

# Protocol for a systematic review on qualitative research with children and young people’s involvement in violence in the UK

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## 1. Background

Children and young people (CYP) are leading increasingly complex lives impacted by a range of factors including austerity, COVID-19, social media influences, and widening inequalities that may impact their wellbeing and mental health (Lewis-Dagnell et al., 2023). Involvement in serious violence is rare, but nonetheless causes significant economic, social and individual harms across multiple spheres including public health, justice, education and social care. In the year ending March 2023, data show there were just under 3,400 knife or offensive weapon offences committed by children (aged 10-17 years) in England and Wales, resulting in a caution or sentence, which is 4% fewer than the previous year but 23% greater than ten years ago (Youth Justice Board, 2024). Of these, the majority of both perpetrators and victims are young males and young people from some minority ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected (Youth Endowment Fund, 2024; Allen et al., 2023; Winchester, 2023). A 2023 survey conducted by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) showed that amongst 13–17-year-olds, one in six reported they had been victims of violence in the last 12 months and a similar proportion said they had perpetrated violence (Youth Endowment Fund, 2023).

There is considerable intersection between key variables, such as socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, use of social media, mental health, school exclusion and regionality/geo-location which may, to varying extents, intersect with pathways to and from involvement in violence. Further, data indicate that the offending rate for violence peak in adolescence/early adulthood. The age-crime curve suggests that most people who offend between the ages of 15-20 years, will ultimately ‘grow-out’ of offending (Kilkelly, 2023; Loeber et al., 2012).

Those seen to be at risk of engaging in serious youth violence tend to be CYP who have removed themselves (or have been removed) from the formal structures including the education system, social services and other formal and community-based settings. They are not only physically absent from formal civil society, but their voice and perspective are often missing with direct implications on research, conducted to inform policy and practice relevant to their wellbeing (Spray and Hunleth, 2020). Despite decades of public and political interest in youth violence in the UK (Williams and Squires, 2021), The Children’s Commissioner recently concluded that local authorities still lack sufficient understanding of what drives CYP into violence or have cogent strategies to address these risks (Children’s Commissioner, 2021). There is also a lack of insight into reasons why young people facing significant levels of risk desist from serious violence.

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The Child-First philosophy (Case and Browning, 2021) proposes that CYP involvement in crime and violence is a reaction to unmet or unidentified needs. Accordingly, it is the duty of the child's social and professional networks (school, parents, health and social services) to appropriately identify and respond to these needs. If this goal is to be accomplished, Ullman (2024: 15) highlights the urgent need to work with children to co-produce a picture of their strengths and needs so that they may be supported to find alternative pathways away from violence.

## 2. Rationale for the review

Over the past decade, a series of systematic reviews have offered valuable insights into serious youth violence, identifying key contributory factors, interventions, and policy implications (Farrington et al., 2017; Haylock et al., 2020; Melendez-Torres et al., 2016; Ullman et al., 2024). The literature, largely based on quantitative data, identifies a range of individual, social and environmental factors associated with violent behaviours and emphasises the importance of an intersectional approach which incorporates both structural and individual factors. However, previous reviews do not adequately describe the complex mechanisms that underlie CYP involvement in violence and pathways that might support desistance. The voices and perspectives of young people who are directly involved in perpetrating violent behaviours are often missing. Understanding the meanings CYP attach to violence, how and why they become involved and how they might be supported away from it can be more appropriately captured through qualitative research. Nuances and variations in attitudes to violence and gangs show significant differences across regions of England as well as gender and different communities of colour. Attitudes to street gangs, for example, differ significantly between White, Black African, Caribbean and SE Asian communities (Dempsey, 2020; Harding, 2020a; Whitaker et al., 2018). Any meaningful intervention, policy or strategy aimed at reducing youth violence will be more effective if informed by the perspectives and experiences of CYP, particularly through data which remains grounded in the social locations and perspectives.

## 3. The phenomenon of interest

The focus of this review is to explore how young people narrate their experiences of both becoming involved in serious violence and choosing pathways enabling them to leave violence behind

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(desistance). We will examine how our findings align with existing theoretical models, drawing on a social ecological model alongside the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) framework (WHO, 2010) that combines structural factors (macro-level) with cultural, social (meso-level), and individual psychosocial factors (micro-level) that impact health and wellbeing. These systems level perspectives illustrate the fluid and interactive nature of complex social phenomenon, with feedback loops used to represent the nonlinear and iterative nature of the contributory factors. Whilst interactions between system levels mean that distinct levels (meso, macro and micro) can be hard to define, adopting a systems thinking perspective enables a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. This prevents attributing behaviours solely to individual characteristics which tend towards punitive responses.

