will allow referred CYP to mix and socialise with a broader range of other CYP who have been building pro-social identities. This brings an experience benefit for the referred CYP and also an opportunity to study the importance of peer effects on the referred CYP. To avoid the concern of not being able to separate the costs of the programme accurately, DPOs will be providing StreetGames with a detailed breakdown of operational costs, and since the DPO will need to invest in additional resources to accommodate the newly referred CYP, the data will be able to provide an assessment of the marginal costs of attending existing sessions with accuracy. Combined with detailed data on the establishment of new sessions, which the project team will have from all DPOs, this information will provide sufficient information to undertake detailed cost-benefit analyses of different policy scenarios (e.g., policy scenarios where existing providers make new slots available, scenarios where providers make new sessions available, and scenarios where new providers 'start-up' anew).

### **Mechanisms of change**

Referencing Labelling Theory (Becker, 1997), 'labelling' CYP as deviant can amplify offending behaviour by marginalising and excluding CYP, reinforcing a negative, deviant self-identity. Sport can challenge the negative or deviant label and offer positive opportunities and roles for a positive and pro-social self-identity.<sup>44</sup>

Sport can provide opportunities to observe positive social behaviour and opportunities to practice such behaviour, as well as sanctions for negative behaviour (Bandura, 1962; 1977).<sup>45</sup> Sports activities can disrupt the routine activities that increase the likelihood of offending and replace them with routines that decrease this likelihood (through positive social learning).

However, it is key for the sports offer to be aligned with the identity of the CYP, take into

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<sup>44</sup> Becker H. (1997) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free press

<sup>45</sup> Bandura A. (1962) *Social Learning through Imitation*. Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press

Bandura A. (1977) Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change *Psychological Review*, 84 (2), 191-215

account the key risks identified by the Youth Offending Teams and case workers, be challenging but realistic, include exposure to and reinforce pro-social values, and be delivered by staff who can adapt the programme to the needs of participants.<sup>46</sup> Change happens by providing CYP the opportunity to engage in supervised, positive, fun activities; to build pro-social relationships; to connect with positive role models; and to strengthen protective factors against offending behaviours.<sup>47</sup> Such group activities that are based on safety, predictability, and fun can make a positive contribution to trauma recovery, directing CYP away from offending behaviours.<sup>48</sup>

There is an important evidence gap for the role of sport in reducing offending for children and young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. This study, with a specific focus on this population of CYP, will aim to provide a further understanding of the potential efficacy of sports programmes in reducing offending for CYP from minoritised backgrounds. The trial will provide a detailed understanding of the perceptions of CYP from minoritised backgrounds, reasons for non-participation and attrition, and further understanding of their lived experience with the criminal justice system and support programmes and will take adaptive measures during the trial to mitigate the risks of lower participation rates and higher dropout rates of CYP from minoritised backgrounds.

### **Intervention duration**

The proposed programme design is for CYP to be offered 24 weeks of sports through Toward Sport if they are referred and randomised into the treatment group. The evidence on the impact of programmes duration as a key mediating factor is limited and there is a range of evidence pointing to the potential efficacy of shorter programmes.

### **Evidence from Sports-based interventions**

Our review of the evidence has found a range of effect sizes from sports interventions, and no

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<sup>46</sup> Nichols, G. (2007) *Sport and Crime Reduction: The role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*. London: Routledge

Stansfield A. (2017) Teen Involvement in Sports and Risky behaviour: A cross-national and gendered analysis *British Journal of Criminology* 57 172-193

Stephenson M., Giller H. and Brown S. (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice* Routledge: Abingdon

<sup>47</sup> Nichols, G. (2007) *Sport and Crime Reduction: The role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*. London: Routledge

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698009/serious-violence-strategy.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> van der Kolk, B. A. (2005). Developmental Trauma Disorder: Toward a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 401–408. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00485713-20050501-06>

consistent evidence linked to intervention duration. For example, the Sports Programmes systematic review<sup>49</sup> notes that studies with longer durations have larger effects, but the evidence on offending outcomes is based on six studies, with substantial heterogeneity and low or moderate confidence. In their meta-analysis, Yang et al. (2023)<sup>50</sup> found that interventions of six months or less were associated with lower aggression in participating children and young people (SMD = -0.99). However, Sluys et al. (2022)<sup>51</sup>, in a review of the effects of physical activity on reducing anti-social behaviour in children and adults, do not find that intervention frequency or intervention duration significantly moderates the effect of physical activity. Finally, in another study reviewing the literature on the effects of physical activity on aggression, Ouyang and Liu (2023)<sup>52</sup> do not find that longer interventions are more effective.

### **Evidence on duration from other programme types**

Due to the limited evidence on the relationship between programme duration and programme efficacy within sports, we extended our literature search to non-sports programmes to assess if programme duration is a key mediator: in a meta-analysis conducted by Plourde et al. (2020)<sup>53</sup>, 12-week programmes with weekly (mentoring) sessions did lead to statistically significant positive effects on key outcomes, including soft skills and drug and alcohol use; in a meta-analysis of programmes for youth with Disruptive Behaviour Problems (DBP), Granski et al. (2020)<sup>54</sup> did find a statistically significant effect associated with treatment length in weeks, suggesting longer programmes are slightly more effective, but there was no significant effect of programme intensity (weeks x hours).

Other literature also found emotional monitoring skills programmes that are six months or shorter in duration have positive effects on a number of outcomes for young people. Wyman

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<sup>49</sup> Gaffney, H, Jolliffe, D, and White, H. (2021) Sports Programmes Toolkit technical report. Youth Endowment Fund. Available at: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sports-Programmes-Technical-Report.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Yang Y, Zhu H, Chu K, Zheng Y, Zhu F. (2023) Effects of sports intervention on aggression in children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *PeerJ*. 2023 Jun 13;11:e15504. doi: 10.7717/peerj.15504.

<sup>51</sup> van der Sluys, M.E., Zijlmans, J., Ket, J.C.F. et al. The efficacy of physical activity interventions in reducing antisocial behavior: a meta-analytic review. *J Exp Criminol* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-022-09536-8>

<sup>52</sup> Ouyang, N. and Liu, Jianghong Effect of physical activity interventions on aggressive behaviours for children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. 2023. *Aggressive and Violent Behaviour*

<sup>53</sup> Plourde, K.F, Thomas, R, Nanda, G. Boys Mentoring, Gender Norms, and Reproductive Health-Potential for Transformation. *J Adolesc Health*. 2020 Oct;67(4):479-494. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.06.013

<sup>54</sup> Granski, M, Javdani, S, Anderson, V.R, Caires, R. (2020) A Meta-Analysis of Program Characteristics for Youth with Disruptive Behavior Problems: The Moderating Role of Program Format and Youth Gender. *Am J Community Psychol*. 2020 Mar;65(1-2):201-222. doi: 10.1002/ajcp.12377.

et al. (2010)<sup>55</sup> found that in programmes where young children were taught emotional monitoring skills over the course of 14 weekly sessions, children in the intervention condition had a 43% decrease in mean suspension events compared to children in the control group.

### **What are the primary and secondary outcomes?**

Toward Sport is expected to reduce offending (violent and non-violent) as a primary outcome, and also generate positive change in critical areas such as conduct problems, hyperactivity, inattention, peer relationships, pro-social behaviour, wellbeing, participation in physical activity, and transferable skills and knowledge as secondary outcomes, in line with the literature presented in the previous section.

The primary outcome will be a binary variable for whether the CYP has offended (violent and non-violent), such that the primary outcome of the analysis can be interpreted as the impact of the Toward Sport intervention on the probability of offending. As such, the power analysis (detailed in 'Sample size calculations') is conducted based on a binary outcome variable, a comparison of two proportions. A binary variable, rather than a categorical variable capturing different types of offending, was chosen largely based on sample size.

In training, caseworkers are made aware that the primary aim of the trial is to measure the impact of the programme on offending and reoffending, to ensure they are referring a cohort of young people with sufficient levels of need. Additionally, Youth Justice Services and the Police are involved in making referrals to participating local authorities to ensure we can reach young people with a tertiary level of need.

As proven offending (even within the evaluation cohort) is rare, there may not be sufficient numbers of young people offending to get meaningful estimates for different offense types. Additional analyses with more disaggregated offending measures will be subject to data availability and quality. The secondary outcome variables are measured through the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire, comparing the mean total score in the treatment to the mean total score in the control. We will also analyse the impact of the treatment on each of the following subscales of the Strengths and Difficulties: conduct problems subscale; hyperactivity/inattention subscale; peer relationships problem subscale; and prosocial behaviour subscale.<sup>56</sup> A similar approach, comparing the mean total score, will be taken with

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<sup>55</sup> Wyman, P. A, Cross, W, Brown, C, Yu, Q, Tu, X and Eberly, S. (2010). Intervention to strengthen emotional self-regulation in children with emerging mental health problems: Proximal impact on school behavior (Rochester Resilience Project). *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 38(5), 707-720.

<sup>56</sup> The scoring of the Strengths and Difficulties will be conducted following the guidance on the tool's website (<https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/c0.py>).

the ONS 4 wellbeing questions and also with the transferable skills and knowledge questions.<sup>57</sup> The participation in physical activity will be a comparison of the mean response (mean number of days) in the treatment versus control group. Physical activity will be captured via a single-item question from Milton et al. (2010)<sup>58</sup>, which asks CYP the number of days in the past week they did 30 minutes of physical activity, which raised their breathing rate. The full question is provided in the Annex.

Primary outcome data on CYP will be collected through the PNC. The evaluation team has submitted an application to the PNC data, which will provide offence-level data on the occurrence and date of offences, the type of offence (including seriousness, which can be mapped to the ACPO Gravity Matrix), and outcomes in the criminal justice system (sentence, verdict of trial). The PNC includes data on convictions, cautions, reprimands, and warnings giving us access to data on contact with the justice system beyond just convictions.

Secondary outcomes of programme participation include conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer-relationship problems, prosocial behaviour improved behaviours, resilience, attitudes and values, and pro-social activity, improved physical and mental wellbeing, and transferable skills and knowledge. Secondary outcomes will be measured through primary data-collection activities.

Follow-up surveys will be collected 24 weeks after baseline data is collected. While these instruments have been validated, they have not been validated specifically for CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds, and this evaluation (including the pilot, impact evaluation, and the IPE) provides an important opportunity to assess the potential value of the instruments for different subgroups of CYP, including CYP from minoritised backgrounds, or with identified SEND, subject to sample size.<sup>59</sup> During the evaluation, we will explore the feasibility of conducting reliability and validity analyses in line with the methods used by Milton et al. (2010) and Mieloo et al. (2012), attempting to limit the additional burden these activities may place

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<sup>57</sup> See the Appendix 'Survey items' for detail on the questions, scales, and scoring.

<sup>58</sup> Milton, K., Bull, F.C., and Bauman, A. (2010) Reliability and validity testing of a single-item physical activity measure. *Br J Sports Med.* 2011 Mar;45(3):203-8. doi: 10.1136/bjsm.2009.068395. Epub 2010 May 19. PMID: 20484314.

<sup>59</sup> Mieloo C, Raat H, van Oort F, Bevaart F, Vogel I, Donker M, Jansen W. Validity and reliability of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire in 5-6 year olds: differences by gender or by parental education? *PLoS One.* 2012;7(5):e36805. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0036805. Epub 2012 May 18. PMID: 22629332; PMCID: PMC3356337.

Stone LL, Otten R, Engels RC, Vermulst AA, Janssens JM. Psychometric properties of the parent and teacher versions of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire for 4- to 12-year-olds: a review. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev.* 2010 Sep;13(3):254-74. doi: 10.1007/s10567-010-0071-2. PMID: 20589428; PMCID: PMC2919684.

on CYP and caseworkers. Survey measures have been kept as short as possible (taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete), to be accessible to CYP.

