



Summer Jobs

Setting up and evaluating an employment support scheme for young people at risk of violence

July 2023

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Background

This report was written for the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) by the Ending Youth Violence Lab (the Lab) in the Summer of 2023. In it we provided advice on how, in our view, YEF should approach establishing and evaluating a scheme which used short-term paid employment to support young people at risk of getting caught up in violence. Our work has influenced how YEF designed their Summer Jobs programme, and so in the interests of transparency we have decided to publish it. A short explanation of our approach is provided below, but it should be noted that we did not take a systematic approach to searching the literature nor synthesising findings which could mean there are gaps or omissions in our findings (Tom McBride February 2024).

Summary

Summer Youth Employment Schemes (SYEPs), which provide vulnerable young people with short-term paid employment during the school summer holidays, are common in major US cities. SYEPs were originally created with a range of aims, including broadening horizons, improving social and emotional skills, providing routes to employment and occupying young people during the summer months, although increasingly SYEPs are seen as a vehicle to address racial disparities in economic opportunity. Employment placements in SYEPs are often fully subsidised, and the schemes rely on public funding and philanthropic donations to operate. Thousands of young people, typically aged between 14 and 24, participate in the schemes each year, in cities including New York, Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia.

There have been several evaluations of SYEPs in the US, and although the findings are mixed in terms of education and future employment outcomes, they do show a general, albeit small, trend in reduction in crime and violence. Given this, the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) are interested in seeing whether these findings can be replicated in the UK. However, since there are no comparable schemes currently in operation, this would require establishing a programme in order to evaluate it.

YEF has commissioned the Ending Youth Violence Lab (the Lab) to explore the feasibility of setting up such a scheme, and to outline an approach to testing its impact on youth violence. In this report we work through the key issues, including intervention design, evaluation methodology, cost, co-funding opportunities, and potential delivery bodies. Broadly we conclude that:

- There are sufficient examples of subsidised work programmes (such as the Future Jobs Fund and Kickstart) and employment-based training (such as the Creating Opportunities Forum) in the UK to think that a scheme focused on short-term paid employment opportunities for young people at risk of violence is feasible. However, setting up a scheme will be a significant undertaking and as a funder YEF would need to invest significant resources in ensuring the scheme operates in the right areas, reaches the right young people, and offers high-quality job opportunities.

- A newly established scheme should grow incrementally and have evaluation embedded from the start, to ensure it is reaching young people who are at genuine risk of getting caught up in violence and that employment opportunities are sustainable. Rushing to evaluation at scale risks poor delivery and undermines the chances of finding a positive impact.
- There is no reason to think that an RCT would not be possible if there is sufficient demand to participate in the scheme from young people. However, the chances of finding a positive result will be increased if YEF builds towards this through a staged approach with significant investment in development and early-stage testing.
- To be suitably powered to detect an impact on violent offending, an impact evaluation would likely have to have around 2,000 participants in the treatment arm. Very broadly we estimate total cost, including evaluation, to be £5-8m.
- There are a handful of potential providers for a scheme, and YEF will need to work in partnership with others such as the Home Office to stimulate interest and encourage bids.
- Given their remit and funding, Youth Futures Foundation is a very credible co-funder of this project.

Introduction

Background to Employment Programmes in the USA

In large US cities, programmes that provide young people with short-term paid employment are common. These programmes are often referred to as Summer Youth Employment Programmes (SYEPs) as they are delivered over the summer, when young people are not in education and rates of crime tend to be highest. SYEPs target disadvantaged young people and usually involve some form of pastoral support like a mentor and job readiness training, alongside paid work. The schemes have a variety of aims, including building skills, improving education outcomes, boosting job prospects, and reducing the likelihood of involvement in crime.

Although they vary in delivery and focus SYEPs have a common set of characteristics. For the purpose of this report, we define SYEPs as having the following characteristics:

- Delivered over summer on a relatively short-term basis of around 6 weeks;
- Paired with pastoral support/job training’;
- At least partially subsidised, either (relying on public or philanthropic funding)¹;and
- Targeted at disadvantaged groups.