Structural determinants, such as access to the labour market, social care, healthcare and welfare services, intersect with cultural, social and environmental factors that can shape social norms and individual behaviours. The evidence base on social and structural determinants of health and violence outcomes has been widely acknowledged (Armstead et al., 2021; Friedson and Sharkey, P, 2015; Hipp, 2010). Additionally, concepts, such as structural violence, referring in part to disparate access to resources, education and healthcare, help elucidate links between broader social structures and violent behaviours (Armstead, 2021).

The interaction between violence across a wide range of key associated factors is inconsistent. These include developmental stages, age-groups, race/ethnicity, class, gender, geography, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), social media use and previous experience of violence, among others. Moreover, an intersectional lens will be applied to understand more holistically how young people enter into or desist from violence.

We will develop a logic model using a multidisciplinary approach proposed by Wood and Alleyne (2010) and further developed by recent theorists (Densley et al., 2020; Harding, 2020b; Windle et al., 2020), as a reference throughout the review. This integration of macro-structural and micro-psychological explanations highlights how systemic inequalities, peer dynamics, and individual experiences contribute to youth involvement in violence. As we synthesise our findings, we will iteratively test and refine the model to accommodate emerging insights. The outputs will inform future research directions and guide policy and practice in violence reduction.

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### 3.1 Definition of serious violence & desistance

We will adopt, for the review, the following definition of serious youth violence. The definition has been guided by discussions with YEF and consultations several of YEF's YAB members as well as professionals working in the area (see Public Engagement below).

Serious youth violence includes:

- Interpersonal violent offences or severe acts of aggression such as murder; assault with a weapon; grievous bodily harm; kidnapping and abduction; sexual violence; race/ethnic or gender-based violence;
- those committed as individuals or as part of groups involved in drug markets (including those involved in county lines, Child Criminal Exploitation, street gangs, post-code gangs, organised crime groups).

We define desistance from violence as leaving gangs or desisting from offending, as well as interventions aimed at supporting desistance. Definitions of what constitutes a gang vary widely, particularly as described by putative gang members, the criminal justice system, members of the public and the press. The term is viewed by some as problematic in its tendency to ascribe criminality, particularly to certain racialised communities (Taylor, 2023). Moreover, its role in racial profiling has been criticised, particularly in perpetuating anti-Blackness and Islamophobia (Williams and Clarke, 2016) and for concerns that typecasting may lead to punitive policy outcomes (Hallsworth and Young, 2004). However, despite being contested the term 'gang' is widely used and whilst acknowledging reservations around its use, due to its centrality in describing violent group conflict, we have included the term as a central part of our search strategy.

### 3.2 Population of interest

Our key population are children and young people (CYP) aged 10-24 years, acting as perpetrators or accomplices in acts of serious violence. Our definition of CYP expands the age-range from YEF's usual focus of 10-17 to an upper limit of 24. This is to ensure potential studies where CYPs have retrospectively reflected on their past experiences of involvement in serious violence and/or their journeys of desistance are included.

Our primary focus are CYPs with direct involvement in serious violence. However, we include CYP considered to be at risk of serious violence as there may be important narratives that may speak to the pathways of involvement in or desistance from serious violence.

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The concept of “at risk of involvement” can include those who have a history of aggression or substance use; carrying weapons; involvement in non-violent crime; engagement in violent protests/riots; disengagement from school (including poor attenders or are permanently excluded from school); or lack of social support. Categories of “at risk” will be informed by definitions in the literature.

## 4. Review questions

We will conduct a systematic review on the qualitative research conducted in the UK with CYP, aged 10 – 24 years, involved in or considered at risk of involvement in serious violence.

The review focuses on three key research questions:

- 1) What is the range of existing UK qualitative research conducted with CYP at risk of or involved in serious violence, how representative are these (e.g. geographical, social context, types of CYP and forms of violence, use of social media) and what are the gaps in the existing evidence?
- 2) What do CYP perceive to be the pathways and influences on their involvement in or desistance from serious violence?
- 3) What are CYP’s experiences of being involved in serious violence and how do these vary across different CYP, social contexts, geography and demographics?<sup>6</sup>

A set of detailed sub-questions are included in Appendix 1.

## 5. Methods

We will conduct a systematic review and meta-ethnographic synthesis of the qualitative literature on the experiences of CYP involved in, or at risk of involvement in, serious youth violence. The review

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<sup>6</sup> While we endeavour to explore CYP’s experiences across different contexts, we expect most studies will only include some of these factors based on the study’s focus area. Our synthesis will ultimately be based on what study authors report and not all of these will be examined.

protocol will be registered with PROSPERO. We will follow the 2012 Enhancing transparency in reporting the synthesis of qualitative research (ENTREQ) framework which provides 21 reporting guidelines, commonly used for qualitative reviews (Tong et al., 2012). We will also report the search outcomes using the PRISMA guidelines (Rethlefsen et al., 2021) to ensure the systematic element of the review are captured and reported.

