Summer Jobs

Feasibility study report

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THE LAB | ENDING YOUTH VIOLENCE

Department for Culture, Media & Sport

youth futures FOUNDATION

YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

1.1.1. About the Youth Endowment Fund

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

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

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

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

For more information about the YEF or this report, please contact:

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1.1.2. About Youth Futures Foundation

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people. It aims to create a society where every young person can achieve good work by finding out What Works and driving change in policy and practice.

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The Summer Jobs Programme aims to provide 16-24-year-olds with paid summer employment to prevent their involvement in crime and violence and improve education and employment outcomes. This model originated in the US, with Summer Youth Employment Programmes (SYEPs) currently being delivered in 27 of the 30 largest US cities. Emerging evidence suggests that SYEPs have a large impact on reducing young people's involvement in violence during the summer. Delivered by UK Youth; funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, YEF and Youth Futures Foundation; and evaluated by the Ending Youth Violence Lab, this feasibility study aimed to establish the first summer jobs programme in the UK. It aimed to deliver to 16-24-year-olds with risk factors associated with involvement in violence across London, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. UK Youth recruited and appointed local delivery partners (LDPs), and the programme offered one week of paid pre-employment training followed by five weeks of paid employment. Pre-employment training was delivered by the LDP and covered areas such as goal setting, workplace skills and CV writing. Employers were also provided with a three-hour pre-placement training session. The programme then aimed to support young people with in-work support, in addition to three check-ins with a youth worker. Participants were paid weekly at £11.44 per hour (in addition to a £5 per day access fund), and the cost of wages was covered by the programme. Young people were referred to the programme by a range of agencies, including violence reduction units, pupil referral units, youth justice services, job centres and local authorities. To be eligible, participants needed at least one risk factor for involvement in violence (including exclusion from school or care experience).

This feasibility study aimed to ascertain whether the programme could recruit and retain young people, whether employers could deliver as intended, how the programme was perceived, and whether there was sufficient demand and capacity to deliver a randomised controlled trial. Participants were asked to complete a baseline and end-line survey that included the New Philanthropy Capital Journey to Employment framework, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and, for some participants, the self-reported delinquency scale. Participants were also asked to complete a shorter programme satisfaction survey. The evaluators also analysed delivery data and conducted 43 interviews and four focus groups with young people, youth workers, LDP managers, referrers and employers. Of the 623 participants who initially registered for the programme, 13% were of Asian or Asian British ethnicity; 46% were of Black, Black British, Caribbean or African ethnicity; 13% were of mixed or multiple ethnic groups ethnicity; 25% were of White ethnicity; and 2% were from another ethnic group. Of this 623, 430 then started a placement. Delivery took place in the summer of 2024.

Key conclusions
The Summer Jobs Programme successfully recruited and retained participants. 623 young people registered for the programme (exceeding the initial target of 600), 84% who were offered a placement accepted it (exceeding the target of 80%) and 86% who accepted a placement completed the expected amount of training and placement hours (exceeding the 80% target).
The cohort was vulnerable and displayed many of the risk factors associated with involvement in violence. More could still be done to hone the referral process and eligibility criteria to ensure those most at risk can benefit.
Overall, the programme was delivered with a good level of fidelity. Young people attended their placements, and the core components of pre-preparation training were largely delivered. There were some inconsistencies in delivery that should be resolved in future delivery (including varied types and quality of in-work and wraparound support, inconsistent use of the access fund and varying levels of stimulating work).
Participants and stakeholders had very positive perceptions of the programme. 95% of young people, 80% of employers and 86% of youth workers who completed satisfaction surveys approved of the Summer Jobs programme, all of which exceeded the initial target (80% across all stakeholders).
Summer Jobs can be delivered at the scale necessary for a pilot randomised controlled trial. There is sufficient demand to reach the scale, although there are challenges relating to post-intervention data collection that need to be addressed.

Interpretation

The Summer Jobs Programme successfully recruited and retained participants. 623 young people registered for the programme (exceeding the initial target of 600); 84% who were offered a placement accepted it (exceeding the target of 80%); and 86% of young people completed 80% of training, 60% of placement hours and all three youth worker check-ins (exceeding the 80% target). Overall, the cohort was highly vulnerable and displayed many of the risk factors associated with involvement in violence. For instance, 21% had a social worker, and 13% had previously been excluded from school. The evaluator does suggest that future delivery should amend the eligibility criteria and prioritise referrals from external agencies (rather than young people already known to LDPs) to ensure the most in-need young people can benefit.