Emerging evidence of the impact of SYEPs on a range of outcomes – including arrests for violent crime, as well social emotional outcomes such as increased civic engagement – is promising. Given this, YEF is interested in testing if these findings can be replicated in the UK. However, as there are no similar schemes currently delivering in the UK, this would require setting up a scheme from scratch and growing it to a sufficient scale where it would be feasible to evaluate using a trial. As a first step, YEF has commissioned the Ending Youth Violence Lab (the Lab) to explore options for setting up and evaluating a scheme which seeks to test if short-term paid employment can improve outcomes for young people at risk of violence.

The US programmes

SYEPs operate in a range of US cities including Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, and St. Louis. Examples include:

- **[Boston Summer Youth Employment Programme](#)**. Introduced in the early 1980s, it connects c.10,000 young people (aged 14-24) each summer with 900 local employers. Participants work a maximum of 25 hours per week for a six-week period from early July through mid-August and are paid the Massachusetts minimum wage. In addition, the programme provides 20 hours of job-readiness training.
- **[New York SYEP](#)**. The largest SYEP in the US: in 2021, 75,000 young people were enrolled across 14,500 work sites. The programme provides up to 6 weeks paid work and educational experience (paid at NY state minimum wage) to 14-24 year olds.

¹ Note that in the Boston SYEP (and possibly others) wage costs are only subsidised if the employer is a public sector or not for profit, and private sector employers are required to pay wages directly

- [One Summer Chicago Plus](#). Provides 14-24s with summer employment (between 20 and 25 hours per week), in addition to personal development programming (25 hours per week). It serves 31,000 young people annually.

Alongside SYEPs, there are other examples of using employment to tackle violence, for example the [Rapid Employment and Development Initiative](#) (READI) in Chicago, which has shown promise in engaging highly vulnerable groups and in decreasing shooting and homicide arrests. However, we view approaches such as READI as fundamentally different to SYEPs, as they are much more intensive and costly (up to 18 months employment costing an average of \$46,000 per participant) and because they tend to work with older age groups (the mean age of participants was 24-26). Given this, for the purpose of this report we are going to concentrate on schemes which offer short-term employment of around 6 weeks.

A brief summary of the existing evidence is below and a more detailed overview can be found in Annex 1. But in summary these are robust evaluations which generally find an impact on youth violence:

- [Modestino \(2019\)](#). An RCT on a summer jobs scheme in Boston demonstrated a reduction in violent crime and property crime arrests amongst programme participants (which was maintained up to 17 months after participation). Participants also showed significantly increased community engagement, social skills, job readiness, and future intentions to work (Modestino & Paulsen, 2019).
- [Heller \(2014\)](#) found that Chicago's One Summer Plus programme decreased violent crime for the treatment group by 43 percent over 16 months relative to the control group.
- [Heller \(2021\)](#) used an RCT to show that participating in a scaled up version of Chicago's One Summer Plus programme resulted in a decline in arrests - a result which was replicated in Philadelphia.
- [Gelber, Isen, & Kessler \(2014\)](#) used an embedded RCT to show that participating in the New York City Summer Youth Employment Programme reduced the probability of incarceration and mortality from "external causes," including homicides, suicides, and accidents.

As Heller (2021) explains, summer job programmes 'consistently reduce criminal justice involvement, even when they are scaled up or implemented in different contexts'. She goes on to provide a useful initial summary:

'Experiments in Chicago, New York, and Boston have found generally similar patterns of SYEPs' effects: large declines in criminal justice involvement and violence, with little improvement in future employment on average (Heller, 2014; Davis and Heller, 2020; Modestino, 2019; Kessler et al., 2021; Gelber et al., 2016). Education impacts are more mixed, with most studies finding small or no improvements in high school or college outcomes (Schwartz et al., 2015; Leos-Urbel, 2014; Davis and Heller, 2020; Heller, 2014; Gelber et al., 2016), and one suggesting larger benefits (Modestino and Paulsen, 2019).'

UK schemes

Whilst there are examples from the UK of programmes which have provided young people with subsidised jobs, these have generally been in response to economic downturns and have sought to dampen the ‘scarring’ that recessions can have on young people’s prospects, rather than directly addressing risks of violence. These include:

Future Jobs Fund

Introduced in October 2009 in the wake of the financial crisis, the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) was primarily aimed at 18-24 year olds in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), with a smaller number of places reserved for JSA recipients aged over 24 in unemployment hotspots. Any private, public or third sector employer in Great Britain could bid to the FJF for funding for the creation of jobs which met certain criteria (at least 25 hours per week, genuinely additional etc). The fund created just over 105,000 jobs by March 2011 and cost approximately £680m. A 2012 evaluation by the Department of Work and Pensions, which used Propensity Score Matching to create a control group, found positive impacts on both not being in receipt of welfare and being in unsubsidised employment.