### **When do we expect to see impacts?**

We have aligned our data-collection activities with the expected timelines within which we expect to see effects on our primary and secondary outcomes. We expect to see effects on secondary outcomes by the end of the 24-week engagement of the programme (and potentially before), with CYP demonstrating changes in Strengths and Difficulties, wellbeing, engagement with physical activity, and ability and confidence in the measured knowledge domains over the course of the 24-week period.

We recognise that the impacts of Toward Sport on offending and re-offending may take longer than the 24-week intervention period to manifest and appear in the data. For this reason, in addition to collecting data on offending and re-offending at the 24-week mark to measure the short-medium impacts of the intervention on the primary outcome, we also plan to collect primary outcome data at the 24-week-plus-6-month mark to measure the longer-term impacts of the intervention. While we anticipate that all data will be included in the 24-week plus 6-month collection point, collecting at 24 weeks allows for preliminary analysis. We expect that longer-term reductions in offending may be correlated with observed sustained improvements in the secondary outcomes, which we also plan to collect data on at the 24-week-plus-6-month point (in addition to the 24-week point). Our trial is well-powered enough to identify effects that are far smaller than the average effect found in the literature. Therefore, even if the identified effect is smaller at 24 weeks than at 24 weeks plus months, we are still able to detect an effect.

### **Theory of Change assumptions**

Our Theory of Change assumes the availability of suitable and high-quality DPOs and delivery staff to deliver the intervention under the requirements of the Shared Practice Model and that suitable DPOs will respond positively to the recruitment process. StreetGames' work with the Youth Justice Sport Fund provides successful past experience to back up this assumption, but it still remains an assumption within the Theory of Change.

Related to the above assumption, our Theory of Change assumes that there will be sufficient interest in sports from eligible CYP and that sessions related to these sports interests will be provided by the recruited DPOs. Again, StreetGames' previous work with the Youth Justice Sport Fund, working with 7,832 young people and 218 sports organisations, provides relevant past experience behind this assumption.

The delivery model assumed from referrals to participation relies significantly on a strong partnership between teams at the local authority level, practitioners, DPOs, StreetGames,

and the evaluation team. The Theory of Change describes the important role of the local authority teams (see 'Consent and randomisation procedure' section), which will necessitate strong partnerships. The project team have had conversations with Local Authority teams in all the expected delivery sites which provide further confidence in our ability to establish strong partnerships and implement the delivery model as intended.

The Theory of Change assumes that DPOs will be able to accommodate high-risk CYP in their sports sessions and either: (i) develop new sessions for high-risk CYP; (ii) accommodate high-risk CYP in existing sessions without negative consequences for other CYP, developing strong safeguarding practices; or (iii) discuss potential alternatives that meet the needs of the CYP. The Theory of Change also assumes that the DPOs will have the capacity to undertake these conversations with CYP and organise sessions around CYP needs.

The Theory of Change and approaches to measurement assume that the effects of the intervention will be measurable through the selected survey items and offending metrics within the timelines chosen (see the 'When do we expect to see effects?' section above).

### **Theory of Change risks**

The Theory of Change faces the risk of being unable to recruit a sufficient number of DPOs (across the range of potential sports interests and geographies) to meet the target referral numbers needed (a minimum 538 in the treatment group completing the sports programme based on the power calculations). Related to this risk is the possibility of being unable to attract sufficiently large numbers of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic CYP to meet the REDI targets for the evaluation. The past experience of the Youth Justice Sport Fund, working with 7,832 CYP across 218 DPOs and with 44% of CYP from ethnically diverse backgrounds, lends confidence to mitigating this risk through existing practices, such as operating in diverse communities, engaging with diverse community organisations and organisations with experience working with CYP from diverse backgrounds, and providing a diverse range of sports options. The Youth Justice Sport Fund operated in England and Wales with over 220 delivery partner organisations, some of whom will also act as DPOs in the Toward Sport trial. In addition, 80% of DPOs recruited in the pilot have at least 50% of their leadership from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, and half of CYP (50%) consenting to participate in the pilot from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds, demonstrating an ability to recruit the right DPOs to meet the needs of young people from diverse backgrounds.

There is a risk that the proposed recruitment strategy of DPOs makes it challenging to meet the 50% target of DPOs Black, Asian and minority ethnic-led. Previous recruitment experience, understanding the distribution of DPO leaders' backgrounds through StreetGames' network information (past network surveys) and engagement with local authority teams, and close monitoring by StreetGames and rigorous selection practices during recruitment will mitigate against this risk. Monitoring by StreetGames includes a DPO Fidelity checklist, which provides information on adherence to key programme aspects, and qualitative information on delivery within each DPO. Each StreetGames coordinator (one per local authority) will conduct these checks in two DPOs in each local authority per month. These more in-depth monitoring checks will take place alongside regular and ongoing communication between StreetGames and each DPO. The evaluation will also provide an

opportunity to better understand the existence of differential attrition rates for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic CYP, as well as the potential factors behind attrition.

The evaluation delivery model faces the potential risk of Local Authority teams not fully understanding the intended referral/randomisation process or not fully adhering to the randomised assignment in the field, for example, finding ways to offer the CYP in the control group additional support. By randomising after the collection of baseline data and sharing the randomisation decision with the caseworkers after it has already been recorded by the evaluation team, the design limits the ability of caseworkers to change the randomisation decision. Our proposal also includes training for local authority teams, including training for caseworkers making referrals. In addition, we have planned for weekly online drop-in sessions and a designated inbox that will be regularly monitored to provide local authority teams with ongoing support during the project.

A potential risk for high-risk referred CYP, linked to the assumption above, is that DPOs may be unable to find sessions appropriate for such CYP within their organisations. This can be due to a limited number of high-risk referrals (or low capacity), making it infeasible to hold exclusive sessions, and/or due to no available slots in existing sessions that would be appropriate for the high-risk CYP, without potentially harming existing lower-risk CYP participants.

There are potential risks around limited acceptance rates by CYP when offered sports (low interest), potential non-attendance within sports sessions (not actually taking up the sports offer) and dropping out during the programme (attending but then leaving before the 24-weeks programme is complete).

### **When will the intervention be delivered?**

The pilot phase included delivery of the intervention from November 2024 to May 2025 (with a review point in February 2025, prior to the start of the full efficacy trial). The full evaluation will include a delivery phase from May 2025 to April 2026.

## Impact evaluation

### Research questions or study objectives

The impact evaluation is designed to answer the following primary research questions:

1. What is the impact of participation in the Toward Sport voluntary sports programme by 10-17-year-old children and young people at secondary and tertiary level of risk (defined above in section 'Who is the intervention aimed at?') on youth offending rates (violent and non-violent offending), as measured by PNC data, and compared to a control group experience of business-as-usual support without sports programmes (business-as-usual is defined further in section 'Control group and business-as-usual')?
2. What is the impact of participation in the Toward Sport voluntary sports programme on emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer-relationship problems, prosocial behaviour, wellbeing, participation in physical activity and transferable skills and knowledge?

In addition, the impact evaluation aims to provide evidence on the following secondary questions:<sup>60</sup>

1. Is there significant evidence of a differential impact of Toward Sport on youth offending (measured by PNC data) and other secondary outcomes for CYP from white backgrounds compared to CYP from Black, Asian, Arab, and mixed backgrounds? This analysis focuses specifically on race. We separate white from non-white CYP in this research question based on a potential shared experience of racism or racialisation amongst non-white CYP, which may impact their outcomes or interaction with the police or justice services.
2. Is there significant evidence of a differential impact of Toward Sport on youth offending and other outcomes based on specific facilitators (e.g., when the CYP share the same sex as the coach, or when CYP share the same ethnicity as the coach)?
3. Is there significant evidence of a differential impact of Toward Sport on youth offending and other outcomes for youth with different characteristics including gender, eligibility criteria (tertiary versus secondary risk levels), and if the CYP has special education needs?<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> We acknowledge the existence of multiple tests here. Given that these research questions and analyses will be underpowered, especially after accounting for multiple hypothesis testing, we consider this analysis explorative in order to improve the understanding of how the programme potentially leads to impacts. This analysis will also allow the generation of hypotheses which can be further explored in the IPE.

<sup>61</sup> We will also analyse cases where the gender is different to the majority gender of the CYP in the group.

4. Does the impact of Toward Sport vary by the number of weeks that CYP attend for?
5. Does the impact of Toward Sport vary by geography (local authority)?

## Design

**Table 1: Trial design**

<b>Trial design, including number of arms</b>		<i>Efficacy trial. Two-armed multi-site trial with randomisation at the individual (CYP) level. Within each local authority, CYP are randomised after referral, when they have provided their consent to participate in the evaluation. The randomisation occurs on a rolling basis after the eligible CYP is referred to the Local Authority, engages with the caseworker, and provides their consent. More details on the process are included in 'Randomisation'</i>
<b>Unit of randomisation</b>		<i>Individual CYP level, within local authorities on a rolling basis, on a 50-50 treatment-control basis to maximise power</i>
<b>Stratification variables (if applicable)</b>		<i>Randomisation will take place within local authorities (stratification at the local authority level). Within local authorities, randomisation will occur on a rolling basis at the CYP level.</i>
<b>Primary outcome (Baseline and follow-ups)</b>	<b>variable</b>	<i>Binary variable if an offence (violent and non-violent) occurs in the data. At baseline this variable is equal to one if any offence occurs prior to baseline; at follow-up this is equal to one if any offence occurs between baseline and follow-up (true for both follow-ups).</i>
	<b>measure (instrument, scale, source)</b>	<i>Number of recorded incidents to date, 0 upwards, PNC</i>
<b>Secondary outcome(s) (Baseline and follow-ups)</b>	<b>variable(s)</b>	<i>Emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour</i>
	<b>measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)</b>	<p><i>Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (<u>one-sided self-rated SDQ for 11-17-year-olds</u>), response scale is Not True/Somewhat True/Certainly True, scoring follows <u>the SDQ scoring approach</u>. The measure will be the total score, as well as each of the following subscales:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Conduct problems subscale.</i></li> <li>• <i>Hyperactivity/inattention subscale.</i></li> <li>• <i>Peer relationships problem subscale.</i></li> <li>• <i>Prosocial behaviour subscale.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>For those aged 10 in the study sample, the caseworker will instruct and work with the parent of the CYP to implement the one-sided SDQ for parents or teachers of 4-17 year olds, found on the SDQ tool site <a href="#">here</a>.</i></p>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>variable(s)</b>	<i>ONS4 Wellbeing</i>

<b>outcome(s)</b> <b>(Baseline and follow-ups)</b>	measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)	<i>ONS4 Wellbeing Questions, Scale 0-10</i>
<b>Secondary outcome(s)</b>	variable(s)	<i>Physical Activity</i>
<b>(Baseline and follow-ups)</b>	measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)	<i>Milton et al (2010) single-item physical activity measure, Scale 0-7</i>
<b>Secondary outcome(s)</b>	variable(s)	<i>Transferable skills and knowledge</i>
<b>(Baseline and follow-ups)</b>	measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)	<i>Transferable skills and knowledge questions used in DCMS evaluation of National Citizen Service, Very Confident/Confident/Neither Confident nor not confident/Not very confident/Not at all confident/Don't Know items converted to 0-6 Scale</i>

A multi-site trial is required for this evaluation to gather sufficient sample sizes of CYP receiving comparable support through community-based sports organisations. Since such organisations are typically small, it is infeasible to design an RCT within a single organisation. The multi-site trial allows a larger number of CYP to be recruited for the evaluation by partnering with multiple organisations. To ensure that the treatment being tested is consistent across CYP and organisations, a Shared Practice Model has been developed (see section 'Intervention'), such that organisations deliver common sports programme components. Multi-site trials also improve the external validity of evaluations versus single-site settings.

Randomisation is conducted at the individual CYP level on a rolling basis within each local authority to maximise statistical power, ensuring that local authority-specific variation does not absorb or confound treatment/control variation. This approach also provides the maximum power to conduct any cross-local authority comparisons. Once local authority-specific stratification is accounted for, the treatment and control groups will be similarly representative of the population of CYP who are eligible and consent to participate in the evaluation – there will be no differential characteristics between treatment and control CYP driven by the treatment-control allocation differing across sites.