## 5.1 Public involvement

We will conduct public involvement with two key groups: young people and key organisation stakeholders.

- i) We will recruit young people (n=5-10) from YEF's Youth Advisory Board (YAB) who have lived experience either of serious youth violence or underlying risk factors to it. We will explain to YAB members what their involvement entails and those that voluntarily decide to take part will be invited to attend discussions to explore key concepts and questions for this review. We will only recruit from the YAB as they are all involved with YEF and there are safeguarding procedures in place to ensure any engagement is safe and ethical. Whilst these young people may represent a range of ages, ethnicities, genders and experiences, our intention is not recruiting a representative sample reflecting a complete range of contributory factors to youth violence. Rather, the aim is to consult with those who can pose challenges and questions arising from lived experience and can offer different perspectives that can contribute to shape our synthesis and interpretation.
- ii) Professionals (n=10-15) including academics, practitioners and policy with expertise of young people's involvement in serious violence will be identified in liaison with YEF.

We will hold a minimum of two consultations with each group: i) Stage 1: at project inception to consider question relevance and definitions of key concepts and ii) Stage 2: to review and interrogate the synthesis of findings; and consider how approaches to dissemination and discuss how findings could be used.

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## 5.2 Search methods

We will conduct a comprehensive literature search across multidisciplinary academic databases including public health, education, social care, youth work, social work, criminal justice and children and youth studies.

An indicative list of databases and websites to be searched is provided in Table 1. Our search strategies were refined with an LSHTM library information scientist and reviewed according to Peer Review for Electronic Search Strategies guidance (McGowan et al., 2016). The draft search strategy used in Ovid Medline ALL, incorporating broad definitions of violence, the population group of CYP and geographical location, is shown in Appendix 1. Our search strategy draws on MeSH terms such as “teen”, “adolescent” and “young adult” alongside free-text terms and specific ages are included to incorporate alternative phrasing that may be used to capture and describe age groups. Our search strategy is not designed to maximise sensitivity. Additionally, the approach reflects the fact that terms may vary more widely within public health and social science literatures, which are also often multi-disciplinary with greater likelihood for variations in terminology, compared to, for example, clinical literature. Our initial search retrieved approximately 2000 records which may appear to be large but is not unusual within the social sciences literature. Based on the review team’s experience conducting systematic reviews, this initial number of records hit within one database is manageable, particularly once duplicates are removed. The final Ovid Medline ALL search will be edited as required to search across all included databases.

In addition, we will search grey literature through DuckDuckGo and key NGO websites. While our list of included governmental and NGO websites may appear large, they were selected to ensure comprehensive search among relevant organisations that have some focus on CYPs. We follow the most up to date Cochrane Guidance (Lefebvre et al., 2024) which indicates “no specific search engines are recommended for a Cochrane Review” (pp 35). For grey literature, Google Scholar is not recommended for more general types of grey literature as it focuses on scholarly information. Harzing’s Publish or Perish is recommended with Google Scholar to facilitate exporting of results easily rather than an approach to improve the search strategy. By contrast, DuckDuckGo is one example provided in the guidance (Higgins and Thomas, 2024). For these reasons, we adopted the search methods proposed.



We will hand search references from the included studies to identify additional relevant publications and also include any additional studies identified during public engagement work with professionals which fit the review criteria.

**Table 1: List of electronic databases and websites searched**

<b>Databases</b>		<b>Websites</b>
<p><b>General:</b> Scopus Clarivate Analytics Web of Science Core Collection which includes the following databases: -Science Citation Index Expanded -Social Sciences Citation Index -Arts &amp; Humanities Citation Index -Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science -Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Social Science &amp; Humanities -Emerging Sources Citation Index</p>	<p><b>Education:</b> EBSCOhost British Education Index, EBSCOhost Education Abstracts, EBSCOhost ERIC, EBSCOhost Teacher Reference Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Barnardo’s</li> <li>-Catch 22</li> <li>-Child and Adolescent Research Unit</li> <li>-Childhoods Today</li> <li>-Children in Scotland</li> <li>-Children in Wales</li> <li>-Community Research and Development Information Service</li> <li>- CREST</li> <li>- Department of Health and Social Care</li> <li>- Early Intervention Foundation (archived site)</li> <li>--Government of Scotland</li> <li>-Juvenis</li> <li>-Leaders Unlocked</li> <li>- Ministry of Justice</li> <li>-National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children</li> <li>-National Youth Agency</li> <li>-Personal Social Services Research Uni</li> <li>- Russell Webster Website</li> <li>-St Giles Trust</li> <li>-The Ben Kinsella Trust</li> <li>The Centre for Education and Youth</li> <li>-The Children’s Commissioner for England</li> <li>-The Children’s Society</li> <li>- The Hope Collection</li> <li>-The Young Foundation</li> <li>-UK Youth</li> <li>-Violence Reduction Unit (individual websites)</li> <li>-Youth Endowment Fund</li> <li>-Youth Justice Board</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social science:</b> ProQuest Applied Social Sciences Index &amp; Abstracts (ASSIA), ProQuest International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), Ovid Social Policy &amp; Practice, ProQuest Social Science Database, ProQuest Sociological Abstracts, ProQuest Sociology Database</p>	<p><b>Youth Studies:</b> EBSCOhost Child Development and Adolescent Studies</p>	
<p><b>Public Health:</b> Ovid Embase, Ovid Global Health Ovid Medline ALL, Ovid PsycInfo,</p>	<p><b>Criminal Justice:</b> ProQuest Criminal Justice Database</p>	