Kickstart

Founded in the summer of 2020 in response to the pandemic, Kickstart operated in broadly the same way as FJF (fully subsidised jobs for 16-24 year olds, at least 25 hours per week for up to 6 months). The Department planned to create 250,000 jobs through the scheme, but as of November 2021, a month before the scheme stopped accepting new applicants, had only created 97,000. An evaluation of the impact will not be available for several years, although a report by the National Audit Office is critical of many aspects of Kickstart, including the cost per placement of £7k being significantly more than planned.

Creating Opportunities Forum

Outside of these schemes, there has been interest from the Government in using work as a way to protect young people from violence. The Creating Opportunities Forum (COF) was established via a joint bid between the Home Office and the DWP to HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund in 2019. It provided funding to pilot a programme supporting young people at risk of serious violence to access employment opportunities (including training, volunteering etc.) and support from a trusted advisor. The COF was run by Catch 22, The Princes Trust, and Apprentice Nation, and operated in Birmingham, Bradford, Croydon, Hackney, Kingston upon Hull, Lambeth, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton.

Our approach

Through the rest of this report, we set out some of the key issues to consider in establishing and evaluating an employment scheme similar to SYEPs and make recommendations to YEF on the next steps. To do this, we have reviewed key documents including the main evaluation reports, consulted with key stakeholders including the Home Office, Catch 22, the Prince's Trust and Youth Futures Fund, and drawn on our experience and expertise in evaluating youth violence interventions. Given the time and budget our approach has been pragmatic, rather than systematic e.g. drawing on the major reports we are aware of and engaging key stakeholders, and the findings should be considered with that in mind.

Findings

Intervention design

Background

The US schemes generally operate at a city level (New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia etc.) Their mechanisms for targeting vary (see target population section below), but in general they seem to have been successful in recruiting a disadvantaged and vulnerable population. For example, in the in the 2014 evaluation of One Summer Plus Chicago, 92% of participants were eligible for free/reduced-price lunches and 20% had been arrested at baseline; in the evaluation of New York's SYEP the average family income was approximately \$40k (very approximately £32k in today's prices)².

The schemes subsidise wages, and generally provide some form of additional support, such as a job mentor or training. Given this, we set out to address the following questions:

- Should YEF replicate the US approach (short-term part-time employment in the summer holidays coupled with some form of mentoring/employment support), or are there fundamental changes that should be made to a UK scheme?
- Are there good reasons to focus on delivering this in the summer, or should this be something that is offered all year round?
- What, if any, pastoral support should be provided to participants?
- How should eligible young people be identified, referred, and selected?
- Should YEF appoint a delivery partner via open competition, and, if so, what is the best way to structure a procurement process to encourage a range of high-quality and credible bids?
- What types of employers should YEF seek to engage with this programme and to what extent will they need to fund/subsidise employment?

² Note [this](#) indicates the national poverty threshold for a family of 4 in 2005-2008 was around \$20k although [other estimates](#) put the threshold for New York as significantly higher than this. The Standard deviation of family income was \$29k which implies that participants were quite diverse in terms of family income (with some with very low incomes), but on average were not well off, albeit somewhat above the poverty threshold.

- What are the best ways to ensure that a commitment to diversity and inclusion are at the core of the intervention?

Conclusions

On the design of the programme it is worth acknowledging that these schemes have a variety of undying theories and rationales. As Modestino (2019) notes the original rationale for SYEPs was to ‘keep youth off the street... while improving “soft skills” such as self-efficacy, impulse control, and conflict resolution’, but that increasingly the focus is on using ‘SYEPs as a vehicle to provide meaningful employment experiences that can lead to an alternative pathway’ in order to address racial disparities in economic opportunity.

Given this, we think there are two potential approaches for any YEF scheme:

1. Given the promising evidence of impact, stick as closely to the US approach as possible.
2. Acknowledge that the US schemes have sprung up to address multiple needs, do not have a strong theory of change underpinning them, and therefore there is no reason to think the design is optimal and needs to be faithfully replicated.