Despite the vulnerable characteristics of the cohort, once a placement was accepted, retention was high. Participants reported that this was supported by the payment provided, the access fund, youth worker support and the preparation week. However, a large number of young people (410) who referred to the programme were not offered a placement or did not take one up. The reasons for this are likely to vary significantly and include challenges securing placements in some areas, young people not wanting to take up the placement they were offered, finding alternative employment or not responding to initial contact from the LDP. 35% of placements were non-LDP third sector organisations, 32% were placements within the LDPs and 32% were placements in the private sector (including fast-food chains, sports companies and businesses in the creative and retail industries).

Overall, the programme appears to have been delivered with a good level of fidelity. For instance, 86% of LDPs delivered the core components of the pre-employment preparation week as intended (exceeding the 80% target). In addition, young people attended their work placements, and retention was good. However, there were some inconsistencies that future delivery should resolve, including the type and quality of in-work and wraparound support and the use of the £5 per day access fund. There were young people who were unaware of or did not receive these access funds. The extent to which employers could provide sufficient, varied work for the five-week period also differed: while many employers provided stimulating work, there were examples of young people not being given enough work to do or too much of the same type of work (resulting in a more negative experience).

Participants and stakeholders had very positive perceptions of the programme. 95% of young people, 80% of employers and 86% of youth workers who completed satisfaction surveys approved of the Summer Jobs programme, all of which exceeded the initial target (80% across all stakeholders). Young people approved of the registration process, salary and access fund, placement matching, pre-employment preparation, in-work support, and youth worker support. Employers' satisfaction was also strong, although lower than for young people. The vast majority (77%) of employers who completed satisfaction surveys were still satisfied with young people's attendance, while 79% of surveyed employers agreed or strongly agreed that the young person added positive value to the team. While over two-thirds were satisfied with the programme's onboarding process, employers did request a longer lead-in time for the programme and more information about the young people so they could adequately prepare. Qualitative feedback from employers did reveal that perceptions of pre-programme training were mixed, with some arguing it could be improved and suggesting earlier, organised touch-points between employers and LDPs. In total, only 10% of companies opted to pay a financial contribution to the programme – it may be challenging to increase the contributions in future delivery.

YEF is proceeding with a pilot randomised controlled trial of the Summer Jobs programme. There is sufficient demand to reach the required scale, although there are challenges relating to post-intervention data collection that need to be addressed. Only 59% of participants completed 75% of the end-line survey, and further thought is required on how to incentivise higher response rates. The feasibility study also indicated that work will be required with LDPs to communicate the importance of randomisation and robust evaluation.

2. Study rationale and background

2.1. About the Ending Youth Violence Lab

The Ending Youth Violence Lab ('the Lab') was founded in Summer 2022, bringing together expertise in intervention, evaluation and youth violence. It is funded by Stuart Roden and the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and incubated at the Behavioural Insights Team.

The Lab's mission is to catalyse a step change in understanding and tackling youth violence. To do this, we identify promising interventions which seek to address youth violence; we fund the development and delivery of these interventions; and we conduct research to assess their delivery, identify ways to improve them and explore the potential for further evaluation (with a focus on early-stage testing to support the work of YEF).

We prioritise three strands of activity:

- Supporting the importation, adaptation and testing of well-evidenced interventions from overseas
- Working with UK organisations to develop strong ideas into evaluable interventions
- Working with developers, researchers, practitioners and service users to co-design new and innovative approaches

2.2. Project overview

Summer Youth Employment Programmes (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 when they are not in education and rates of crime tend to be highest.[1] However, SYEPs are increasingly seen as a vehicle to address racial disparities in economic opportunity.[2] 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.[2]

Robust evaluations of the SYEPs through randomised controlled trials (RCTs) using routine data have been conducted in Chicago, Boston, New York and Philadelphia and show a general trend in reduction in crime and violence. The clearest results are for violent crime or offending, where in both programmes evaluated against these outcomes, the Boston and the Chicago SYEPs, there was a reduction in violent crime. An RCT of the Chicago One Summer Plus programme found a 43% reduction in violent crime over 16 months (for the treatment vs control group; $p<0.05$)[3] – 3.95 fewer violent crime arrests per 100 youth, although it showed no difference in property or drug arrests. In another analysis of Chicago One Summer Plus, the programme was found to reduce arrests for violent crimes in the first year after participation, although the effect faded in the second and third years.[4] An RCT of the Boston SYEP found a reduction in violent crime of 35% during the 17 months after participation.[5] An evaluation of the New York SYEP found

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[1] Modestino, A. S. (2019b). How do summer youth employment programs improve criminal justice outcomes, and for whom? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *38*(3), 600–628. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22138.