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### 5.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

#### Inclusion criteria:

- Primary qualitative studies conducted in the UK
- Include first-hand accounts from CYP, aged 10 – 24, living in the UK, involved in or at risk of involvement in serious violence as previously defined, and/or their experiences of desistance.
- Research published since 2000.

#### Exclusion criteria:

- Studies not using qualitative design or not conducted in the UK
- Studies that do not include experiences reported by CYP themselves
- Studies where CYP are outside of the 10 – 24 age bracket
- Studies that look at violence not covered in our working definition of serious youth violence
- Studies where CYP were not involved in and not at risk of perpetrating serious violence
- Non empirical publications ( e.g. letters, editorials, conference proceedings etc).
- Studies published prior to 2000.

We anticipate some studies may not align directly with our inclusion and exclusion criteria. For example, the study sample may include a wider age range than our focus age-groups. In these cases, we will assess based on whether the majority of the study population (>50%) was in our age group, or if the mean age of the sample was, or if it is possible to disaggregate the findings by age group, we would include the study. Similarly, for studies that might have been conducted across several countries, we will adopt a similar strategy such that where findings have been reported by country or where the majority was in the UK, they would be included.

#### Rational for the review timeframe

Given the rapidly changing social, cultural and economic contexts over the last couple of decades this review will exclude literature published prior to 2000. The reason for this cut-off is largely pragmatic

and acknowledges that much of the theory development will be based around models and thinking developed prior to this date.

Changes in the models of violent gangs have been noted, with a significant rise of the County Lines gang model since it was first reported as a phenomenon in the UK in the mid 2010's (Harding 2020). Growing youth violence has been attributed to a range of factors including: austerity; shifting immigration patterns; access to new and different types of weapons; impact on young people's mental health following the COVID-19 pandemic; media influences; territorial disputes and the growing perception that knives are necessary for self-defence (Children's Commissioner, 2021; Densley et al., 2020; Harding, 2020a; Pitts, 2020). Significant growth in ownership and use of mobile phones over the last two decades have also contributed to modes of communication and gatherings which may lead to violent acts (Campbell et al., 2024). Government policy, developed with the intent of controlling youth violence, has seen a number of initiatives which have all played their part in changing the contextual landscape to youth violence including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (1998), the creation of Youth Offending Teams in (1998) followed by the Respect Agenda of 2006.

#### 5.4 Data management and screening

All references identified from searches will be downloaded as RIS files into EPPI-reviewer, a specialist software for managing systematic reviews. The title and abstract of each reference will be screened against the inclusion criteria, with 10% double-screened by two reviewers (RB & JM) to ensure consistency in application of the criteria, aiming to reach 90% agreement. In instances where agreement falls below 80% a further 10% of titles and abstracts will be double screened until this target is reached. Any areas of persisting divergence will be resolved by consulting the wider research team. The number of studies and reasons for exclusion at this stage will be recorded and reported as per PRISMA reporting guidelines.

We anticipate that some studies may not have sufficient information to be clearly included or excluded at the initial title and abstract screening stage. These may include studies that did not include the age group of CYP or had not clearly defined the types of violence explored, or multi-country studies that include the UK. We will include these for review at the next stage to ensure potentially relevant studies are not excluded.

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Full texts of the included studies will then be retrieved and read through to ensure they meet the inclusion criteria. Where full text documents cannot be retrieved, we will contact lead authors and/or make use of inter-library loans to access them. As with the initial screening, 10% of the full text review will be double screened at this stage. Following full text review, the reasoning for excluding studies will be recorded and reported.

### 5.5 Data extraction and quality assessment of primary studies

We will develop a template to extract key characteristics of the final included studies. We will extract study information on: author and year of publication; research aim; who conducted the research (e.g. academic, NGO); the geography and regionality; study period; sample characteristics (including levels of involvement in violence, and whether this is past or current involvement, online or offline involvement); definition and types of violence; data collection and analysis methods (including levels of youth participation); key findings from the research related to our research questions; and limitations. For quality and consistency checking, 10% of the included studies will be double extracted. Once agreement has been made between the two reviewers, the remaining papers will be extracted by one reviewer. Any subsequent uncertainties will be discussed and agreed between the two reviewers and the wider team as needed.