Overall, we lean towards the former position i.e. a UK scheme should be:



Focused - offers short-term paid employment which is fully subsidised and does not include volunteering, training or other forms of support.



Targeted - Operating in high crime areas and targeted towards those most at risk



Supportive - Include support beyond employment, including a job mentor and possibly some form of training



Specific - Has a direct measure of crime or violence as the primary outcome

In our view, departing from these key elements would mean that YEF was funding something fundamentally different to the SYEP delivered in the US.

However, in some areas we can see less reason to replicate the US approach exactly:



Timing - We don't see a strong rationale to offer this exclusively in the summer holidays



Part-time - we feel YEF should be open to the programme including part-time roles which fit around education and training.



Age range - Some US schemes start at 14, and most run to 24. We feel 16-21 or 16-24 would be right here



Other measures - In addition to admin data on employment and crime this should capture self-report measures such as emotional regulation

Our rationale for the offer not being exclusive to the summer is that, as far as we can tell, the reason that the US schemes operate during the school holidays is a combination of convenience, a desire to occupy young people during the summer months, and the seasonality of crime and violence. However, we think that the most plausible mechanisms through which SYEP are having an impact on youth violence is through developing social

and emotional skills and/or broadening horizons. As such, we can see little reason to offer this exclusively during the summer holidays, or to focus solely on full time employment. We can imagine that any scheme YEF creates might make most of its placements during the summer holidays when many young people will have significant free time. However, we can see little theoretical or empirical reason not to offer opportunities at other points in the year, for example providing part time work that fits around education or during seasonal peaks such as Christmas, and an all year round offer is likely to increase the number of young people who are able to participate in the programme (which is an important consideration given YEF's desire to rigorously assess the impact on offending within the lifetime of their endowment). However, we should be clear that it is an assertion that delivery in the summer is not an important mechanism, and so dispensing with this could have a detrimental effect on the programme's effectiveness.

The age range included in the scheme is ultimately a question for YEF. However, given that it will be difficult to offer paid employment to those below 16, we think this should be the lower limit, and that going up to 24 offers consistency with previous government schemes and widens the pool of eligible individuals.

On pastoral support, the US schemes have mostly included a job mentor to provide regular advice and guidance, and some have included additional support such as CBT, job training or social and emotional interventions. Although not always tested, when they have been evaluated these additional elements have seemed to provide little to no benefit over and above the job and mentor support. For example, Heller (2014) found that the 10 hours of socio-emotional training (based on CBT) that half of those in the treatment arm received, had no benefit over the job and a job mentor only. With that in mind, we think YEF should state through the procurement process that the minimum expectation is high quality mentoring to support young people with their work placement, and that they are open to the provider proposing additional training or support to bolster young people's readiness for work. YEF should make clear that any additional support would require a clear theoretical reason as to how it would boost the effectiveness of the paid employment and be open to testing the impact of the additional support by offering it to a subsample of those in the treatment arm.

In terms of referrals and inclusion, we were told by the Home Office that whilst the COF did reach a cohort who were some distance from the labour market, there were very few referrals from organisations and agencies directly involved in youth justice, such as YOTs, VRUs and PRUs, and hence most participants were at limited risk of being involved in violence. One reflection they had was that more time to work closely with these agencies and build relationships was needed. In addition, they noted that their payment structure incentivised providers to prioritise quantity of participants over need. Given YEF's remit to work with a high-needs cohort, a focus on selecting the right geographical areas to work in and an emphasis on the delivery body developing close working with relevant agencies is essential. It will also be important to monitor referrals closely, so that adjustments can be made if the scheme is not reaching the highest need groups. Alongside this, we recommend one of the following approaches to increase the chance of making a robust assessment of the impact on offending:

1. **Screening** - Put in place a post-referral but pre-randomisation screening tool to ensure only the most vulnerable are included.
2. **Sub-group analysis** - Accept a larger and more diverse cohort of young people in terms of need, but conduct prespecified subgroup analysis on the impact on offending for those assessed at randomisation as most likely to be involved in violence. Note that whilst this would greatly increase the sample size, and hence cost, it may make bringing in other funders such as Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) easier.