[2] e.g. New York SYEP; One Summer Chicago SYEP

[3] Heller, S. B. (2014). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. *Science*, *346*(6214), 1219–1223. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1257809.

[4] Davis, J. M. V., & Heller, S. B. (2020). Rethinking the benefits of youth employment programs: The heterogeneous effects of summer jobs. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, *102*(4), 664–677. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00850.

[5] Modestino, A. S. (2019b). How do summer youth employment programs improve criminal justice outcomes, and for whom? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *38*(3), 600–628. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22138.

that participating in the programme was associated with a significant reduction in mortality rates (log odds ratio −0.20; 95% confidence interval [CI] −0.32–0.08)[6].

A systematic review of the impact of summer employment and education programmes on outcomes among disadvantaged or at-risk young people found overall no impact of employment programmes on a range of violence and offending outcomes.[7] However, there is low confidence in this overall statement, as there was noted to be substantial variability across and within studies, with substantial reductions in criminal justice outcomes seen in the studies which show impact. This systematic review looked at 19 studies of six programmes, of which 15 studies were from the New York, Chicago and Boston programmes.

Evaluations have also examined the impact on education and employment outcomes, with mixed findings. While no overall evidence of impact on the majority of education or employment outcomes was found in the systematic review, the Boston SYEP did show promising evidence of an effect on progression to higher education.[8] On the other hand, a negative impact on entry to employment was observed in the Boston SYEP and no effect in the Chicago programme.[9] The positive impact on entry to higher education may explain these findings.

Since the evaluations of the SYEPs largely rely on routine data, there are limited findings on the impact on other outcomes. However, the evaluation of the Boston programme had a broader set of outcomes and found a moderate positive impact on an individual's sense of community (log odds ratio 0.26; 95%CI: 0.12–0.40) and level of depression (log odds ratio 0.43; 95%CI: 0.31–0.56).[8] There was also a significant positive impact on socio-emotional skills/engagement (standard mean difference: 0.32; 95%CI: 0.20–0.45),[10] but no significant effect on socio-emotional skills or engagement in an evaluation of a programme in Washington DC and Baltimore.[11]

The systematic review[12] highlights mechanisms through which the programmes may produce their outcomes, including:

- Acquisition of employability skills, leading to improved job readiness
- Expectations for conduct in a new adult environment, leading to improved job readiness
- A boost in education and employment aspirations
- The formation of positive relationships with staff, leading to improved well-being
- Expectations of performance, which build responsibility, maturity and self-esteem
- The development of soft skills
- The creation of economic opportunities through these experiences

Although SYEPs are common in large cities in the US, there are no direct equivalents in the UK setting. Nationally in the UK, there are summer youth programmes targeted at young people, until recently including the National Citizen Service (NCS), which was targeted at 16–17-year-olds and offered activities and volunteering opportunities that aligned with community development. There are also various

[6] Gelber, A., Isen, A., & Kessler, J. B. (2016). The effects of youth employment: Evidence from New York City lotteries. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 131(1), 423–460. https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjv034.

[7] Muir D., Orlando C., & Newton B. (2024). Impact of summer programmes on the outcomes of disadvantaged or 'at risk' young people: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 20(2):e1406. doi: 10.1002/cl2.1406

[8] Modestino, A. S., & Paulsen, R. J. (2019a). Reducing inequality summer by summer: Lessons from an evaluation of the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *72*, 40–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.09.006.

[9] Davis, J. M. V., & Heller, S. B. (2020). Rethinking the benefits of youth employment programs: The heterogeneous effects of summer jobs. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, *102*(4), 664–677. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00850.

[10] Modestino, A. S. (2019b). How do summer youth employment programs improve criminal justice outcomes, and for whom? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *38*(3), 600–628. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22138.