We will assess the quality of the included articles using a comprehensive guideline developed for qualitative research. Three tools will be trialled: CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) (CASP, 2024) and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal checklist (Lockwood et al., 2015) and a tool previously adapted for use among youth (Ponsford et al., 2022) to see which is best suited to our particular research context. CASP is a widely used tool focussing on questions of rigor, credibility, and relevance. The JBI checklist asks questions on the congruity of the methodology with the philosophical/theoretical perspective, the research questions, methods, data collection, analysis and interpretation, researcher and participant relationship, representation of participants' voices, researchers cultural or theoretical influence (Lockwood et al., 2015). In our case particular attention will be paid to adopting a tool which helps examine the appropriateness and ethical considerations of methods, including the conduct of interviews with stigmatised and marginalised populations.

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The quality appraisal will address the rigour of sampling, data collection, data analysis; the extent to which the study findings are grounded in the data and the perspectives of CYP; and the depth and breadth of findings. Studies will not be excluded based on the outcome of the quality appraisal, but insights from studies assessed as being of poor quality may be given less weight in the analysis (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007).

## 5.6 Synthesis of findings

Once the final list of eligible research has been identified and collated the team will consider the need for adaptations on the focus and research questions for the qualitative synthesis. These will be discussed and agreed with YEF and informed by earlier PPIE with CYP.

We will synthesise the literature using meta-ethnography, a form of qualitative synthesis that is particularly suited to developing conceptual models and theories. Meta-ethnography helps to analyse data that involve multifaceted social phenomena such as serious youth violence, which are influenced by multiple interacting factors such as socio-economic conditions, community structures, and individual behaviours. By comparing and translating concepts across studies, this method captures the nuanced interplay within systems that contribute to youth violence. The inductive nature of meta-ethnography means that the synthesis is driven by the data, allowing for themes and concepts to emerge organically. This approach is particularly advantageous in systems-based analyses because it helps reveal underlying patterns and relationships that might not be apparent through deductive or more rigid methods. An interpretative approach supports a richer synthesis by considering how different studies' findings relate, contrast, and build upon each other to illustrate systemic complexities (Sattar et al., 2021).

Meta-ethnography was first devised by Noblit and Hare (1988) as a tool for synthesising contradictory concepts from interpretive study accounts with unique contexts. The aim is to translate and re-interpret primary data (in the form of participant quotations) and the themes and concepts developed by the primary study authors, to develop higher order themes (possibly in the form of new theories and concepts) across different studies. The process involved in this form of synthesis is complex and often poorly reported. To increase the quality and transparency of this study in addition to the use of the ENTREQ framework for reporting the synthesis of qualitative research, we will also



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draw on eMERGe reporting guidance (France et al., 2019), which provides nineteen criteria to ensure a standard and routine process is followed through the various stages of meta-ethnography. eMERGe was developed in response to the wide range of methods in meta-ethnography and offers particular insights into: the translation of concepts; the synthesis of translations and the development of new line-of-argument synthesis. The approach is based on methods of constant comparative analysis where findings are constantly refined as each new study is added. Using principles of framework analysis (Gale 2013, Downes 2016) we will test emerging findings against a theoretically informed starting point using a logic model which was derived from previous literature (Harding, 2020b; Windle et al., 2020; Wood and Alleyne, 2010) and posits a number of theoretical mechanisms and pathways for participation in serious youth violence. To reduce bias, we will employ refutational analysis, actively addressing inconsistencies, contradictions, and alternative viewpoints across the data. Where opposing viewpoints are not easily reconciled within the project team these will be presented as alternative perspectives in the line-of-argument synthesis.

This synthesis will highlight thematic layers, showing how themes evolve from first order concepts (participants' views) to second-order interpretations (study authors' analysis), to third order interpretations (synthesisers' new insights). Conceptual diagrams may also be used to illustrate mechanisms that may operate at different systemic levels.

The final included studies will be uploaded to NVivo, read multiple times, and coded inductively line-by-line, informed by the research questions. Data will be coded to identify first order-constructs (directly quoted data and findings from CYP) and second-order constructs (primary authors' interpretations). These will be used to identify patterns of 'reciprocal translation' where similar concepts are expressed across studies, as well as cases of 'refutational synthesis' where concepts expressed in the studies conflict with each other. Throughout this process, we will refer to the study characteristics table and the logic model to ensure the wider study contextual factors are incorporated. Two reviewers will lead on the coding of the extracted data and discrepancies on the thematic structure/theory/amendments will be resolved through consensus and discussion with the wider team as needed.