In terms of appointing a delivery partner, we think that given the likely scale and longevity of the project, an open competitive process is essential. There is a limited number of potential providers (see potential providers section below), but nonetheless we strongly encourage YEF to host a market testing event to publicise the scheme and encourage potential bidders, and to consider having an Expression of Interest stage to gauge levels of interest.

On types of employers, we are told by the Home Office there was a good range of employers willing to participate in the COF (which generally offered training rather than paid employment). These included large national employers such as Marks and Spencers, Barclays, JP Morgan and the NHS. The Home Office did raise concerns that not all employers who were willing to participate were brought on board by the consortia running the scheme (for example an offer from ASDA was never taken up), and that they regret not bringing in a national construction provider such as McAlpine into the scheme.

The Home Office and DW have tentatively signalled that they might be able to provide some soft support in promoting the scheme and recruiting employers. Given this, we think whilst YEF should expect the provider to lead on recruiting employers, they, in combination with Government and the YFF, should use their convening power to bring big employers to the table.

On diversity and inclusion, the Home Office has confirmed that there was not a specific focus on issues of diversity or racial disparity within the COF tender documents. However, the winning consortium did reference the diverse base of their mentors and coaches and highlighted that this would enable them to offer an appropriate service to reflect the young people they would be working with. In addition, they noted that they would be working with employers with a view to diversifying their workforces. Just under 40% of participants in the programme identified as being from a Black, Asian or another minority ethnic group.

Although issues of race equity were not central to the appointment of the provider or the design of the service for the COF, it is important to note the COF sought to serve a large cohort which included young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) as well as those at risk of violence. That said, in our view YEF has good processes for considering diversity and inclusion throughout procurement, co-design and evaluation and we do not see any reason to depart from that general approach on this project.

Evaluation design

Background

Most of the US evaluations we reviewed conducted an RCT on an existing and well-established programme, and relied on the schemes being oversubscribed to allow for within area individual level randomisation.

Given this and YEF's focus on causal inference, we set out to address the following questions:

- Would it be feasible to conduct an RCT in the UK?
- What preparatory work should be conducted prior to any efficacy trial?

Conclusions

On the feasibility of an RCT, from our perspective one of the biggest barriers to evaluation, will be establishing a high-quality and well-targeted offer at scale in order to make a robust assessment on the outcomes of relevance to YEF (see outcomes section below). If this is in place and the scheme is receiving sufficient referrals, then there is no obvious reason why an RCT would not be possible.

As noted above, lots of the US evaluations have exploited the programme being oversubscribed as justification for randomisation (i.e. it is the 'fairest' way to allocate places rather than using another approach such as first come first served, level of need or quality of application). Given this, ensuring that the number of referrals exceeds capacity feels key, as this should limit concerns from providers and commissioners about withholding services when there are available job opportunities. If YEF feels this could be problematic - because referrals may be low, practitioners will be unwilling to withhold services or areas will be uncomfortable with this approach - then it may be possible to conduct a QED. However, a QED would have many of the usual problems about identifying a counterfactual and the strength of causal claims which can be made, and so we strongly recommend that YEF pursues an RCT as their preferred evaluative approach.

In terms of preparatory work, in our view it is essential to conduct high-quality feasibility work and to increase delivery incrementally towards a large-scale RCT. This will be a new programme and there is a chance that it will not be feasible e.g. employers or young people are unwilling to participate, referrals are too low or attrition is high, all of which would comprise YEF's ability to conduct an RCT. It is important to bear in mind that, as far as we can tell, most of the US evaluations were conducted on schemes which had been established for some time.

Given this, we suggest a programme of work which goes from feasibility through to full efficacy trial and has strict stop-go criteria that are used to agree on progression to the next phase. At this stage we suggest 6 stages to the project:

- **Phase 1 - Scoping (currently underway)**
 - defining what YEF wants to test and where,