[11] Theodos, B., Pergamit, M. R., Hanson, D., Edelstein, S., Daniels, R., & Srini, T. (2017). *Pathways after high school: Evaluation of the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

[12] Muir D., Orlando C., & Newton B. (2024). Impact of summer programmes on the outcomes of disadvantaged or 'at risk' young people: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 20(2):e1406. doi: 10.1002/cl2.1406

employability programmes which aim to support young people in work. These included NCS's UK Year of Service programme for 18–24-year-olds, which offered 9–12 month work placements for socially-driven career paths. Other employment programmes targeting young people include the Hatch programme run by UK Youth, which offers workshops and paid work experience for 16–25-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training. Previous government initiatives which have since been withdrawn include Kickstart, providing funding to create jobs for 16–24-year-olds on Universal Credit who were at risk of being long-term unemployed, and the Creating Opportunities Forum, commissioned by the Home Office, which focused more specifically on supporting young people at risk of violence to help them access employment opportunities, reduce their engagement in violent crime and improve their wellbeing. Employment opportunities were around nine months long, and the delivery of this programme was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in recruiting youth and employers.

In Britain, violence is known to impact ethnic groups disproportionately. YEF's Racial disproportionality in violence report[13] highlights the over-representation of children and young people from certain ethnic groups in both the youth justice system and those affected by violence. In official data, although the majority of children and young people in the criminal justice system are White, Black children were found to be over-represented as both victims and perpetrators at all levels in the criminal justice system compared to the size of their population. Compared to their population share, they are 64% more likely to be arrested, 84% more likely to be convicted and 300% more likely to be in custody. Mixed ethnicity children are also over-represented, and Asian children are under-represented. Black young people are also over-represented as victims of homicide.

With respect to education and employment outcomes, between 2017 and 2019, an average of 11.5% of young people aged 16 to 24 were not in employment, education or training (NEET).[14] Nationally, young people in Chinese and Indian ethnic groups were less likely to be NEET, but there were no other significant differences with the UK average.

Given the US evidence, the Lab worked with YEF to design a programme of work which would test if these findings can be replicated in the UK. The Lab was a partner for the early stage of this programme, supporting the co-design of the intervention and then conducting a feasibility study to understand how that was received and whether it could progress to large-scale impact evaluation by an independent evaluator. Since the Lab was involved in the co-design of the intervention, we have taken steps to ensure our evaluation is a fair assessment of the feasibility of the programme. This includes setting progression criteria in advance of delivery and publishing our protocol and external review of the study findings. The advantages of our involvement in the co-design of the intervention are a depth of knowledge of the programme and its potential limitations.

The Lab partnered with UK Youth, who led on designing and delivering the programme to young people. UK Youth is a charity working across the UK as a sector-supporting infrastructure body, a direct delivery partner and a campaigner for social change. UK Youth acted as an umbrella organisation, recruiting local delivery partners (LDPs) from their network 14. The LDPs would work directly with young people, enrolling them in the programme, matching them with a placement, providing wraparound pastoral support, supporting their registration, providing pre-employment training and meeting with them during the placement. LDPs would be youth work organisations with strong community connections in the delivery areas and experience working with the target cohort.

The rationale for this evaluation

While there is evidence that SYEPs can have a small-to-moderate effect on reducing violent crime among vulnerable young people, all research has been conducted in the US. There are known issues with programmes being transported into new countries and not demonstrating effectiveness when trialled in

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[13] Youth Endowment Fund. (2025) Racial disproportionality in violence affecting children and young people.
[14] Office for National Statistics (2021). Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

their new settings, and there are several examples in the UK of the failed replication of programmes.[15][16][17][18] There are, of course, considerable differences between the US and the UK, including a much lower prevalence of violent crime, which could impact the suitability and effectiveness of SYEPs in the UK. This feasibility study will help us understand whether SYEPs can be delivered in the UK and whether a full-scale impact evaluation is possible. It will mitigate the risk of expending resources on an extensive trial before the programme is ready, which would ultimately yield uninformative results.