Two arms are chosen because of the trial's design relative to the core research questions: comparing the impact of Toward Sport against business-as-usual activities.

## Randomisation

The evaluation team, with the support of the project team, is working with representatives at the local authority level, aligning on the eligibility criteria and how they are recorded, the survey of secondary outcomes, and the consent and data-sharing agreements to introduce to the eligible families once engagement with the case worker begins. The evaluation team will work with the data lead of the Local Authority teams to ensure that the eligibility criteria for the evaluation (see 'Who is the intervention aimed at?') are clearly understood and applied to identify eligible families and CYP. Based on the eligibility criteria, the caseworkers will be given clear instructions to engage with the families and CYP, including detailed training sessions and ongoing support (see 'Support provided to Local Authority teams').

The Local Authority case workers will begin engagement with the eligible families and in each case will undertake a comprehensive risk assessment and assess the CYP's interests, including specific questions on interests in sports (in general). At this stage, there will be no clear offer of a sports programme – the case worker will be assessing the CYP's interest in sports and in particular sports activities (as well as other interests) as part of the initial engagement and assessment. For those CYP who express a potential interest in sports, the case worker will then ask the CYP if they would be willing to participate in the evaluation study. For those who consent, the caseworker will collect baseline data on the primary and secondary outcomes and demographic data.

After consent and baseline data are collected, the evaluation team will randomise each young person into treatment or control. At the pilot stage, the evaluation team randomised new referrals using the Cambridge Randomiser. However, as the Cambridge Randomiser does not allow multiple entries at once, the evaluation team will randomise in Excel during the efficacy trial based on the larger volume of referrals. Once the evaluation team has completed the randomisation, the case worker will be notified of whether or not the CYP has been assigned to treatment or control. Specifically, our engagement strategy involves the following steps: (i) the caseworker engages with the family and CYP to identify eligible, interested, and consenting CYP, and collects their baseline data; (ii) the caseworker feeds this information directly to the evaluation team, (iii) and the assignment of the CYP into treatment/control is shared back to the caseworker. If the CYP is assigned to the treatment group, they are allocated to an appropriate DPO who undertakes risk assessment and invites the young person to participate.

We will provide clear guidance and reasoning to the local authority teams, ensuring that caseworkers understand the benefits of a high-quality study and fully understand the requirements to achieve this and their roles in meeting them (see 'Support provided to Local Authority teams'), as well as our ongoing monitoring of compliance and fidelity (detailed in section 'Compliance').

We are aware that there is an important reliance on Local Authority case workers. Based on informal discussions with Early Help representatives in several local authorities, the proposed approach is considered feasible, with many Local Authority teams already engaging in primary data collection on similar outcomes (e.g., implementing the Strengths and Difficulties tool). The main recommendation for our engagement is to streamline the interactions with the caseworkers, undertaking as much of the processes for the evaluation ‘upfront’ (i.e., with the local authority team) as possible, following aspects of the implementation approach of the Family Group Conferencing RCT funded by Foundations. We do, however, acknowledge that there are still additional asks of local authority staff and capacity. For this reason, both the project team and the evaluation team are earmarking resources to support data-collection activities that will be used to minimise the burden on case workers, incentivise responses, and/or compensate additional data-collection activities asked of case workers (see the Shared Practice Model document for additional information).<sup>62</sup>

Data collection and collaboration with caseworkers in the pilot stage were largely successful. The evaluation team will continue to work closely with the teams at the local authority level throughout all phases of the study and will provide supporting activities, in collaboration with the project team.

### **Resentful demoralisation**

We acknowledge the potential risk of resentful demoralisation for CYP in the control group. We have incorporated the following mitigations into the evaluation to address this risk:

- CYP randomised into the control group will have a clear pathway into business-as-usual services (detailed in the section ‘Control group and business-as-usual’). CYP will experience regular engagement through business-as-usual services and will (in principle) experience the same level of engagement with the case workers as the treatment group (conditional on their risk level and needs).
- The information provided to CYP will clearly lay out how they are involved in an important and valuable study without overselling the potential benefits of involvement in the programme.

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<sup>62</sup> StreetGames have earmarked additional resources within their budget under the *capacity contributions to Supporting Families* heading. See Project budget breakdown, *additional budget narrative* tab, for more detail. StreetGames has held extensive discussions with local authority teams at Caseworker, Data analysis and Senior Leadership levels.

- At the stage of referral into the programme (and prior to randomisation), CYP are not aware of the specific offer of sports and are instead invited to participate in a support programme. CYP are only made aware of the offer of sports once they are randomised into the treatment group. This approach was designed in collaboration with caseworkers responsible for making referrals into the evaluation, with the aim of limiting resentful demoralisation in the control group.
- Through interviews with caseworkers in the IPE of the pilot stage, we found limited evidence of resentful demoralisation, but this will continue to be monitored as a risk throughout the efficacy trial.

## **Participants**

The intended participants for the evaluation and the intervention, as well as the rationale behind the eligibility criteria, are detailed above in the Theory of Change section ('Who is the intervention aimed at?').

## **Incentives for CYP to participate in the evaluation**

We have accounted for incentives for CYP to participate in the evaluation (engage in data-collection activities) for both the treatment and control group in the full evaluation (£60,000 to accommodate a £10 voucher for participation in each of the follow-up surveys). £2,000 will also be reserved for incentives for the IPE activities to compensate CYP for their participation in focus groups or interviews. The approach to incentives was decided based on a steer from YEF, based on feedback from StreetGames and caseworkers. In addition to their role in improving participation and response rates for the evaluation, incentives play a potential role in reducing resentful demoralisation for the control group (see section 'Randomisation'). If there is an underspend on incentives, we will repurpose any remaining budget to other areas of the evaluation.

## **Sample size calculations**

The sample size of the evaluation is based on practical (capacity) constraints, from which we estimate the minimum detectable effects under a level of power of 80% and a significance level of 5%. The constraints are based on 50 DPOs recruited by StreetGames, each able to deliver weekly sports sessions (of 2 hours) for 24 weeks to a group no larger than 15 CYP, as well as data provided by local authority teams on the number of eligible young people in each local authority area.

Based on this capacity, and under the following assumptions, we estimate that a total of 2,242 CYP will be approached by caseworkers, of whom 1,435 will be eligible. A total of 1,134 will be randomised over the evaluation period, of whom 1,077 will be included in the analysis and we will have follow-up data on. The assumptions are as follows:

- A rate of attrition from the evaluation of 5% (for both the treatment and control group), accounting for 3% of participants withdrawing their consent from the evaluation, and 2% of participants being missing from administrative data.
- 40% of CYP approached by caseworkers being ineligible for participation in the evaluation, based on (i) not meeting any of the secondary or tertiary eligibility criteria, or (ii) being uninterested in sports.
- 20% of CYP who are eligible will not consent to participate in the evaluation.
- Referrals for the available slots from non-participants and drop-outs are offered to new CYP after a delay of 8 weeks (some delay due to distinguishing between non-participation and a missed session, as well as administrative delay).
  - The referrals for newly available slots will be offered on a randomised basis. All referrals within the evaluation will follow the same consent, randomisation, and referral process as outlined in the Shared Practice Model.
  - Those who drop out of the programme are still included in the analysis of the evaluation. Specifically, all CYP who consent to the evaluation and are randomised into the treatment group will be included in the analysis as treatment-group members (regardless of number of weeks attending). Subsequent complementary analysis will assess the importance of duration on efficacy. CYP in the treatment group who drop out of the programme will also be sent follow-up surveys on secondary outcomes.
  - The proposed operating model ensures that these slots are replaced in order to: (i) maximise the number of CYP that benefit from the available slots (for value-for-money and power reasons); (ii) ensure sufficient CYP numbers in each sports group session. New CYP will be referred to the sports sessions throughout the referral window, or until we reach 3,000 eligible referrals.

With 1,134 CYP randomised into the trial, we estimate the minimum detectable effect, assuming a two-sided test, 80% power, and 5% significance level. We estimate the minimum detectable effect with different sample sizes in the table below:

**Table 2: Sample size and effect size**

MDES %	Treatment effect size in Cohen's $h^{63}$	Sample size
50%	0.32	304
45%	0.29	386
40%	0.25	500
35%	0.22	670
32%	0.20	800
30%	0.18	932
29%	0.18	976
<b>27%</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>1134</b>
25%	0.15	1372

The table above presents sample size estimates for different levels of the Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES), expressed both as a percentage reduction in the probability of offending and as a standardised effect. The MDES ranges from 50%, which is the approximate effect estimated in the YEF Sports Programme Toolkit, to 25%. The calculation has been carried out under a 25% offending rate in the control group. This is an approximation based on evidence from a [Department for Education](#) report and recent [Youth Justice Statistics](#) on offending and re-offending. The proposed sample size (in bold) would allow for the identification of an impact of a 27% reduction in offending rates for the whole sample, with the standardised effect size detectable below the 0.2 threshold and a 48% reduction in offending for CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. In both cases, the sample sizes are large enough to ensure a well-powered trial and detect an effect in line with the average impact estimated in similar studies.

While the literature offers guidance on the potential impact, as this is a relatively novel and short intervention, there is some uncertainty around the impact that can be achieved. Therefore, the proposed sample size will allow us to prudently detect even smaller effects and potentially allow for subgroup analysis.

**For subgroup analysis comparing CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds to CYP from white backgrounds, in terms of the efficacy of Toward Sport:** For the case where the control group offending rate is 25% and 30% of participants are from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, the minimum detectable effect size within this group for the

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<sup>63</sup> Binary effects are translated into a standardised effect size using the arcsin transformation (Cohen, 1988): insert the two proportions into this function:  $2 \cdot \text{asin}(\sqrt{p1}) - 2 \cdot \text{asin}(\sqrt{p2})$ . In each of the above, the pre-post test correlation is assumed to be zero for conservativeness.

efficacy of Toward Sport is a 48% reduction or a Cohen’s h of 0.31.

The efficacy trial is designed and powered to assess the overall efficacy of Toward Sport for the eligible CYP population. Due to the sample size and power considerations, the subgroup and heterogeneity analyses are intended to be exploratory and complementary to the implementation and process evaluation analyses, which are further detailed in the section ‘Implementation and process evaluation’ and which specifically focus on the differential experiences and perceptions of CYP from different subgroups.

**Table 2: Sample size calculations**

PARAMETER	
Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES)	
0.17 (Cohen’s h)	
Pre-test / post-test correlations	level 1 (participant)
	0 (our power calculations have been conducted under this conservative assumption)
level 2 (cluster)	N/A
	Intraclass correlations (ICCs)
level 1 (participant)	0
level 2 (cluster)	N/A
Alpha <sup>64</sup>	
0.05	
Power	
0.8	
One-sided or two-sided?	
Two-sided	
Average cluster size (if clustered)	
N/A	
Number of clusters <sup>65</sup>	Intervention
	N/A
	Control
N/A	
Total	N/A
Number of participants randomised	Intervention
	567
	Control
567	
Total	1,134

<sup>64</sup> Please adjust as necessary for trials with multiple primary outcomes, 3-arm trials, etc., when a Bonferroni correction is used to account for family-wise errors.

<sup>65</sup> Please state how the data is clustered, if there is any clustering (e.g., by delivery practitioner or setting).

## Outcome measures

Toward Sport is expected to reduce offending (violent and non-violent) as a primary outcome, and also generate positive change in key areas such as conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer-relationship problems, prosocial behaviour, wellbeing, participation in physical activity, and transferable skills and knowledge as secondary outcomes, in line with the Theory of Change presented above and the literature cited within that section. The outcomes are explicitly outlined in the Theory of Change and the measures are described below.

The primary outcome of the impact evaluation is the rate of youth offending (violent and non-violent), which will be sourced from the Police National Computer data. The secondary outcomes are emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention, peer-relationship problems, prosocial behaviour, participation in physical activity, and transferable skills and knowledge.