- designing a procurement process,
 - engaging potential suppliers, employers, and other funders etc.
- **Phase 2 - Procurement, set up and training**
 - conducting a market testing event with potential providers and employers,
 - appointing a delivery partner through a competitive bidding process,
 - carrying out co-design to define the offer and its theory of change, developing referral criteria and pathways,
 - recruiting and training job mentors and programme staff
 - identifying a wide range of employers willing to participate etc.
- **Phase 3 - Establishing feasibility** - Beginning delivery in a small number of areas, without a control group, to test questions on:
 - volume and suitability of referrals,
 - take up of the offer,
 - sustainability of employment opportunities,
 - the optimal set of outcome measures
 - participants, practitioners and commissioners' views of the service and improvements required as delivery is scaled up etc.
- **Phase 4 - Piloting** - Expanding the scheme and including a control group to test:
 - Deliverability - implementation and process evaluation to test fidelity of model at scale, perspectives of young people, practitioners and employers.
 - Evaluability - testing processes of randomisation and collection of outcome data to understand if a larger scale RCT is possible.
- **Phase 5 - Testing Efficacy** - large scale RCT across multiple areas and with up to 2,000 young people in each arm.
 - Test impact on relevant outcomes (self-report, arrest records, school attendance etc.)
 - Make recommendations on if the programme should continue and how it might be funded
- **Phase 6 - Long-term follow up** - To understand if any improvements seen post intervention are sustained
 - use NPD, LEO and PNC data to understand education and employment destinations and offending levels

- make further recommendations on delivery, including if it is successful how to build the infrastructure to ensure that fidelity and quality are maintained long-term delivery

Timetable

Background

We are cognisant of YEF's desire to move quickly and to get impact evaluations into the field. But in our view there is a need to balance this with sufficient development and early stage evaluation work to ensure that a high security evaluation is produced (i.e. confidence in the results is not undermined by low take up, high attrition, poor fidelity, failure to capture the right data etc.)

Given this, we set out to explore what an ambitious yet achievable timetable to progress through the six stages outlined above might look like.

Conclusions

The below timetable is our estimation of the time each stage might take. Although we have informally tested this with potential providers, who have not raised serious concerns, it is important to note that there is inevitably a high degree of uncertainty in this. The Lab is also not in a position to advise on when YEF would be able to find the resources for this, or how quickly it could progress through the internal approvals process.

Phase	Subtasks	Start	End
1. Scoping	Initial report to YEF	June 23	Aug 23
	Report agreed and direction set	Aug 23	Sep 23
2. Procurement, set up and training	Market testing and expression of interest	Sep 23	Oct 23
	Procurement of funder and evaluator for phase 3	Oct 23	Nov 23
	Funding approval and grant signing	Nov 23	Dec 23
	Co-design	Jan 24	Jun 24
3. Establishing feasibility	Delivery	Jun 24	Dec 24
	Adaption of programme in light of emerging findings	Sep 24	Dec 24
	Decision on progression and procurement of independent evaluator	Sep 24	Dec 24
4. Piloting	Delivery & evaluation	Jan 25	Dec 25
	Decision on progression to phase 5	Sep 25	Dec 25
5. Testing efficacy	Delivery and evaluation	Jan 26	Dec 26
	Analysing data report writing and publication	Jan 27	Jun 27
6. Long term follow up	Accessing data, analysis and report writing	Jan 28	Dec 28

Number, location and size of areas

Background

The COF was delivered in Birmingham, Bradford, Croydon, Hackney, Kingston upon Hull, Lambeth, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton. We are told that this was based on a combination of crime and NEET rates. It is not clear why no Welsh areas were selected.

Our understanding is that areas were not consulted on whether they would like to participate in the scheme, although there was no significant resistance given it was essentially a free good to these areas.

Given this we set out to answer the following questions:

- Should YEF select the areas they want delivery to take place in, or allow bidders to suggest areas?
- If the former, should YEF replicate the delivery areas used in Creating Opportunities (possibly with the addition of some Welsh areas), or would a different approach, such as using their own analysis to select the highest risk areas or selecting a subset of VRUs?
- How many areas will be needed for a full trial?

Conclusions

On the selection of areas, our instinct is that it is important for YEF to play a strong role in specifying the level of geography (ward, LA, city etc) that they want this scheme to operate at, and the areas they want included. As YEF has less ability to 'impose' a scheme on an area than the Home Office, we think it will be necessary for them to work alongside the delivery partner during phase 2 to recruit areas and embedded services.

The most faithful replication of the US approach would be for the scheme to operate at a city level, but to target certain demographics or geographical areas within that. We think there is good reason to try the same here.³ It may be possible to use the influence of Mayoral offices in the major cities to promote the scheme, encourage referrals from agencies and recruit employers. Also, longer-term if the scheme is shown to improve outcomes, then fundraising at a city level might be an easier route to long-term sustainability, rather than relying on a national scheme which is funded by central government.