The approach will make it possible to refine the programme and approach to evaluation, enhancing the rigour and certainty of the results produced. If a feasibility study establishes the programme is deliverable, acceptable and evaluable, then there is a strong case to conduct a full-scale efficacy trial in the UK, given the strength of existing evidence. The key stages of this work are:

- **Stage 1 – Co-design of the intervention:** working with UK Youth to define the key components of the intervention, how it will be delivered and to whom
- **Stage 2 – Feasibility study:** testing the extent to which it is possible to deliver and evaluate an SYEP in the UK and its acceptability to key stakeholders
- **Stage 3 – Pilot trial:** testing the extent to which it is feasible to robustly evaluate an SYEP via an RCT in the UK and gathering preliminary evidence on its impact
- **Stage 4 – Efficacy trial:** conducting an efficacy trial to robustly determine if the SYEP has a positive impact on outcomes for young people in the UK

2.3. Theory of change

The theory of change for the Summer Jobs programme is shown in Figure 1. The theory of change was developed during the co-design phase for the feasibility study in conjunction with the Lab, UK Youth and Inclusive Boards, drawing on evidence from the US studies and from the systematic review of the impact of summer employment programmes.[19] Drawing on evidence from the systematic review and discussions with key stakeholders, the Summer Jobs programme is hypothesised to trigger a number of immediate mechanisms through which it would improve a range of medium- and long-term outcomes:

First, through building a trusted relationship with adults and the expectations set within the workplace, young people are expected to develop their social skills and increase their confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy, leading to improved relationship quality and well-being.

Second, through participating in a work placement, young people are expected to gain both employability skills as well as social and emotional skills, which increase their employability as well as improve their emotional regulation, in turn leading to a reduction in offending and antisocial behaviours.

Third, providing exposure to a workplace is hypothesised to improve attitudes to employment and employment aspirations by allowing young people to identify their goals. These may be expected to lead to increased engagement in education in the medium term and to a reduction in NEET status and higher

[15] Robling, M., Bekkers, M-J., Bell, K., Butler, C. C., Cannings-John, R., Channon, S. et al. (2016). Effectiveness of a nurse-led intensive home-visitation programme for first-time teenage mothers (Building Blocks): A pragmatic randomised controlled trial. *Lancet, 387*, 146–155. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(15)00392-X

[16] Humayun, S., Herlitz, L. Chesnokov, M., Doolan, M., Landau, S., & Scott, S. (2017). Randomized controlled trial of Functional Family Therapy for offending and antisocial behavior in UK youth. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 58*(9), 1023–1032. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12743.

[17] Fonagy, P., Butler, S., Cottrell, D., Scott, S., Pilling, S., Eisler, I. et al. (2018). Multisystemic therapy versus management as usual in the treatment of adolescent antisocial behaviour (START): A pragmatic, randomised controlled, superiority trial. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 5*(2), 119–133. doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30001-4.

[18] Lendrum, A., & Humphrey, N. (2012). The importance of studying the implementation of interventions in school settings. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(5), 635–652. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.734800

[19] Muir D., Orlando C., & Newton B. (2024). Impact of summer programmes on the outcomes of disadvantaged or 'at risk' young people: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews.* 20(2), e1406. doi: 10.1002/cl2.1406

qualifications in the longer term. Improved emotional regulation, confidence and self-esteem support the building of aspirations.

Finally, the immediate benefit of earning money and being occupied may act as a diversion from offending during the programme.

Figure 1. Theory of change[20]

Evidence-based observation	Evidence-based need	Target population	Intervention activities that will address the need	Immediate outcomes	Intermediary outcomes	Primary outcomes
Summer employment programmes in cities in the US show a small positive impact on violent offending outcomes. Good employment is associated with better physical and emotional health and wellbeing.	Young people lack **opportunities** to engage in meaningful activities during the summer holidays. Young people at risk of violence lack **professional networks / first employment** opportunities. Young people have **barriers** e.g. financial, socio-emotional to engaging in work experiences. Young people face **financial pressures** due to deprivation and financial precarity	Young people aged 16 - 25, living in a deprived area with high crime rates and at risk of becoming involved in violence. E.g. been in the secure estate, are/been persistently absent from school, attend(ed) an alternative provision unit, have/had a social worker.	1 week paid pre-employment preparation: employability, workplace. 5 weeks paid employment of 25+ hours / week. Placement matched to interest where possible. Weekly payment. £5/day access fund. 1-2-1 mentor support from youth worker (3 visits) to . In-job supervisor. Letter of recommendation	Trusted relationship with adults Familiarity with new work context Positive attitudes towards employment ↑ emotional regulation ↑ confidence ↑ self esteem ↑ self efficacy ↑ social skills ↑ aspirations ↓ financial precarity ↓ offending during lifetime of programme	↓ externalising behaviour ↓ internalising behaviour ↑ prosocial behaviour ↑ well being ↑ social capital ↑ engagement in education ↑ employability ↑ relationship quality	↓ violent offending ↓ offending ↓ NEET status ↓ anti-social behaviour ↑ qualifications ↑ wellbeing
Evidence-based assumption	Evidence-based assumption	Evidence-based assumption	**INTERVENTION**	Evidence-based short-term outcomes	Evidence-based medium-term outcomes	Evidence-based long-term outcomes