Data on CYP outcomes for the evaluation will be collected at three points in time: at baseline (at the point of referral, after consenting to participate in the evaluation), at the end of the 24-week period, and 6 months after the 24-week period (24 weeks plus 6 months after referral).

Secondary outcome data at baseline will be collected by the local authority case workers and through an online survey of CYP at both follow-ups. The case workers will be provided training by the evaluation team on obtaining consent for the evaluation, the availability of ongoing support and communication channels, and the availability and process for receiving incentive payments.

For the 6-month and 12-month follow-ups, when most young people will no longer have an open case with a local authority case worker, we will collect data by providing CYP with an online link via text or email to complete the survey of secondary outcomes. When the time to complete the survey comes around, the CYP will be notified and asked to complete the survey. The survey will first be sent to the CYP themselves. If contact with the CYP is unsuccessful, the survey will be sent to the parent. CYP and parents will receive two reminders before being registered as non-responsive. In cases where the CYP's case is still open with the local authority at follow-up, we will ask the caseworker to assist with data collection and getting in touch with the young person. For young people in the treatment group, we will also ask DPOs to assist with data collection at the first follow-up.

There may be instances where CYP require additional support to complete the follow-up surveys, based on additional learning or access needs. Microsoft Forms (the platform on which the survey is coded) has built-in accessibility measures to support CYPs in completing the survey. This includes an immersive reader function, which will read survey text aloud, only

show one line of text at a time, and provide images for certain words to help better illustrate their meaning.

SEND status for all consenting young people is collected at baseline, meaning the evaluation team know which young people may require additional support ahead of follow-up data collection. For CYP with identified SEND, additional information will be sent to parents and young people on the use of accessibility features when they receive the follow-up survey. All CYP and parents are provided with contact details for the evaluation team, who can provide additional support if the existing support is not sufficient.

Secondary outcomes of programme participation include improved emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer-relationship problems, prosocial behaviour, wellbeing, participation in physical activity, and transferable skills and knowledge. The data-collection tools consist of: the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire<sup>66</sup> for the 11-17 age group; the ONS 4 Wellbeing questions<sup>67</sup>; the single item measure for physical activity<sup>68</sup>, and transferrable skills and knowledge obtained by the CYP, using questions used in the National Citizen Service Evaluation by DCMS following completion of the intervention. We have included a draft survey to measure secondary outcomes in an annex ('Survey items').

For the primary outcome for consenting CYP, we will have access to offending data from the PNC. While we initially planned on using local offending data, as well as PNC data, conversations with local authorities indicated there was some missingness and variation in quality of local data across areas, with examples of missing records potentially including, (i) offense histories from CYP who had moved from other local authorities, and (ii) offense records for CYP who turn 18 during the evaluation period. As a result, we have decided to rely on PNC data to measure our primary outcome.

Discussions with Ministry of Justice representatives from the Data First Initiative have suggested an expected period of 12 months until access. The data from the PNC also incorporates a lag of up to 6 months in the offending data (for example, the data as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 will include offending up to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024). We will have access to the Police National Computer data in time to analyse data for the full efficacy. We have planned for the additional time required to account for the lag in the offending data when using the PNC as the source. The PNC data allows access to past offending data, meaning that access by the end of the trial will provide offending data for the longer-term follow-up and for the baseline period.

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<sup>66</sup> [https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz\(UK\)](https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz(UK)) For those aged 10 in the study sample, the case worker will instruct and work with the parent of the CYP to implement the One-sided SDQ for parents or teachers of 4-17 year olds, found on the SDQ tool site [here](#).

<sup>67</sup> <https://evaluationframework.sportengland.org/media/1333/sport-england-child-question-bank.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> Milton K, Bull FC, Bauman A. Reliability and validity testing of a single-item physical activity measure. *Br J Sports Med.* 2011 Mar;45(3):203-8. doi: 10.1136/bjsm.2009.068395. Epub 2010 May 19. PMID: 20484314.

However, the PNC data would not be available in time for the pilot, where we will use local offending data to measure our primary outcome.

### **Data collection timelines**

Data for both the treatment and control participants will be collected at the following intervals:

- Baseline (at the stage of referral, after the CYP consents to participate in the evaluation, but before the CYP's assignment into treatment/control is revealed).
- 24 weeks after referral into the evaluation, consistent with programme duration.
- 6 months after the 24-week timeframe has ended (up to the end of the data-collection phase for this project).

In order to keep young people engaged throughout the evaluation period, and through both follow-ups, young people and parents will be sent an email reminding them of their participation in the trial, asking them to update the evaluation team if they change their contact details in future, and reminding them that we'll be in touch with another survey. These touchpoints will occur 3 months before the first follow-up and 3 months before the second follow-up. This gives the evaluation team another opportunity to check that contact details are valid, and reminds the family they are involved in the evaluation. Further, while some caseworkers may no longer be engaged with the family at this time, there will be a greater number of open cases than at the longer-term follow-up, meaning caseworkers can also assist with reaching out at this point, or provide up-to-date contact information.

Additional monitoring data will also be collected (with the support of StreetGames) from DPOs. This includes data on the number of individual young people engaged within the Toward Sport programme; what sports they are participating in (e.g., contact versus non-contact sports), and which sports are most popular, sessional attendance, including the number of sessions and hours provided, the types of activities provided by each DPO, coach characteristics (e.g., ethnicity and gender), each DPO's attendance rates, and participant engagement levels using an Engagement Matrix to record participant engagement levels every 8 weeks or at least twice during the programme.

### **Demographic data**

We also plan to collect the following demographic data on participating and consenting CYP:

- Ethnicity, following the UK government [guidance](#)
- Sex, following ONS [guidance](#)
- Age
- SEND status
- Looked after status
- First language spoken at home

For the purpose of data archiving, for consenting CYP, we will collect their name, date of birth, address (postcode), and school.

## **Compliance**

For CYP assigned to treatment, DPOs will collect regular attendance and engagement data. This data will allow the assessment of compliance of treatment-group participants with actual attendance and engagement with the intervention.

Based on conversations with StreetGames, the design of the randomisation (in which the randomisation decision is revealed to the caseworker after the initial meeting), and the role of the StreetGames referral coordinator in assigning CYP to appropriate DPOs (rather than caseworkers), it is highly unlikely that control group participants will attend Toward Sport sessions. In training, caseworkers are explicitly instructed not to refer CYP to sport programmes as part of BAU, and DPOs are instructed not to accept referrals for funded places, except through the referral mechanism for the evaluation. Nevertheless, we will monitor the extent to which the control group are attending funded sessions in DPOs as a result of taking part in the study through a question in the 6-month follow-up survey administered to young people.

To assess compliance of DPOs with the Shared Practice Model, the evaluation team will receive reports from StreetGames, which has local area teams working with DPOs to provide support and ensure that the Shared Practice Model is being adhered to.

## **Analysis**

The analysis of the data will be on an intention-to-treat basis. The intention-to-treat parameter will be estimated based on a regression of the follow-up outcome on the treatment indicator, the baseline level of the outcome, and local authority (strata) fixed effects. This approach follows the 'Conditional inference' [YEF guidance](#). The confidence intervals will be based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors at the individual level. We will convert this estimate into the relative risk ratio, comparing the control mean probability of offending (adjusted for local authority fixed effects) with the control mean plus the estimated treatment effect. Further detail on the analysis can be found in the Statistical Analysis Plan for the evaluation.

## **Internal pilot evaluation and progress criteria**

Prior to the full efficacy trial, the team implemented a pilot evaluation within one local authority, Bradford, and five DPOs. The first referrals for the pilot were received in November 2024, with the first young people beginning to participate in sessions in December. Prior to receiving the first referrals, the evaluation and delivery team coordinated with local authority teams, designed and agreed consent forms and data sharing agreements, and trained caseworkers and DPOs.

In parallel, the mobilisation period ensured that the project and evaluation team are engaged with all local authority teams to understand the operating and data environment in each area. This mobilisation period continues following the pilot, after which the efficacy trial (having been reviewed and revised based on pilot learnings) and associated training sessions begin. This means that the key learnings from the pilot will be combined with a detailed understanding of the data and operating context in all of the sites, ensuring that the full efficacy trial is ready to launch in each site. Key operational learnings from the pilot will be brought into ongoing mobilisation discussions.

The first cohort of CYP in the pilot had baseline data collected in November 2024, and the implementation period of the pilot will finish by the end of June 2025 after which follow-up data will be collected for all cohorts of CYP, including regarding primary and secondary outcomes as listed above, and analysed at the end of the pilot. Pilot data will also be analysed alongside efficacy data in the final report, subject to data quality and comparability with the full efficacy trial. In December 2024 through March 2025, the team conducted an implementation and process evaluation (IPE) of the pilot. The IPE included interviews with caseworkers, DPO staff and coaches, and CYP participating in sport sessions, led by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Experts.

The transition point report was submitted to YEF in February 2025, with a few weeks allocated for YEF to review the pilot and progress criteria and decide whether to proceed with the efficacy study. Learnings from the pilot are being incorporated into the efficacy trial design and associated materials from February-April 2025, with the revised protocol being sent for additional ethical review if necessary. The training sessions for Early Help teams and DPOs will start in mid-March 2025, with the efficacy trial ready to launch in full by May 2025. At the end of the pilot, the evaluation team wrote a transition document outlining progress against the progression criteria, and key learnings and findings from the trial and engagement with DPOs, caseworkers, and young people. The transition document was used by YEF to review the pilot phase and decide whether to proceed with the efficacy study.

## **Progress Criteria**

The pilot was assessed against the following progress criteria, where the noted metric was assessed against the following thresholds of Green = >75%, Amber = 50%-74%, and Red < 50%, unless a different threshold is specifically stated. RAG criteria for the pilot were informative and meant to be assessed holistically. Red and Amber criteria provided an indication to the delivery and evaluation team that these elements needed to be updated or monitored for the full efficacy trial based on learnings from the trial, rather than necessarily an indication that the full trial should not go ahead. The progression criteria also informed YEF's decision about progression to efficacy, along with the evaluator's recommendation in the transition point decision document.



Rag ratings Criteria	Green (Go)	Amber (Pause and think)	Red (pause and think or stop)
Referral and participation numbers. <i>Metric = % of CYP consenting to participate in the evaluation as a % of the 80 CYP target (our target is 90% consent, therefore 36 in the treatment group and 36 in the control group).</i>	>75%	50%-74%	<50%
Referral and participation numbers. <i>Metric = % of CYP consenting to participate in the evaluation who are from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. In line with YEF guidance, 30% of CYP coming from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds will correspond to a green rating. Our definition of minority ethnic includes anyone who identifies as Black, Asian, Arab, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma, or from Mixed and multiple ethnic groups.</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Randomisation fidelity. <i>Metric = 1 - % of CYP assigned to the control group centrally that appear in the treatment group or participate in treatment.</i>	<10%	11-30%	>30%
Participation rates in the baseline. <i>Metric = % of CYP that respond as a % of the total that agree and consent to participate in the pilot both in the treatment and control group (36 in the treatment group and 36 in the control group).</i>	>75%	50-74%	<50%
Attendance rates in at least one sports session for the treated group that have completed a readiness and risk assessment check. <i>Metric = % of CYP that participate as a % of the total number of treatment group participants (c. 25) that agree and are deemed ready to participate in the intervention.</i>	>75%	50%-74%	<50%
The percentage of missing or infeasible data items across all questions in surveys. <i>Metric = 1-% of questions across all surveys that contain evidence of data quality issues.</i>	<25%	26-50%	>50%
The percentage of treatment group participants for which attendance and engagement data is received from the DPOs. <i>Metric = % of CYP in the treatment group attending a sports session/registering with a DPO for whom we receive attendance and engagement data from the DPO.</i>	>75%	50%-74%	<50%

Rag ratings Criteria	Green (Go)	Amber (Pause and think)	Red (pause and think or stop)
Recruitment of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority led DPOs. <i>Metric = 50% of DPOs recruited that are Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority led.</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A-
DPO Fidelity. <i>Metric = % of DPOs implementing the sports programme as intended, consistent with the Shared Practice Model.</i>	>75%	50-74%	<50%
Attendance rates at pilot evaluation training sessions by participating DPOs. <i>Metric = % of DPOs with at least 1 senior leader and 1 other member of staff attending the training.</i>	>75%	50-74%	<50%
Attendance rates at pilot evaluation training sessions by participating local authority teams. <i>Metric = % of expected attendees attending the session (expected attendees depends on the site, but will include the data lead, the involved case workers, and an administrative coordinator)</i>	>75%	50-74%	<50%
Assessment of availability and quality of local offending data. <i>Metric = access to local offending data in pilot area by week 8.</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Progression of access to Police National Computer data. <i>Metric = PNC data application progressing as planned.</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A

All progress criteria for the pilot were green, apart from two which were rated as amber: (i) referral and participation numbers, and (ii) attendance rates in the sport sessions. The number of referrals was lower than expected due to the length of the pilot, with limited time for caseworkers to get trained and up to speed with the programme, the Christmas period and adverse weather conditions impacting referral patterns, and referrals only coming from specific postcodes due to the location of DPOs. The low number of CYP attending at least one sport session can also partially be attributed to the short duration of the pilot, with DPOs highlighting the lag between when a young person is referred, and when they can attend the first session, based on requiring additional information from caseworkers, or scheduling an introductory meeting with the CYP's family.