On the level of randomisation The US schemes have used within-area individual-level randomisation, and we think this is the best approach here, as randomisation at a city or Local Authority level would be challenging in terms of numbers, and randomising at a school level would exclude over 18s. That means the most relevant factor in terms of number of areas needed is how many will YEF need in order to generate sufficient referrals to make robust causal claims (see target population section below). YEF would need to work with the

³ Note given its size, there may be a case for dividing London into sub-regions.

provider and the areas on this, but if this is to be delivered at the level of the city, then 5-10 seems a sensible starting assumption.

Outcome measures

There has been a range of outcome measures in the US evaluations, but all have used administrative data on offending (arrests, convictions etc.), which some have combined with education outcomes and self-report measures on attitudes, behaviours or other relevant outcomes.

We set out to address the following questions

- What should the primary outcome(s) be for this evaluation?
- Given the challenges in finding an effect on offending in a UK context what other constructs might we collect?

Conclusions

Given the evidence from the US, and YEF's desire to do more on measuring the impact on offending, it seems sensible to make the primary outcome an objective measure of violent offending. In keeping with the approach used in the Focused Deterrence trial, Police National Computer (PNC) data on violence against the person offences committed within 1 year of the individual being randomised seems like a sound starting point. Alongside this, it would be interesting - and in our view valuable - to assess whether the intervention has had any impact on non-violent forms of crime, by using PNC data on any offence category.

Assuming that the age range of participants in this scheme will go to 21 and possibly 24, education data on attendance or KS4/KS5 results are likely to be of limited value. If the YFF were to co-fund this (see potential co-funders section below) then they will almost certainly want an outcome measure which is closer to their area of interest, such as NEET status one year after randomisation. They may also be interested in trying to assess the quality of outcomes through measures such as average earnings, or time in the labour market, post-intervention. The details of the specific measures and how to capture them would need to be worked through with YFF.

Beyond the use of administrative data, there is an opportunity for this evaluation to collect self-report data. This could make a huge contribution to confirming the intervention's Theory of Change and for identifying the mechanisms it works through. It also may produce findings sooner than analysis of PNC data. Detailed work on the intervention's Theory of Change during co-design will be necessary to identify the outcomes(s) YEF would wish to assess, and the best tools to collect them. But constructs such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy, locus of control, and self-report delinquency would be worth considering.

Target population and sample size

Background

Although often open to applicants up to 24, since they run during the academic summer holidays and often recruit via schools, the mean age of participants in the SYEPs we have looked at is around 16. Schemes have used a variety of referral mechanisms: some only recruit via schools in high-crime neighbourhoods, others accept applications from anyone who lives in the city and others use intermediaries to promote the scheme and process applications. Where demographic data is reported it does seem that regardless of referral mechanisms these schemes are quite successful at recruiting young people from a disadvantaged background.

The referral routes for COF were varied (social services, schools, YOTs, self-referrals etc). Although the statistics we have seen indicate that they have been successful in reaching people who were NEET, one of Home Office's major reflections from the programme was that a lot of these young people were some distance from violence, and that the nature of the funding arrangement incentivised the provider to prioritise quantity of participants over need. For these reasons the Home Office have emphasised the need to ensure that the programme is reaching the right people and to build strong relationships with the agencies who are most likely to refer young people at genuine risk of violence (YOTS, VRUs PRUs etc.).

In light of this, we addressed the following questions

- Does YEF want to replicate the approach used in the COF, or is there an alternative way to ensure we are delivering to young people most at risk of getting caught up in violence?
- How do we encourage participation in the evaluation?
- What sample size will we require to assess the causal impact on youth violence?

Conclusions

In terms of referrals, as set out in the intervention design section above, we think it is important that YEF dedicates sufficient time and focus to ensuring that the delivery partner builds relationships with the key agencies. Assuming that YEF wants to use this work to measure the impact of crime or violence, there will be a need to use screening to ensure only those at genuine risk of violence are included, or to accept a large and diverse sample but have pre-specified subgroup analyses to look at the impact of offending for the most vulnerable. Given the complexities in setting up this scheme and getting it to scale, we advise that YEF pursue the first of these options.