WHY | WHO | HOW | WHAT will the intervention achieve?

[20] Externalising behaviours are behaviours acted out towards the environment e.g. aggressive behaviours. Internalising behaviours are negative behaviours focused inwards e.g. social withdrawal. Prosocial behaviours are behaviours intended to benefit others. These three groups of behaviours are captured through the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire.

3. The Summer Jobs programme

3.1. Intervention overview

The Summer Jobs programme, co-designed with UK Youth, is a targeted youth employment programme for vulnerable young people aged 16–24 in England who are at risk of violence and is modelled on the SYEPs that have been successfully implemented in the US. The Summer Jobs programme aims to reduce offending and improve engagement in education and employment for the young people involved. The theory of change above describes the rationale for the intervention, target population, key inputs and hypothesised short-, medium- and long-term outcomes.

3.1.1. Co-design process

The aim of the co-design process was to produce the delivery plan and evaluation plan for the intervention. The initial proposal submitted by UK Youth was used as the starting point for this process. The UK Youth proposal was based heavily on the One Summer Chicago Plus programme, with adaptations to make it relevant to the UK population.

The delivery plan and evaluation plan were collaboratively developed in a series of four half-day structured workshops in January to March 2024 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Agenda for co-design workshops

Workshop	Aims and focus
Workshop 1	To create a shared understanding of: • UK Youth's summer jobs proposal and areas which require further development • The US evidence on summer jobs programmes, including mechanisms of impact • The aims of the feasibility study
Workshop 2	Theory of change development
Workshop 3	Evaluation design and data collection requirements and responsibilities
Workshop 4	Timescales and risk register

3.1.2. Delivery of Summer Jobs

The design process concluded that the Summer Jobs programme would be delivered in 11 local authorities in London (Croydon, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest) and two local authorities outside London (West Midlands Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Authority). The areas were all large urban areas with potential employers, a diverse population and high levels of crime or the presence of a Violence Reduction Unit. The target for year 1 of the programme was to deliver it to up to 600 young people across these areas.

We decided that the target group for the Summer Job programme should be young people who are vulnerable to becoming involved in violence and that meeting one or more of the following criteria would serve as a proxy for this.

- Have been in the secure estate
- Are or have been persistently absent from school
- Have been the victim of violence
- Are attending, or have attended, an alternative provision unit
- Have had at least one fixed-term exclusion
- Have a sibling or parent who has been involved in serious violence
- Have been in the care system
- Have been identified as being at risk of criminal exploitation
- Are engaged with the Supporting Families programme
- Have, or have had, a social worker
- Have been in contact with youth justice services
- Have been arrested and released with no further action

The programme was to be delivered by LDPs that would recruit eligible young people from their existing networks and through external agencies that are working with eligible young people, such as pupil referral units, youth justice services and social services. LDPs were to be recruited and onboarded by UK Youth[21] but would have responsibility for direct delivery to young people, including matching them with placements and providing pastoral support. Table 2 provides a fuller description of the roles of the organisations involved.

The Summer Jobs programme was designed to be delivered for six weeks during the summer of 2024, over the school holiday period. Young people would receive one paid week of pre-employment and work readiness training (some delivered by the youth worker in a group setting and some independent activities to complete) ahead of their placement, with the curriculum for this prepared by UK Youth in collaboration with key stakeholders. The training delivery was to be led by the LDPs. Young people would then spend five weeks at their employment placement, working no more than 25 hours per week and being paid £11.44 per hour weekly in arrears.[22] During their placements, young people would receive three in-person check-ins from their youth workers. All young people were entitled to a £5/day access fund to support their engagement in the programme. This was to be managed by the LDPs, who were expected to discuss with young people during the pre-employment week the best use of this support, e.g. transport or clothing.