### **Implementation and process evaluation**

We will conduct an IPE after the full evaluation. The IPE will focus on the research questions detailed below, using the full evaluation IPE findings to understand potential drivers and mediating factors behind the impact evaluation results.

Our approach to the IPE will be based on the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research<sup>69</sup> and we will develop the outcomes for the implementation evaluation using the Proctor et al (2011) framework.<sup>70</sup>

The recruitment of respondents (detailed below) for the IPE will include a proportional representation of CYP from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, ensuring that the following research questions will be explored explicitly considering the experience of CYP from marginalised backgrounds.

### **Research questions**

1. To what extent is the referral, randomisation, and consent process being implemented as intended? And how acceptable are these procedures to CYP and other stakeholders?

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<sup>69</sup> Damschroder, L., Hall, C., Gillon, L., Reardon, C., Kelley, C., Sparks, J., & Lowery, J. (2015). The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR): progress to date, tools and resources, and plans for the future. In *Implementation Science* (Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1-1). BioMed Central.

<sup>70</sup> Proctor E, Silmere H, Raghavan R, Hovmand P, Aarons G, Bunger A, Griffey R, Hensley M. Outcomes for implementation research: conceptual distinctions, measurement challenges, and research agenda. *Adm Policy Ment Health*. 2011 Mar;38(2):65-76. doi: 10.1007/s10488-010-0319-7. PMID: 20957426; PMCID: PMC3068522.

2. To what extent are the sports programmes being implemented as intended and consistent with the Shared Practice Model?
3. What is the demographic profile of participants in terms of age, sex, ethnicity, and special education needs?
4. What is the level of engagement (including number of weeks attended and engagement levels as measured by the engagement matrix) by CYP, how do CYP and staff perceive the intervention, what are the aspects contributing to positive and negative experiences, and how does this experience differ across groups of CYP (including specifically for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups, and across sex, and CYP with special education needs)?
5. What are the key barriers to participation and further engagement in the programme (including specifically for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups, and across sex and CYP with special education needs)? Are these barriers preventing the meeting of the REDI targets of this evaluation?
6. What are the perceptions of the avenues of support, what additional support do local authority teams and DPOs require, and what is the best modality and design of this support? Do local authority teams feel they received sufficient training prior to the evaluation?
7. What external factors (e.g., community and family factors) impact participation and engagement?
8. Are there any unintended consequences of the programme and the evaluation that were not picked up during design (including specifically for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups, and across sex and CYP with special education needs)?
9. How robust are the monitoring and evaluation systems in place in the DPOs in order to accurately track participation, engagement, and costs?
10. How appropriate are the evaluation materials, such as the consent forms, information sheets, and questionnaires, for different CYP (including specifically for CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds and for CYP with special education needs), and how can they be improved?
11. To what extent is there evidence of resentful demoralisation from control group participants? What are the key features of the evaluation design and implementation that help to mitigate resentful demoralisation?
12. To what extent do CYP feel that participation in the sports programme and subsequent data collection activities are voluntary?

## Research methods

The IPE will draw on the following datasets:

**Local authority data:** Early Help teams at the local authority level have a list of eligible families for the Early Help programmes and will have a list of families that meet the eligibility criteria for the Toward Sport programme. For the families that consent to participate in the evaluation, this data will include information on the eligibility criteria, the centrally determined randomisation, the support offerings to each family, and the responses to the data-collection tools (demographic data and outcomes data).

This data will be used to assess the feasibility of the trial and the fidelity to the trial requirements. This data will also be used to understand the reach of the trial to different minoritised groups and how their experiences have differed.

**DPO monitoring, evaluation and learning data:** DPOs participating in the evaluation will record participation and engagement (using the engagement matrix) with the intervention by CYP assigned to the treatment group. This data will be shared with the evaluation team.

This data will be used to assess the fidelity to the trial requirements, the reach of the trial and the intervention specifically to CYP and different groups of CYP, the popularity of different sports or types of sports, and the engagement levels, highlighting likely positive and negative experiences.

**Interviews with local authority teams and DPO staff:** During the full evaluation, we will interview 20 local authority staff and 20 DPO staff. The interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one basis with experienced social researchers. The interviews will be semi-structured based on detailed topic guides that will be designed to answer the core research questions and adapted based on learnings from the pilot and data analysis. The semi-structured format still allows the respondent and the researcher flexibility to explore additional topics that are important to the respondent and/or to dive into topics in more detail.

This data will be used to assess the trial's implementation quality, appropriateness, and acceptability. This data will explore the successes and challenges faced in the referral process, recruitment process, obtaining consent, and the randomisation process. It will also help understand adherence to the Shared Practice Model by DPOs and identify any concerns and points of deviation, including what business-as-usual supports are provided to CYP in the control group by local authority teams. We will also aim to sample caseworkers with longer engagements or cases with the young people to understand the extent to which the control group is experiencing resentful demoralisation as a result of the trial. StreetGames has engaged with over 100 practitioners through training, giving us a sufficient sample for engagement in interviews. Further, during the pilot stage, the average length of time a young

person was engaged with the service was 17 weeks, and 34% of young people were engaged with caseworkers for 24 weeks or longer.

This data was also used to assess the adequacy of existing support during the pilot and the need to provide additional support to local authority teams and DPOs during the full evaluation.

**Focus groups with CYP:** As part of the IPE of the full evaluation, we will conduct 10 focus groups with CYP from the treatment group, recruiting a representative sample of CYP, and 4 additional focus groups with CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. The topics will relate directly to the CYP's engagement with and experiences of the evaluation and intervention, focusing on potential drivers of effects, using the Theory of Change and learnings from past interviews and the data as guidance, as well as any unintended consequences of the evaluation and the intervention. The additional focus groups will focus on understanding how the experiences of CYP from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds differed and how this feeds into impacts and policy implications. The sampling strategy for the focus groups in the full evaluation will be purposeful, based on local authority, DPO, age, sex, ethnicity, and special education needs, to ensure a diverse range of views are incorporated into the data. The aim will be to have sessions that are sufficiently large to ensure broad representation of views and interactive discussions, but not too large to crowd out individual voices. All focus groups will be led by experienced and trained social researchers. Safeguarding will be at the forefront of the research, and CYP and their parents will be provided with clear guidelines and information about the focus group in advance.

While we initially planned to conduct focus groups during the pilot, we ultimately engaged with CYP through interviews, based on feedback from DPOs. One-to-one interviews allowed young people to share more openly, without worrying about the opinions of their peers or fellow session participants, and allowed us to be flexible with our questions based on how many sessions a young person had participated in. While we plan to conduct focus groups for the full evaluation, we will remain flexible to engage in other ways, depending on feedback from DPOs and what works best for each young person.

**Case studies with ethnographic observations:** We will conduct case studies of 5 CYP from the treatment group who participate in the intervention, including a detailed understanding of their backgrounds and experiences with the evaluation and intervention. The case study will provide a holistic picture of the CYP's engagement with and experience of the referral process, initial engagement with the DPO, and their experiences of the intervention. The case study will also explore how the intervention plausibly impacted the CYP's outcomes and how external factors and other characteristics and experiences of the CYP interacted with their experience of the evaluation and intervention. Recruitment for the case studies will be designed to provide variation across positive experiences (high engagement), less positive experiences (early dropout), and across ethnic groups. The case studies will include engaging

with recruited CYP from the start of their interaction with the evaluation and throughout the evaluation and intervention period, up to the end of the evaluation. The engagement will be adapted to the needs and requirements of participating CYP and can include in-person discussions, telephone or online discussions, family visits, observing and discussing a sports session, discussions with the case worker, and discussions with the DPO staff and coaches. The objective is to bring in a broad range of information from a variety of sources and over time, in order to develop a deep understanding of the lived experience of the CYP. The approach taken will be flexible to the circumstances and preferences of the CYP and will evolve depending on the learnings obtained throughout the engagement (for example, the types of discussions had with the caseworkers and DPO staff will depend on the learnings from the CYP discussions and their engagement with the intervention).

## **Analysis**

Data and information from each component of the IPE will be analysed separately by the research team and then triangulated. The approach will be to synthesise findings from the qualitative research and identify areas where the sources provide different conclusions or where there is reinforcement. The analytical approach will use the Theory of Change as guidance and highlight areas where new components or pathways to the Theory of Change may be needed.

Qualitative data will be digitally recorded, with the notes from social researchers recorded verbatim. We will use Framework Analysis<sup>71</sup> to examine and interpret qualitative data, identifying key themes through deductive and inductive methods. The qualitative data will assess perceptions of implementation quality by local authority staff and DPO staff and experiences of CYP. This data will be used to understand potential deviations from the evaluation and randomisation protocol, adherence to the Shared Practice Model core components, potential implementation barriers and challenges, and barriers to further participation and engagement. In addition, the qualitative research will explore qualitative descriptions of the impact of the intervention and the perceptions of the causal mechanisms leading to change, as well as any key mediating factors that impact the potential efficacy of the intervention.

We will use well-documented dimensions of implementation science to understand how the trial was implemented, the barriers and facilitators to implementing as intended, and the perceived feasibility, acceptability, and appropriateness of the trial.

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<sup>71</sup> Gale et al. BMC Medical Research Methodology 2013, 13:117 <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/13/117>

**Table 3: IPE methods overview**

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/ data sources (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed	Implementation/ logic model relevance
Local authority data	Data-sharing agreement with local authority	All participating local authorities	Descriptive quantitative analysis	1, 3	Quality/fidelity
DPO monitoring evaluation and learning data	Data-sharing agreement with DPOs (through StreetGames)	All participating DPOs	Descriptive quantitative analysis	1, 3, 4, 7, 9	Quality/fidelity/acceptability/appropriateness
Interviews with Local Authority teams and DPO staff	Qualitative interviews	N= 40 for the full evaluation	Qualitative thematic analysis	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,10, 11	Quality/fidelity/acceptability and appropriateness of the trial and intervention and perceived impacts and pathways
Focus groups with CYP participating in the intervention	Qualitative focus group discussions	N= 14 groups for the full evaluation	Qualitative thematic analysis	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10	Fidelity/acceptability and appropriateness of the trial and intervention and perceived impacts and pathways
Case studies with CYP participating in the intervention	Qualitative interviews	N=5	Qualitative thematic analysis	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10	Fidelity/acceptability and appropriateness of the trial and intervention and perceived impacts and pathways

## Cost data reporting and collecting

All DPOs are required to collect detailed cost data on expenditure on materials, staff costs, transport costs, venue maintenance, and venue hire. The detailed costs will allow the estimation of the costs of delivery of funded sports sessions and will allow the individual components of delivery to be costed. This information will be used to estimate bottom-up cost estimates for the Toward Sport programme.