On participation in the evaluation, YEF and their evaluators have a strong track record in encouraging participation, gaining consent etc. However, as we have noted elsewhere, the US schemes have relied on demand for jobs outstripping supply. In these circumstances allocating at random is likely to be seen as fair by participants and practitioners. However, if there are fewer referrals than there are job opportunities then the incentive for practitioners

and referring agencies to try and circumvent randomisation is greater. So ensuring a strong pipeline of referrals feels key.

In terms of the sample size, we have not performed power calculations. Instead, we note that in the Focused Deterrence protocol the sample size of 1,700 means the study is powered to detect an effect size of a 26% reduction in violence against the person offences in 80% of trials. Given that the population being worked with in this project are likely to be further from violence than those in the focused deterrence work (meaning a smaller effect size is likely) and that there are likely to be multiple outcome measures (meaning multiple test correction will need to be applied, further increasing the sample size required) it seems sensible at this stage to assume that a total sample of more than 2,000⁴ (split equally between treatment and control) will be needed.

Cost

Background

The US schemes have tended to have costs \$2-3k per person, with the majority of this accounted for by wage costs. The largest scheme we are aware of is in New York, which had approximately 165,000 participants in the 4 years from 2005 at a cost of over \$260m.

Conclusions

UK costs are hard to define precisely at this stage. However, a 3 year scheme with 2,000 in the treatment arm would cost several million pounds in wage costs alone, with additional costs for administration, pastoral support and evaluation.

However, we advise caution about reaching this scale of delivery too quickly, as developing a high-quality offer which can be delivered with fidelity will be crucial to detecting impact. We have scoped a process which allows delivery to be scaled up incrementally, making adjustments to the offer on the basis of early-stage evaluation. We also advise having stop/go criteria throughout the implementation, so that delivery can be paused, and adjustments made if there are concerns on the scale of delivery or the quality of the offer.

Recommendations

In our view, funding the delivery and evaluation of a scheme which provides young people at risk of violence with short-term employment opportunities is well aligned to YEF's mission and is feasible to achieve. However, this is an expensive and complex undertaking which will require significant expenditure and internal resources.

The following is intended as a set of suggested next steps, rather than a comprehensive route map for establishing such a scheme. It does not include everything discussed in this

⁴ Based on the Focused Deterrence protocol a Minimum Detectable Effect Size of a 20% reduction in violence against the person offences would require a total sample of around 2,400 (1,200 treated). However, if the effect were as small as 10% reduction then a study would be massively underpowered at that level and would need a much larger sample size

report (for example sample size, outcome measures) as in our view these are decisions which would be better taken in due course.

YEF should:

- Seek approval from GEC0 at the next available opportunity to invest in the delivery and evaluation of an employment scheme.
- Open formal discussions with Youth Futures Foundation about co-funding and co-branding the delivery and evaluation of the scheme.
- Make a decision as to whether bringing in other funders (including central government departments) is worth the time and resources required and the additional complexity it will add to the final project
- Start laying the groundwork to appoint a delivery provider through YEF's procurement infrastructure. The provider will be responsible for designing and delivering a fully subsidised short-term paid employment and mentoring support to young people. The scheme should operate all year round but have a particular focus on placements during the summer holidays.
- Decide what level of geography this scheme should operate at, and the role YEF will have in identifying areas and encouraging their participation.
- Conduct a market testing event(s) to generate interest from range of potential bidders and consider having a formal expression of interest stage
- Use the procurement process to generate ideas of additional support which might be provided to young people to help them integrate into work, such as social and emotional training.
- Work with the Home Office and other central government departments to encourage national employers to work with the delivery partner in offering paid employment.

- Use its usual processes to ensure that race equality is at the heart of the design, delivery and evaluation of the scheme.
- Work with the delivery provider in the co-design phase to develop referral pathways that ensure that young people who are genuinely at risk of violence are the main beneficiaries of the programme. Alongside this, consider introducing a formal screening tool to ensure only the most vulnerable young people are accepted. Monitor referrals throughout and take corrective steps if the volume or type of referral is off trajectory.
- Have the programme and evaluation teams review the design outlined in this report, make adjustments where necessary and begin scoping a programme of delivery with evaluation embedded from the outset.

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