It was agreed that following the employment placement, the young people would receive a letter of recommendation[23] and attend a celebration event to mark the end of the programme and their completion

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[21] LDP eligibility criteria: Working in one of the programme locations, commitment to youth work principles, credibility and track record of effectively working with the target profile of young people, capability to recruit between 40 and 50 young people of the intended profile in year 1, capacity to provide the necessary support for young people, ability to process payments to young people on a weekly basis, existing partnerships and relationships with referral partners (especially youth offending teams), commitment to the evaluation process, open learning and experience of monitoring systems, ideally a range of organisation sizes and primary organisational focuses (e.g. some violence specialist and others more general).

[22] A working week of no more than 25 hours per week was the number of hours worked in the Chicago SYEP and was chosen for a combination of five reasons: 1) learning from UK Youth previous employability programmes it is about sufficient time required to give young people enough experience in a real work environment, 2) it offers enough paid work/high enough salary to incentivise participation, 3) fewer than full-time hours (35hrs) gives young people time to engage in other activities during summer holidays, meet other commitments (e.g. engage with youth justice services and meet caring responsibilities) and rest, which is positive for their wellbeing and likely to increase participation because young people can see how opportunity can be balanced with other commitments, 4) fewer than full-time hours also allows workplace supervisors to prepare activities and support for them and 5) more than 25 hrs per week would not be affordable within the project budget.

[23] In the New York SYEP, letters of recommendation were found to increase employment the following year by 3 percentage points. Heller, S., & Kessler, J. (2002) Information frictions and skill signaling in the youth labor market. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 16 (4): 1–33. DOI: 10.1257/pol.20220544

of the placement. Celebration events were open to all young people. However, letters of recommendation were not widely used in year 1.

Table 2: Description of organisations involved in the recruitment process

Organisation type	Role
LDPs (recruited by UK Youth)	- Recruited by UK Youth - Recruiting young people to participate in the programme via referral partners or current relationships with young people - Providing youth workers to support young people throughout their placements - Organising and delivering the preparation week for young people in their delivery areas - Managing relationships with employers throughout placement periods - Checking in with young people during their placements and providing support where needed - Managing the access fund
Referral partners (engaged by the LDPs to aid the recruitment of young people e.g. violence reduction units, pupil referral units, youth justice services, job centres and local authorities)	Referring suitable young people (meeting eligibility criteria) to the programme
Employers	- Providing placements for young people on the programme - Providing one-on-one support as required by the programme's core component(s), including: - Workplace supervisor (to manage young people's employment, allocate and oversee task completion and conduct weekly management check-ins) - Where possible, workplace mentor (to provide support and development for young people and make sure their needs are met within the workplace)

Wages and the access fund were covered by the programme. Employers were initially asked to make a financial contribution to the wages of between £200 and £750 per placement, depending on the organisation's turnover.

An overview of the Summer Jobs programme using the TIDieR framework can be found in Annex A.

4. Research questions

We set out to explore the feasibility of delivering Summer Jobs to young people who are vulnerable to violence through testing recruitment, retention, fidelity, etc. and to understand the perceptions of key stakeholders, including youth workers, employers and young people, in order to adapt future delivery of the programme and inform future evaluation.

We had three key research questions for this stage:

- **Deliverability:** can UK Youth and its LDPs recruit and retain young people at risk of youth violence to Summer Jobs, and can it and the employers deliver the programme with fidelity?
- **Acceptability:** is the Summer Jobs programme seen as acceptable and valuable by young people, staff employed at placement employers, referrers, youth workers and LDP managers?
- **Evaluability:** first, is there sufficient demand and capacity to deliver Summer Jobs at a scale required for an RCT? Second, is it feasible to collect outcome data from participants

5.   Design and methodology

5.1.   Programme delivery during the feasibility study

The Summer Jobs programme started in July 2024, during the school summer holidays. For each young person, engagement was for up to six weeks. However, delivery was slightly staggered due to different school holiday schedules and for young people who were not in mainstream education. Each young person received one week of paid pre-placement preparation and then five weeks of paid employment of up to 25 hours/week.

5.2.   Participants

430 young people aged 16–24 and meeting at least one of our eligibility criteria enrolled in the programme and accepted an employment placement.