The sampling will include all DPOs within the evaluation, and the DPOs will collect and share data on the relevant staff costs and time spent on the Toward Sport sessions. For cases where it is difficult to separate venue costs and staff costs attributable specifically to Toward Sports sessions (e.g., in larger DPOs, where there are existing sessions in an existing venue, and staff work on multiple sessions), the data collected will be based on the DPO's best estimate of detailed costs required to deliver the specific Toward Sport sessions.

The resources needed to deliver the intervention include:

- Venue costs (venue hire costs required for individual sessions can be estimated as a fraction of the total venue hire costs; e.g., if the monthly venue hire cost is  $x$ , then the cost for 4 2-hour Toward Sport sessions in the month is  $x \cdot (8 \text{ hours} / \text{total operating hours})$ ).
- Equipment costs. Equipment specifically required for the Toward Sport sessions; and if there is shared equipment, using the above approach.
- Transport costs for CYP as needed. Specifically, for CYP in the treatment and participating group funded by the intervention.
- Staff time and costs for Toward Sport sessions. This is provided by the DPO, including wage and non-wage costs, and estimated using the above approach if staff time is shared across sessions (e.g., if total staff cost is  $x$  per month; and the staff shares time equally across Toward Sport sessions and other sessions, then the estimate is  $x \cdot 0.5$ ).

## Diversity, equity and inclusion

### Recruitment of a diverse sample of young people

We are confident that the programme will have a broad representation of CYP and DPO leaders from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds based on StreetGames' existing network of DPOs, engaged through the Youth Justice Sport Fund. Within the Youth Justice Sport Fund, 44% of young people engaged were from a minority ethnic background, with 18% of young people coming from a Black background.

Further, data on the cohort of eligible young people from a sample of local authorities where we expect to operate exhibit the following proportion of young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds:

- West Yorkshire: Bradford
  - 52% of the identified cohort come from an ethnic minority background
- Greater Manchester: Manchester
  - 37% of the identified cohort come from an ethnic minority background
- East Midlands: Leicester
  - 45% of the cohort identified come from an ethnic minority background
- West Midlands: Walsall
  - 31% of the cohort identified come from an ethnic minority background

As such, and based on past engagement rates with StreetGames through the Youth Justice Sports Fund (described above), the evaluation is well-placed to receive a high proportion of referrals from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. In addition to the location, working with DPOs with diverse leadership backgrounds and experience engaging with diverse communities, as well as ensuring the provision of a wide range of support options, will help to strengthen participation and engagement of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds.

This information gives confidence that there are a large number of CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds within these operating sites. This data, as well as through targeted engagement strategies of CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds (e.g., recruitment of minority ethnic-led DPOs; and a focus on sports interests linked more closely to minority ethnic CYP), the expectation is that the 30% target will be achievable across all sites. We acknowledge that the presence of high proportions of CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups does not guarantee participation, however, the previous rates of engagement with StreetGames through the Youth Justice Sports Fund provide further confidence.

## Engaging with CYP

The findings and learnings from interviews will feed into the implementation and process evaluation of the pilot evaluation. While we have not included a participatory workshop for the pilot evaluation, we engaged with a high proportion of DPO leaders and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds through interviews.

For the full evaluation, we have planned to conduct 14 focus groups, 4 of which will be targeted specifically towards CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. From the set of participants in the focus groups, and with additional recruitment from CYP participating in the intervention, if necessary, we will recruit a CYP participatory research panel, with at least 50% of participants from minoritised communities. The panel will provide guidance on the interpretation of evidence and findings and provide insight into what the implications of different evidence may be.

Finally, the Shared Practice Model is designed with the lived experience of CYP in mind, and a child-first ethos. All activities take a child-first approach, with a focus on them being participatory, inclusive, and child-centred. Where possible, young people will be able to choose a sports programme that suits their interests, and sessions will be held in spaces where they feel safe and comfortable. The evaluation and delivery model includes regular touchpoints with DPOs and local authority teams, as well as open communication channels, ensuring that key learnings and experiences of CYP are communicated directly to the project and evaluation teams.

## Inclusivity and suitability of research materials and activities

All primary data collection tools are designed to maximise accessibility and to limit burden on participants. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, ONS 4 Wellbeing Questionnaire, and the Transferable Skills and Knowledge Questionnaire have been used previously in research with diverse groups of CYP. Baseline surveys will be administered by Early Help caseworkers, who are experienced at working with families and CYP with diverse and complex needs, including those with special education needs.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the pilot provided an opportunity to assess the suitability of the survey for both practitioners and young people through interviews with Early Help practitioners. Caseworkers fed back during the IPE that they found surveys easy to use, and were able to be easily modified to their normal ways of working with families.

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<sup>72</sup> See this article for an example: <https://supportingfamilies.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/10/holistic-intervention-to-support-a-child-with-special-educational-needs-return-to-school-and-engaging-parents-as-part-of-the-process-a-familys-perspective/>

Discussion and topic guides to be used during focus groups and interviews will be drafted by researchers on the evaluation team experienced in qualitative research. Further, our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Experts, who have a combined 20+ years of experience engaging ethnically diverse CYP through participatory research, fed in on all fieldwork materials used in the pilot, ensuring they were appropriate for use with CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, a key component of the training provided by Alma and StreetGames to local authority teams, case workers and DPO staff and coaches will include discussions on engaging with families and CYP from diverse backgrounds (see sections 'Support provided to local authority teams' and 'Support provided to DPOs').

Sports activities in which CYP will participate will also be designed to be accessible, and inclusive to CYP from diverse backgrounds. DPO staff will be specifically recruited for their young person-centred approach to sports delivery, prioritising and responding to the needs of young people, and their experience engaging with CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. Further, delivery staff will have a minimum of two years of delivery experience with similar cohorts of young people. Activities will emphasise inclusion and collaboration, to foster pro-social relationships and behaviours between different groups of participating young people.

### **Experience of the evaluation team in working with CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds**

When conducting the evaluation, we will prioritise a culturally competent approach to inform engagement with young people from minoritised backgrounds. All members of the evaluation team will undergo cultural competency training courses, which will provide insights and tools in how to sensitively interact with research participants from minoritised backgrounds, understand how to interpret findings with a lens critical to racial equity considerations, and design research materials such that they are appropriate for use with young people and practitioners from a broad range of backgrounds. The research materials will be designed with awareness of considerations such as language and differing cultural stigmas. We have explored arranging training sessions through organisations with dedicated expertise in cultural competency training, such as [Power the Fight](#).

Further, the team has robust previous experience engaging with CYP from diverse backgrounds. The Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team, working with the evaluation team for the pilot, has over 10 years of experience in Activating Creative Talent CIC, which supports young people from marginalised communities to engage in development activities. Further, they have experience in multi-agency working and contextual safeguarding, as well as expertise in working with minoritised young people in high-risk situations.

The evaluation team have further research experience with vulnerable young people, including young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. Team members

have contributed to evaluations and feasibility studies of programmes including a 2022 feasibility study of the National Citizen Service, which aims to engage young people from a diverse range of backgrounds in meaningful activities, such as volunteering and residential experiences, a process evaluation of [Violence Reduction Orders](#), an evaluation of the Youth Engagement Fund, which aims to help disadvantaged young people aged 14-17 to participate and engage in education and training, and an impact, economic and process evaluation of the [Families First for Children Pathfinder and Family Network Pilot](#), which will test key reforms to children's social care system.

Along with experience evaluating relevant programmes, the evaluation team have experience with engaging under-represented young people, and those disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system. This includes [engagement with young people transitioning from children and adolescent mental health services to adult mental health services](#) and [engaging with young people with lifelong disabilities and their carers](#) to understand their experience of council social care support services.

## Ethics and registration

Both the pilot evaluation and the full evaluation will undergo two stages of ethical review. Firstly, an internal research ethics committee review within Alma Economics, which includes our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Director, and two Principal Economists sitting outside the project. Secondly, an external research ethics committee review made up of external academics and qualified researchers with experience participating in ethics committees and with specialised knowledge tailored to research on youth offending and sports-based interventions. The evaluation team will ensure the trial is registered at [www.controlled-trials.com](http://www.controlled-trials.com) and include the ISRCTN (International Standard Randomised Controlled Trial Number) in the protocol as soon as it becomes available.

## Data protection

### GDPR compliance

Informed consent is required. For example, research participants must be informed how their personal data will be processed, with the ability to withdraw it at any time. Requirements include:

- Free access to data for participants at any time
- A copy of the data can be provided to research participants
- Allowance for participants to have their data deleted
- Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA) are carried out to analyse the security of the data holders

When working with personal data, compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 is a priority. Our Data Protection Officer at Alma, Evan Spyropoulos, is responsible for explicitly addressing all matters relating to GDPR. Our security policies have been revised to meet GDPR, and we have ready-to-use protocols for participants wanting to access or delete data and for data breaches.

### **Approach to sensitive data handling**

Our Data Protection Officer at Alma, Evan, is responsible for maintaining safe storage and usage of sensitive client data. Access to this data can only be approved by the Data Protection Officer, who produces an in-depth record of all activities (access granted, status of files, etc.) associated with client data. Furthermore, the Data Protection Officer is responsible for conducting regular checks to ensure that client data will not be altered, tampered with, or lost.

For sensitive data, we carry out an in-depth review of appropriate storage and security measures on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the appropriate level of security, ensuring compliance with any data provider-imposed restrictions, and ensuring any disruption as a result of a disaster or other major event is minimised. All Alma staff are trained to identify and handle sensitive data. In addition, our training focuses on creating a culture of personal responsibility and good security behaviour. We conduct regular in-house training sessions, including on sensitive data protocols and procedures. This allows our team members to produce statistical results using confidential data while also posing minimal risk of disclosure of identity and/or personal information. Under no circumstances will Alma Economics share any data from the research with any third parties outside of the evaluation or project team.

### **Data storage, transfers, handling, and disposal**

All of our company computers utilise full disk encryption (FDE). Full disk encryption automatically encrypts everything the user or the operating system creates. This ensures that the whole disk will remain unreadable in case of accidental loss or theft. For macOS we use Apple's FileVault 2, and for Windows, Microsoft's Bitlocker. Both encryption solutions offer 256-bit XTS-AES key strength and are FIPS 140-2 compliant.

While full disk encryption serves as the basis of our encryption strategy, it does not protect against unattended computers where users are logged in or during file transfers. For this reason, we employ an additional targeted file encryption layer for all our sensitive data files. Depending on the circumstance, we either use VeraCrypt or the Microsoft Office 365 built-in document encryption. Both use AES 256-bit encryption.

Additionally, when data has to be kept off-network in secure locations, we use Aegis Fortress external hard drives. These devices offer automatic FIPS 140-2 level 2 validated hardware-based encryption.

When data transits into the service from clients and between data centres, it's protected using transport layer security (TLS) encryption. OneDrive will only permit secure access and will not allow authenticated connections over HTTP but instead redirect to HTTPS. All our email communications are encrypted by default using TLS. If needed, we can deliver further email encryption features such as OME/IRM as part of the Azure RMS and S/MIME.

Alma Economics will always consult with our clients about the most practical and safest way to transfer sensitive data files. We will never initiate a file transfer via email or other file transfer means without first encrypting the files. When we work with subcontractors, we require that they utilise the same security standards, policies and systems used at Alma Economics. Our Data Protection Officer is responsible for informing our sub-contractors before project commencement.

Modern computers – including ours – use solid-state hard disks (SSD), a technology different from traditional spindle-based hard drives. This makes specialised data disposal software unreliable. Our policy of full disk encryption of all our devices counteracts this by rendering any retrieved deleted files unreadable. As an added bonus, application temporary or cache files that are often overlooked during the disposal process are also unreadable in case of retrieval.

If, however, this is required for compliance reasons, we do support all the traditional wiping methods and standards through specialised file shredding software. The majority of our work is conducted electronically. However, we maintain a robust policy of disposing of paper records when necessary. All non-electronic information assets are shredded to DIN level 3.

By default, printing or reproducing information assets is strongly discouraged and monitored by the Data Protection Officer.