Codes reflecting similar concepts will then be grouped into overarching (higher-order) themes and sub-themes constituting third-order constructs (reviewers' interpretations of the first and second order constructs). Findings from analysis of individual papers will be undertaken by two members of the team (RB and JM). Where there are disagreements relating to thematic coding these will be resolved by consideration within the wider research team and YEF, where necessary, and used to ratify or amend aspects of the logic model. Although the emerging meta-ethnography is premised on the notion that new theory may be generated from the analysis, it is nonetheless valuable to observe how the data, supports or refutes established theories, thus bridging past and current research by deepening methodological and theoretical connections within and across contexts (McCall and Edwards, 2021). With this in mind, emerging theory will be tested against a logic model derived from literature, intended to provide a contextual reference to help record new thinking.

Finally, we will develop a 'line of argument synthesis' that holds across studies to describe CYP's experiences of involvement in violence.

## 5.7 Appraisal of confidence in the review

We will follow the Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative Research (CERQual) approach to evaluate the confidence that can be placed in review findings (Lewin et al., 2018). This method, systematically assesses the confidence in qualitative evidence by examining four key domains:

1. **Methodological limitations:** This refers to the degree to which issues in the design or execution of the primary studies might affect the validity of their findings.
2. **Relevance:** This domain evaluates how closely the evidence from the primary studies aligns with the specific context of the review question, considering factors such as population, perspective, setting, and the phenomenon of interest.
3. **Coherence.** This domain examines the consistency between the data from the primary studies and the review findings, assessing whether the data provide a clear, logical explanation for the patterns or themes identified.
4. **Adequacy:** This assesses the sufficiency of the data supporting each review finding, taking into account the richness (depth and detail) and quantity (amount) of evidence available.



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Based on these assessments, review findings will be assigned a confidence rating, likely to include **high, moderate, low, or very low**. A table summarizing the key findings will be created, indicating the confidence level for each finding and providing a clear rationale for the assigned confidence level.

## 6. Reflexivity and positionality

In line with rigorous qualitative research standards, the authors acknowledge how their life experiences and perspectives may shape the analysis. All authors share a commitment to amplifying the voices of young, marginalized people to influence policy and practice around violence reduction. As female academics, we recognize both our privilege and our distance from the study population. To ensure thorough scrutiny, we will seek input from professionals and young people at key stages of the review and use those perspectives to guide the review.

## 7. Knowledge exchange and dissemination of findings

A final report detailing methods, analysis, discussion and conclusions will be produced for YEF, in line with the YEF publication policy. The report will incorporate theory, relating to mechanisms of involvement, to highlight findings relevant to policy and practice. In addition, a summary database of included studies, potentially in the form of an Evidence Gap Map (EGM), will be made available to YEF as well as a revised logic model. We aim to submit the review to a relevant youth and social justice academic journal.

The final review will also be used to support and compliment other YEF projects though adding the voice of young people to provide depth and nuance to other forms of data reporting on factors relating to youth violence. Presentation of data may involve weaving the data together as a cohesive narrative, bringing together themes and concepts identified across studies

These different outputs will aim to reach diverse groups of audiences to encourage reflection, uptake and use of the findings. It will demonstrate the strength, importance and utility of including qualitative research, particularly those that bring the voice of young people to the fore.

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## Appendix 1

Research sub-questions:

- 1) What is the scope of UK qualitative research conducted with CYP at risk of or involved in violence? This will include the following sub-questions:
  - a. Who are the research participants? How are they involved in the research?
  - b. What geographical, regional and social contexts are covered in the research?
  - c. What specific serious youth violence are addressed in the research?
  - d. What types of data collection methods are used and to what extent are they participatory?
  - e. What is the quality of the research?
- 2) How do CYPs' perceive the pathways to their involvement, including both online and offline forms, in violence and whether there were key points of intervention that may have prevented their involvement?
- 3) What are the potential and actual pathways to desistance and what are the key influences (including individuals, time points, environmental, services and interventions) that can support CYP to do so?
- 4) How do these experiences differ for CYPs from different social and geographical context, including regional variations of county line violence, demographic backgrounds and differences in involvement in violence?
- 5) What are the gaps in the existing UK qualitative research on CYP at risk of or involved in violence?