In the rare instance where hard copy (including removable media) information is required for the needs of a project, we apply strict physical controls to ensure that this data is kept safe and secure. Our Data Protection Officer is solely responsible for allowing any information assets to be printed or transferred to removable data. In the rare instance that this is required for a given project, the Data Protection Officer will be responsible for ensuring safe physical storage and usage of sensitive client data. We have sufficient lockable storage for protectively marked material. This remains locked throughout (unless specifically requested, in which case the Data Protection Officer reviews the request and arranges for access), with keys secured.

We will archive the data in the YEF data archive, sharing the data with ONS and the Department for Education through this process. The legal basis for the processing and sharing of the data will be the 'public task' basis.

## Stakeholders and interests

Key contacts from StreetGames, who have oversight of the Shared Practice Model and participating DPOs are provided below. Participating DPOs and their lead contacts will be determined during the mobilisation phase of the efficacy trial. The key contacts from the evaluation team are Alma Economics, Ecorys, Activating Creative Talent CIC, and Dr Carolynne Mason, our academic partner.

### StreetGames:

- **Stuart Felce** – UK Director of Strategic Business Relationships, will act as Programme Director with full programme oversight.
- **Claire Khan** – Insight and Regional Strategy Manager, will act as Programme Data Collection and Compliance Lead.
- **Graham Helm** – National Partnership Manager, will act as Regional Relationship Manager Lead.
- **Dan Grice** – Research Co-ordinator, will act as Data Quality Control and Compliance with DPOs Lead.
- **Nikki Ottowell** – Project Manager, will oversee full programme compliance and delivery.

### Alma Economics:

- **Nick Spyropoulos** – Project Director, Nick will provide strategic guidance and quality assurance of methods and deliverables.
- **Dr Elisabetta Pasini** – Team Leader, will oversee day-to-day project management and coordinate the four sub-teams within the evaluation team, as well as act as the key contact for participating local authorities and StreetGames.
- **Lucille McKnight** – Impact Evaluation support, will support Elisabetta and Nick with all elements of the trial, including engaging with local authorities and StreetGames, and data collection and analysis.
- **Dr Christina Olympiou** – Shared Practice Model and Development Lead, will lead on collaboration with DPOs and the finalisation of and adherence to the Shared Practice Model. Christina will also liaise with local authority leads to ensure adherence to randomisation and proper data collection procedures.
- **Dr Eleni Kotsira** – Implementation and Process Evaluation Lead, will lead on the implementation and process evaluation, overseeing the design of fieldwork materials, engagement with participating DPOs and local authority staff, and will oversee the collection of programme monitoring data.

## **Ecorys:**

- **Dr Matthew Cutmore** – Multi-site Trial Lead, will jointly lead the design of the MST at full-trial stage, designing randomisation procedures and responsible for analysis of outcomes data.
- **Dr Andreas Culora** – RCT Design and Implementation Expert, will jointly lead the design of the RCT at full-trial stage, designing randomisation procedures and will be responsible for analysis of outcomes data.

## **Loughborough University:**

- **Dr Carolynne Mason** – Sports-based Intervention Expert, will work closely with Eleni to engage with DPOs, ensuring fidelity to the Shared Practice Model during the main efficacy trial. Carolynne will also assist with recruitment and fieldwork for the IPE, specifically in engaging DPOs.

## **Activating Creative Talent CIC:**

Partners from Activating Creative Talent CIC worked with the evaluation team during the pilot stage of the project, leading interviews with children and young people, and feeding in on fieldwork materials.

- **Teswal White** – Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Expert, led the Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team, specifically the engagement strategy and design of fieldwork materials.
- **Cheryl White** – Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Expert, worked alongside Teswal on the Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team, co-designing the engagement strategy and fieldwork activities, and conducting interviews with participating young people.

## Risks

The table below provides key risks to evaluation and delivery, as well as proposed mitigation strategies.

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>Low rates of consent and participation in the evaluation by CYP (likelihood: low; impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our evaluation is linked to established Early Help programmes, which means that the target CYP for our evaluation already have close engagement with the programme, with regular visits by a case worker.</li> <li>• Our evaluation proposal includes the allocation of incentives to compensate CYP for their time in participating in the study.</li> <li>• StreetGames has good engagements with stakeholders and partners in the intended operating areas and the mobilisation period will ensure that a wide range of stakeholders and partners are aware of the programme and the evaluation.</li> <li>• The information sheets that we develop will be easy to understand and provide clear information on the value of the study and the importance of the role of participating CYP.</li> <li>• The training provided to local authority teams and DPOs will include sessions on engaging with CYP, obtaining consent, providing key information, and the ongoing support and resources available during the study.</li> <li>• For CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, additional mitigations will be in place, detailed below.</li> </ul>
<p>Being unable to recruit a sufficient number of DPOs (across the range of sports interests and geographies) to meet the target referral numbers (a minimum of 567 in the treatment group). (likelihood: low, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• StreetGames has a large network of locally trusted organisations (DPOs) to draw upon – totalling circa 1,600, and a regional staffing structure which connects with and provides support to these DPOs on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Initial scoping work has already been undertaken as part of the planning for this project, to identify a ‘long list’ of potential DPOs which have existing experience in working with vulnerable young people.</li> <li>• For the efficacy trial, StreetGames allowed for a longer window to recruit DPOs. This ensures DPOs in the trial have the right expertise and are located in the right areas to best serve the young people referred.</li> <li>• StreetGames has also been able to draw upon previous learning &amp; experience of delivering other large-scale interventions such as the Ministry of Justice-funded Youth Justice Sports Fund which involved working with 220 DPOs (over 7,000 CYP) and Sport England-funded Doorstep Sport Clubs which involved working with 311 DPOs (over 100,000 CYP).</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>Being unable to recruit a sufficient number of young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>(likelihood: medium, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation team will undergo cultural competency training to be aware of the key potential barriers to participation by CYP from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>• The engagement materials and the training materials for Early Help teams and DPOs will be informed by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team, which has over 10 years' experience supporting young people from marginalised communities to engage in development activities.</li> <li>• The engagement materials (including consent materials and information sheets) will be informed by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team and will be adapted to the needs of participating families and CYP.</li> <li>• The trainings provided to Local Authority teams and DPOs will include core components on obtaining consent and on racial equity considerations.</li> <li>• As noted in the Shared Practice Model, the Toward Sport programme includes transport and language support where needed. The ongoing monitoring of attendance data will highlight where non-attendance is an issue and the needs of the CYP will be discussed to increase participation and engagement. Monitoring data includes demographic information on the participating CYP, allowing the evaluation team to identify disproportionality in disengagement during the trial.</li> <li>• Through the Youth Justice Sport Fund, 44% of young people engaged were from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds. This means that this risk can be mitigated through existing recruitment practices.</li> <li>• Information from local authority teams and data from administrative sources on population characteristics (ethnicity) show a high proportion of CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds in the intended delivery sites.</li> <li>• The IPE will provide a key opportunity to assess the existence of differential participation and attrition rates, as well as potential drivers, across key subgroups of CYP. This information will be used to adapt the evaluation materials and processes for the full evaluation as necessary to minimise this risk.</li> <li>• DPOs in the StreetGames network are embedded within local communities, run by local people who provide hyperlocal access to services. DPO staff are experienced at engaging young people from local communities into sport. Analysis of monitoring data from previous similar programmes shows their success in this regard. For example, monitoring data from the Youth Justice Sport Fund programme showed that of the 7,832 young people who engaged with this programme, the distribution across ethnicities was: 18% Black, 13% Asian, 8% Mixed, 5% Other and 55% White.</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>CYP from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds withholding consent due to the requirement of accessing offending data (likelihood: medium; impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation team will undergo cultural competency training.</li> <li>• The engagement materials and the training materials for local authority teams and DPOs will be informed by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team, which has over 10 years' experience supporting young people from marginalised communities to engage in development activities.</li> <li>• The engagement materials (including consent materials and information sheets) will be informed by our Ethnically Diverse CYP Engagement Team and will be adapted to the needs of participating families and CYP.</li> <li>• The trainings provided to local authority teams and DPOs will include core components on obtaining consent and on racial equity considerations.</li> </ul>
<p>Being able to meet the target of 60% of DPOs being 50% Black, Asian, and minority ethnic-led. (likelihood: low, impact: medium)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• StreetGames routinely captures information in relation to the diversity of DPO leadership and workforce in our network through a <a href="#">network survey</a>. This information has been reviewed by members of the Research and Insights Team, together with data relating to the geographical location of DPOs and expertise in engaging vulnerable young people.</li> <li>• Location selection: the areas we intended to work in for this multi-site trial comprise large proportions of minority ethnic communities.</li> <li>• Monitoring data from the delivery of previous similar programmes has also been reviewed, which together with the size and scale of our network has enabled StreetGames to prepare an initial 'long list' of potential DPOs which we could look to draw upon for this programme - which exceeds the 30 DPOs required to meet REDI targets for this programme.</li> <li>• A rigorous selection process of DPOs will be undertaken to meet these requirements</li> </ul>
<p>DPOs dropping out of the programme based on lack of staff, lack of facilities etc. (likelihood: medium, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations of DPOs will be made clear during recruitment and selection.</li> <li>• StreetGames and the evaluation team will provide regular drop ins and support sessions to DPOs to provide support and monitor any emerging issues.</li> <li>• In the event of a drop-out, StreetGames can identify potential replacements based on its existing network of organisations.</li> <li>• Where feasible, we will adjust the case numbers of each DPOs to ensure no organisation feels overstretched.</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>Unless a Safeguarding Risk Assessment determines otherwise, CYP will be allocated to DPOs that are in locations close to their home or school, where they feel safe or comfortable. Thus, there is a risk of being unable to recruit a sufficient number of DPOs to provide capacity in the areas where eligible/participating CYP need them.</p> <p>(likelihood: low, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location selection: the geographic areas selected for this multi-site trial comprise large proportions of minority ethnic communities.</li> <li>• Engagement with local authority teams will provide a good understanding of the type of communities eligible young people are based. This information can be used to ensure that there are enough DPOs in areas where CYP will likely need them.</li> <li>• We will use StreetGames’ existing network of DPOs to ensure enough DPOs are recruited in suitable locations to meet CYP needs.</li> </ul>
<p>Local authority teams not fully understanding the intended referral/randomisation process or not fully adhering to the randomised assignment in the field, e.g., finding ways to offer additional support to the CYP in the control group.</p> <p>(likelihood: low, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CYP will be randomised into treatment and control shortly after the first engagement with the case worker, limiting the ability of the caseworker to influence the randomisation decision.</li> <li>• The evaluation team will provide introductory training to all Early Help teams, including all-staff training, and training for those working at the local authority level. This will highlight the importance of implementing a high-quality and rigorous evaluation, the roles and requirements of each of the stakeholders, and the value.</li> <li>• The evaluation team will offer weekly drop-in support and Q&amp;A sessions for local authority teams, as well as a designated inbox, monitored by the evaluation team to provide local authority teams with support.</li> </ul>
<p>DPOs may be unable to find sessions appropriate for high-risk CYP within their organisations. This can be due to a limited number of high-risk referrals (or low capacity) making it unfeasible to hold exclusive sessions, and/or due to limited available slots in existing sessions that would be appropriate for the high-risk CYP, without potentially harming existing lower-risk CYP participants.</p> <p>(likelihood: low, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with DPOs prior to roll-out to ensure DPOs have sufficient places for high-risk CYP.</li> <li>• Within the Youth Justice Sport Fund, 63% of organisations engaged young people who were associated with gangs, and more than half of organisations engaged with young people who had been arrested or cautioned in the last six months, indicating a high number of DPOs capable of facilitating activities for high-risk young people.</li> <li>• The eligibility criteria have been designed so that young people with a high level of tertiary need (e.g., CYP in a secure estate) or with specific high-risk needs (e.g., young people experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation) are not eligible, to ensure DPOs have the resources and training to offer appropriate supports to participating CYP.</li> <li>• There will be regular communication and coordination with DPOs throughout delivery to deal with situations such as these in real time. The likely responses will be to work with the DPO in question to identify opportunities to reorganise sessions with minimal disruption, strengthen safeguarding protocols, and work with nearby DPOs to identify possible appropriate slots if needed.</li> <li>• Local Authority teams will review carefully the needs of each CYP on a case-by-case basis prior to referring them to the intervention.</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>Limited acceptance rates and non-attendance by young people when offered sports based on low interest.</p> <p>(likelihood: medium, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, young people will be matched with DPOs that offer sports programming they are interested in, in areas convenient to them to prevent non-attendance.</li> <li>• DPOs will arrange an initial meeting with the young person and family prior to attending the first session to begin building relationships, improve rates of uptake and discuss any worries or concerns. Learning from the Youth Justice Sport Fund found that taking this approach improved engagement rates for referred young people.</li> <li>• Rates of attendance and attrition will be estimated during the pilot and throughout the evaluation period. In combination with past data on attendance and engagement, the teams will have sufficient information to accurately predict rates and adapt predictions during the evaluation period. These modelled rates will allow the team to target a larger number of CYP during referral, taking non-attendance and attrition into account.</li> <li>• While we observed some non-attendance and refusal of support during the pilot, the small sample size makes it difficult to understand exactly how this will translate into efficacy trial.</li> </ul>
<p>A high number of young people drop out before completing the full 24-week session.</p> <p>(likelihood: medium, impact: medium)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPOs will be provided training and support to keep young people connected with the programme throughout the full 24-week session.</li> <li>• Monitoring and attendance data will be assessed regularly by the evaluation team. Multiple non-attendances in a row could trigger contact by the local authority case worker.</li> </ul>
<p>Reduction in capacity by DPOs or evaluation team based on illness, staff shortage, or other reasons</p> <p>(likelihood: medium, impact: low)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• StreetGames and the evaluation team will be in regular communication with all DPOs to monitor resource allocation and identify any bottlenecks early.</li> <li>• If necessary, StreetGames will draw on their extensive network of past partners and select backup DPOs.</li> <li>• The evaluation team is large, made up of individuals from multiple institutions, and does not rely on the expertise of one individual, so others can step in, in case of illness/force majeure.</li> <li>• StreetGames has low staff turnover and has an Operational Programme Board in place to specifically monitor internal capacity. Additional resources have been identified within this programme budget to recruit programme-specific roles where needed (e.g., project management and monitoring evaluation support) and additional capacity has been agreed with relevant existing staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Data breach by evaluation team</p> <p>(likelihood: low, impact: medium)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data sharing agreements will be in place between DPOs, Local Authorities, and the evaluation team.</li> <li>• Only data on consenting CYP will be shared.</li> <li>• Data will be stored by the evaluation team in secure drives and will be shared via a secure platform.</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>Major safeguarding incident taking place at a DPO session (likelihood: low, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPO staff will be provided with robust safeguarding training and recruited based on specified skills, qualifications and experience working with the target population.</li> <li>• StreetGames and the evaluation team will ensure that each DPO recruited has a safeguarding plan in place, and a named safeguarding lead, prior to the start of delivery.</li> <li>• The project team and the evaluation team will each nominate an internal safeguarding lead, to whom DPOs can refer questions and potential concerns</li> <li>• StreetGames uses the 'tootoot' case management app to record and manage safeguarding incidents. The app provides real-time updating and reporting as well as remote support from StreetGames staff.</li> <li>• StreetGames will provide support throughout the intervention period for DPOs to refer questions and potential concerns to.</li> <li>• Local Authority teams will carefully assess the 'risks' of each individual CYP prior to referral.</li> </ul>
<p>One or more of the selected local authority teams 'drops out' of the programme due to financial reasons or policy changes (likelihood: low, impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial scoping conversations have been held with Local Authority teams to ascertain interest and identify potential challenges and solutions.</li> <li>• Detailed information and induction sessions will be held with key staff within the Local Authority teams during the mobilisation period so that they are well prepared for the intervention.</li> <li>• Given StreetGames' national coverage and strong relationships through existing work, it would be possible to connect into a new area and a new local authority team should one of the teams from our current list 'drop out' during mobilisation.</li> </ul>
<p>Low completion rates of the baseline and follow-up surveys (likelihood: low; impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with representatives from a number of Local Authority Teams in the planning process have given us confidence that the primary and secondary outcomes proposed for this intervention are largely captured by their teams already and that we can embed the intervention surveys into existing touch points that the case workers have with the young person, improving the quality of data collected by caseworkers at baseline. Young people may also be familiar with the outcomes measures through this work, potentially making it easier for them to engage in follow-up surveys.</li> <li>• Where caseworkers are still engaged with young people at follow-up, they can assist with data collection and getting in touch with the young person.</li> <li>• The evaluation team collects contact details for both the young person and their parents or carer. In the event the young person cannot be contacted, the survey will be sent to the parent.</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to the two follow-up surveys, we will send reminders to CYP 3-months prior to each follow-up data collection activity to confirm we have the correct contact details, and remind CYP they are involved in the evaluation.</li> <li>• We also used the pilot phase to 'test' the survey content, processes and the 'balance' of support to ensure the best possible learning returns during the trial. StreetGames has good experience in resourcing monitoring and evaluation appropriately when needed.</li> <li>• Young people will also receive incentives for their participation in follow-up surveys to boost response rates.</li> </ul>
<p>Mixing CYP of different levels of need within sessions adversely impacts low-risk CYP (likelihood: low; impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pre-meeting will include a comprehensive risk assessment with the CYP and information from the local authority teams.</li> <li>• Where mixed sessions need to take place, DPOs will ensure that the sessions adhere to the requirements and safeguarding practices set out in the Shared Practice Model.</li> <li>• In cases where the mixing of sessions will not be appropriate for the CYP being referred and the existing attendees of the sports session, the DPO staff will work with the CYP to identify potential solutions (alternative sessions; rearranging the attendees of existing sessions; explore nearby DPOs if needed) and ensure that the CYP can attend a funded sports session.</li> <li>• Undertake ongoing risk assessments and enact the above potential solutions as and when session mixing is deemed high risk.</li> </ul>
<p>Resentful demoralisation experienced by CYP in control group (likelihood: low; impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CYP randomised into the control group will have a clear pathway into business-as-usual services (detailed in the section 'Control group and business-as-usual').</li> <li>• CYP will experience regular engagement through business-as-usual services and will (in principle) experience the same level of engagement with the case workers as the treatment group (conditional on their risk level and needs).</li> <li>• The information provided to CYP will clearly lay out how they are involved in an important and valuable study without overselling the potential benefits of involvement in the programme.</li> <li>• Our proposal includes incentives for both the treatment and the control group to increase participation in follow-up data collection activities, and reduce resentful demoralisation.</li> <li>• There was little evidence of resentful demoralisation identified during the IPE for the pilot.</li> </ul>