## Appendix 2

Search string:

Ovid MEDLINE(R) ALL <1946 to September 09, 2024>

- 1 violence/ or domestic violence/ or exp child abuse/ or honor-based violence/ or spouse abuse/ or gender-based violence/ or intimate partner violence/ or physical abuse/ or workplace violence/ or ethnic violence/ or aggression/ 122202
- 2 gun violence/ or mass shooting/ or terrorism/ or torture/ or weapons/ or bombs/ or firearms/ or exp tear gases/ 17121
- 3 sex offenses/ or child abuse, sexual/ or human trafficking/ or rape/ or stalking/ 28968
- 4 homicide/ or infanticide/ 15648
- 5 cyberbullying/ 713
- 6 civil disorders/ or riots/ or road rage/ 1238
- 7 (violence or violent\*).ti,ab. 81503
- 8 (aggressiv\* or aggression\* or aggressor).ti,ab. 266918
- 9 (((("section 250" or "section 91") adj2 sentenc\*) or (detention adj2 majesty\* pleasure) or DHMP).ti,ab. 21
- 10 ("offences against the person act" or sexual offences act or malice aforethought).ti,ab. 54
- 11 (weapon\* or knife or knives or blade or firearm\* or gun or guns).ti,ab. 55854
- 12 (murder\* or manslaughter or homicid\* or infanticide or kill or killed or killing or ((serious\* harm\* or serious\* injur\* or death or wound\* or maim\* or disfigur\* or disable\*) adj2 (unlawful\* or intent\* or cause or inflict\*))).ti,ab. 276112
- 13 ((acid or corrosive) adj2 (attack\* or substanc\* or throw\* or intent\* or unlawful\* or inflict\*)).ti,ab. 14269
- 14 (threatening or threaten or (force adj2 ("use\*" or physical or threat\*)) or ("use\*" adj2 threat\*) or assault\* or bodily harm or GBH or robbery or robbed or mugged or mugging or mug).ti,ab. 350649
- 15 ((sex\* adj1 (offenc\* or abus\* or exploit\*)) or (force\* adj1 (prostitut\* or sex\*)) or rape or raping or raper or non-consensual or grooming or revenge porn).ti,ab. 34434

- 16 (group conflict or gang or gangs or organised crime or organised criminal\* or criminal\* exploit\* or county lines or modern-day-slave\*).ti,ab. 1839
- 17 (fight\* or punch\* or kick\*).ti,ab. 66457
- 18 (cyberbullying or cyber-bullying or cyberviolen\* or cyber-violen\*).ti,ab. 1693
- 19 desistance.ti,ab. 432
- 20 or/1-19 1148626
- 21 adolescent/ or young adult/ or child/ or homeless youth/ or minors/ or adolescent mothers/ 3721947
- 22 puberty/ or menarche/ 19327
- 23 child, abandoned/ or "Child of Impaired Parents"/ or child, foster/ or child, orphaned/ or child, unwanted/ or child, adopted/ or disabled children/ or foster home care/ 18484
- 24 orphanages/ or schools/ 55006
- 25 (child\* or paediatric\* or pediatric\* or boy\* or girl\* or schoolage\* or (school adj1 age\*) or schoolchild\* or youngster\* or minor\* or prepubescen\*).ti,ab. 2421907
- 26 (adolescen\* or puberty or pubescent\* or juvenil\* or underage\* or preteen\* or pre-teen\* or teen or teens or teener or teenage\* or youth or youths or young people\* or young person\* or young wom?n or young man or young men or (transition adj3 adult\*) or emerging adult\* or young adult\* or early adult\*).ti,ab. 752471
- 27 (((secondary or high or grammar or academy or comprehensive or private or public or junior or middle or upper or lower or prep or preparatory or selective) adj1 school\*) or ((school or college or university or education) adj3 (pupil\* or student\*)) or (key stage adj1 ("3" or "4" or "5")) or sixth-form or gcse or 11-plus or a-level\* or t-level\* or btec or baccalaureate).ti,ab. 221342
- 28 (runaway or "taken into care" or young offender\* or care home\* or foster home\*).ti,ab. 8964
- 29 ((school\* adj2 (removed or expelled or exclus\* or exclud\* or disengage\* or attendenc\* or attender\*)) or truant or truancy).ti,ab. 1174
- 30 (("10" or "11" or "12" or "13" or "14" or "15" or "16" or "17" or "18" or "19" or "20" or "21" or "22" or "23" or "24") adj1 (year\* old or year\* of age)).ti,ab. 282183
- 31 ((ten or eleven or twelve or thirteen or fourteen or fifteen or sixteen or seventeen or eighteen or nineteen or twenty or twenty-one or twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-four) adj1 (year\* old or year\* of age)).ti,ab. 6617