Risk	Mitigation strategy
<p>Ineligible CYP are referred to and participate in the treatment intervention (likelihood: low; impact: medium)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will coordinate closely with teams at the local authority level to ensure that the eligibility criteria are clear and identifiable in their recording.</li> <li>• We will extensively cover the process of eligibility, referrals, consent, and randomisation through our training sessions. Ongoing support will also be available to ensure that there is a full understanding of these processes throughout the study.</li> <li>• Referrals are made through a number of different pathways across the participating local authorities, including the Police and Youth Justice Teams, to ensure a sufficient proportion of young people with a tertiary level of need are recruited.</li> </ul>
<p>Limited capacity or buy-in from local authority teams (likelihood: low; impact: high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The co-design phase has included promising discussions with local authority teams about the evaluation approach and the intervention. Supporting letters have been provided by local authority teams that we have engaged with.</li> <li>• The mobilisation period will include detailed discussions with local authority teams, covering the expectations and requirements of this evaluation. In addition, the benefits of participating will be clear (the provision of funded sports sessions for in-need CYP, as well as participation in a key study). Only local authority teams that can commit to the requirements will be engaged with.</li> <li>• The project team have earmarked resources for supporting the teams.</li> <li>• There will be ongoing support from both the project team and the evaluation team to minimise the burden of local authority teams and case workers and to ensure that key information and support are on-hand.</li> </ul>
<p>Unable to pool the pilot and full trial data due to large changes being required based on pilot learnings (likelihood: low; impact: low)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data from the pilot was high-quality, suggesting we will be able to pool data from the pilot and the efficacy trial. Even if we cannot use the data from the pilot, the trial is still well-powered enough to detect a standardised effect size below the 0.2 threshold.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## Timeline

See attached Gantt chart for detailed activities.

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
<b>May 2024 – July 2024</b>	Project mobilisation set up and mobilisation stage, including recruitment of DPOs and local authority teams, and preparation of pilot phase.	Alma Economics, StreetGames, Early Help team, and DPO teams in local authority for pilot.
<b>November 2024 – May 2025</b>	Pilot evaluation within one local authority and with up to five DPOs, including IPE.	Alma Economics, StreetGames, Early Help team, and DPO teams in local authority for pilot.
<b>February 2025 – April 2025</b>	Revision of evaluation design and implementation based on pilot learnings. Training of local authority teams and DPOs for the full evaluation.	Alma Economics, StreetGames, Supporting Family teams, and DPO teams in local authorities for full evaluation.
<b>May 2025 – April 2026</b>	Toward Sport intervention period	Alma Economics, StreetGames, Supporting Family teams, and DPO teams in local authorities for full evaluation.
<b>May 2025 – May 2027</b>	Data collection, including baseline, 24 weeks after referral and 24-weeks-plus-6-months after referral for evaluation study cohorts. We allow an additional 6 months for the PNC data to reflect the offending outcomes relevant to the 240 weeks-plus-6-months after referral. This is because of a potential lag in the PNC data.	Alma Economics, StreetGames, Supporting Family teams, and DPO teams in local authorities for full evaluation.
<b>July 2025 – June 2026</b>	IPE activities for full evaluation, implemented while CYP are still engaging with the evaluation and intervention.	Alma Economics
<b>May 2027 – September 2027</b>	Statistical analysis, synthesising findings from impact evaluation and IPE, participatory workshops to interpret the preliminary findings, and reporting	Alma Economics

## Survey items

The following table lists each set of survey questions, and their source, as currently proposed. The exact design of the final questionnaire items will be confirmed during the pilot stage of the multi-site trial, as we test and explore different question sets.

## Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Each item is scored on the following scale: not true/somewhat true/certainly true

1. I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings.

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2. I am restless, I cannot stay still for long.

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3. I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness.

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4. I usually share with others (food, games, pens, etc.).

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5. I get very angry and often lose my temper.

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6. I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself.

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7. I usually do as I am told.

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8. I worry a lot.

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9. I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill.

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10. I am constantly fidgeting or squirming.

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11. I have one good friend or more.

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12. I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want.

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13. I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful.

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14. Other people my age generally like me.

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15. I am easily distracted. I find it difficult to concentrate.

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16. I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence.

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17. I am kind to younger children.

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18. I am often accused of lying or cheating.

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19. Other children or young people pick on me or bully me.

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20. I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers and children).

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21. I think before I do things.

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22. I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere.

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23. I get on better with adults than with people my own age.

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24. I have many fears, and I am easily scared.

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25. I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good.

#### ONS 4 Wellbeing Questions

26. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? (on a scale from 0 to 10)

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27. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (on a scale from 0 to 10)

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28. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile? (on a scale from 0 to 10)

#### Physical Activity Question (Milton et al, 2010)

29. In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? (on a scale from 0 to 7)

#### Transferable skills and knowledge questionnaire (National Citizen Service Evaluation)

30. To what extent do you feel you can (Very confident/Confident/Neither confident nor not confident/Not very confident/Not at all confident/Don't know)

- Meeting new people
  - Having a go at things that are new to me
  - Working with other people in a team
  - Being the leader of a team
  - Explaining my ideas clearly
  - Speaking in public
  - Managing disagreements and conflict
-



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