- 
- 32 (age\* adj1 ("10" or "11" or "12" or "13" or "14" or "15" or "16" or "17" or "18" or "19" or "20" or "21" or "22" or "23" or "24") adj1 year\*).ti,ab. 71807
- 33 (age\* adj1 (ten or eleven or twelve or thirteen or fourteen or fifteen or sixteen or seventeen or eighteen or nineteen or twenty or twenty-one or twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-four) adj1 year\*).ti,ab. 277
- 34 or/1-32 6128994
- 35 20 and 34 1148626
- 36 juvenile delinquency/ 9101
- 37 35 or 36 1154636
- 38 exp United Kingdom/ 398232
- 39 (national health service\* or nhs\*).ti,ab. 55107
- 40 (english not ((published or publication\* or translat\* or written or language\* or speak\* or literature or citation\*) adj5 english)).ti,ab. 132635
- 41 (gb or "g.b." or britain\* or (british\* not "british columbia") or uk or "u.k." or united kingdom\* or (england\* not "new england") or northern ireland\* or northern irish\* or scotland\* or scottish\* or ((wales or "south wales") not "new south wales") or welsh\*).ti,ab. 333174
- 42 (bath or "bath's" or ((birmingham not alabama\*) or ("birmingham's" not alabama\*) or bradford or "bradford's" or brighton or "brighton's" or bristol or "bristol's" or carlisle\* or "carlisle's" or (cambridge not (massachusetts\* or boston\* or harvard\*)) or ("cambridge's" not (massachusetts\* or boston\* or harvard\*)) or (canterbury not zealand\*) or ("canterbury's" not zealand\*) or chelmsford or "chelmsford's" or chester or "chester's" or chichester or "chichester's" or coventry or "coventry's" or derby or "derby's" or (durham not (carolina\* or nc)) or ("durham's" not (carolina\* or nc)) or ely or "ely's" or exeter or "exeter's" or gloucester or "gloucester's" or hereford or "hereford's" or hull or "hull's" or lancaster or "lancaster's" or leeds\* or leicester or "leicester's" or (lincoln not nebraska\*) or ("lincoln's" not nebraska\*) or (liverpool not (new south wales\* or nsw)) or ("liverpool's" not (new south wales\* or nsw)) or ((london not (ontario\* or ont or toronto\*)) or ("london's" not (ontario\* or ont or toronto\*)) or manchester or "manchester's" or (newcastle not (new south wales\* or nsw)) or ("newcastle's" not (new south wales\* or nsw)) or norwich or "norwich's" or nottingham or "nottingham's" or oxford or "oxford's" or peterborough or "peterborough's" or plymouth or "plymouth's" or portsmouth or "portsmouth's" or preston or "preston's" or ripon or "ripon's" or salford or "salford's" or salisbury or "salisbury's" or sheffield or "sheffield's" or southampton or "southampton's" or st albans or stoke or "stoke's" or sunderland or "sunderland's" or truro or "truro's" or wakefield or "wakefield's" or wells or westminster or "westminster's" or winchester or "winchester's" or wolverhampton or "wolverhampton's" or (worchester not (massachusetts\* or boston\* or harvard\*)) or ("worchester's" not (massachusetts\* or boston\* or harvard\*)) or (york not



("new york\*" or ny or ontario\* or ont or toronto\*) or ("york's" not ("new york\*" or ny or ontario\* or ont or toronto\*))))).ti,ab. 227616

43 (bangor or "bangor's" or cardiff or "cardiff's" or newport or "newport's" or st asaph or "st asaph's" or st davids or swansea or "swansea's").ti,ab. 3549

44 (aberdeen or "aberdeen's" or dundee or "dundee's" or edinburgh or "edinburgh's" or glasgow or "glasgow's" or inverness or (perth not australia\*) or ("perth's" not australia\*) or stirling or "stirling's").ti,ab. 44285

45 (armagh or "armagh's" or belfast or "belfast's" or lisburn or "lisburn's" or londonderry or "londonderry's" or derry or "derry's" or newry or "newry's").ti,ab. 1595

46 or/38-45 938636

47 (exp africa/ or exp americas/ or exp antarctic regions/ or exp arctic regions/ or exp asia/ or exp oceania/) not (exp great britain/ or europe/) 3465717

48 46 not 47 862243

49 (((("semi-structured" or semistructured or unstructured or informal or "in-depth" or indepth or "face-to-face" or structured or guide) adj2 (interview\* or discussion\* or questionnaire\*)) or (focus group\* or qualitative or ethnograph\* or fieldwork or "field work" or "key informant")).tw,kw. or interviews as topic/ or focus groups/ or narration/ or qualitative research/ 569739

50 ((child\* or adolescen\* or young or youth or juvenil\*) adj2 (attitude\* or aware\* or belief\* or believ\* or choice\* or collaborat\* or compliance\* or consent\* or concern\* or decision\* or desire\* or dissatisfaction\* or empower\* or engage\* or expectation\* or experience\* or feeling\* or goal\* or hope\* or input\* or involve\* or issue\* or need\* or opinion\* or participat\* or percept\* or perceiv\* or perspectiv\* or photovoice or point-of-view or prefer\* or report\* or satisfact\* or value\* or view\* or voice\* or willing\* or wish\*)).ti,ab. 183997

51 49 or 50 730522

52 20 and 34 and 48 and 51 2340

53 limit 52 to yr="2000 -Current" 2113