5.3.   Outcome measures

As this was a feasibility study, our primary objective was to establish deliverability (through collecting data on the recruitment and retention of LDPs, young people and employers), acceptability (through measuring and understanding the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders) and future evaluability. While we did gather data on a range of outcomes (including the self-reported delinquency scale), this was to understand the feasibility of data collection rather than to assess impact (see the outcome survey section for further detail).

5.4.   Data collection and analysis

We used a mixed methods approach to evaluate the deliverability, acceptability and evaluability of the Summer Jobs programme. In the following section, we provide a high-level overview of the research activities we completed, as well as any deviations from the methodology plans we outlined in the study protocol. For a fuller description of the methods, please see the relevant annexes of this report and the evaluation protocol.

5.4.1.   Quantitative data

Outcome surveys

Although not normal practice in a feasibility study, we gathered outcome data for two key reasons. Primarily, we wanted to measure response rates in order to assess the feasibility of the data collection process for subsequent rounds of evaluation and, second, to explore the feasibility of collecting sensitive outcome data in a future pilot trial. We invited participants to complete separate outcome surveys at baseline and end-line. Baseline surveys were a requirement for young people to be onboarded onto the programme. As we expected higher attrition at end-line, young people were sent a £10 voucher upon completion as an incentive.

The outcome measures were selected based on the key immediate and intermediate outcomes in the Summer Jobs theory of change. We could not include all outcomes due to a need to keep the questionnaire as short as possible. We chose to include outcomes based on three different criteria. First, that they represented different mechanisms within the theory of change (e.g. aspiration, confidence/self-efficacy/self-esteem, emotional regulation), second, that they were included in YEF's outcome framework and, third, that there were concerns about question acceptability. These are also intended to inform future

evaluation design. We arranged a small group discussion with young people at one of the LDPs prior to data collection to explore the acceptability of the questions on offending and victimisation and the understanding of different questions on aspirations. We chose questions on aspirations which were more understandable by the young people and chose to remove questions on victimisation since these were felt to be very sensitive to one young person. Young people and youth workers expressed discomfort around the self-reported delinquency scale (SRDS) questions. These questions are known to be sensitive and were included as a test in this feasibility study on a sample of participants (see below). The outcome measures included in surveys for young people were:

- New Philanthropy Capital Journey to EmploymenT framework questionnaires on aspirations and employability skills
- New general self-efficacy scale
- Strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Self-reported delinquency scale (SRDS)

All young people receiving the programme were invited to complete two surveys during and after programme delivery. The primary aim of these was:

- To determine
    o The feasibility of administering these surveys
    o The ease of completing them for young people
    o The completeness and quality of data collection
- To identify any concerns or issues with the measures we are using
- To understand the prevalence and distribution of some key outcomes among participants

These quantitative metrics helped us identify whether particular measures or aspects of the survey had lower rates of completion and/or whether young people with certain demographic characteristics are less likely to engage with particular aspects of the survey. They also provide an indication of the prevalence and distribution of outcomes in the population to support calculations of sample size for a future efficacy trial.

Surveys were designed to be completed in 20–25 minutes to maximise completion. Due to concerns about the acceptability of the SRDS questions, including from youth workers, and concerns that this might alienate young people from the programme, we selected a random sample of 20% of respondents to be asked to answer the SRDS questions so we could examine whether this affected survey completion.

The baseline survey was completed by young people after registration. Young people completed it online through a link at the end of the registration form. We set a cut-off for the baseline survey to be completed by the middle of July, as this was a requirement to start a placement; however, due to compressed timelines, surveys were still being completed until the beginning of August. End-line surveys were sent to young people by email/text in a staggered approach (between 11 and 24 September) after the final placement week. Young people were sent up to two email/text reminders to complete the survey.

User satisfaction surveys

Young people, staff at LDP organisations (e.g., youth workers, LDP managers, mentors) and staff at placement organisations were asked to complete a short online user satisfaction survey (10 questions or fewer taking under five minutes) at the end of the programme. For young people, this was planned to take place at the final one-on-one check-ins with their youth workers. Staff at LDPs were sent the survey after the celebration event. Employers were emailed the survey in the month after the end of the placement(s) and were also sent two chaser emails if they had not started the survey. Surveys covered satisfaction with the programme overall, as well as separate questions on satisfaction with different elements and the perception of the support that was received from different stakeholders.

Administrative data analysis

We have analysed administrative data from the following sources:

1. Onboarding data:
   o Referral forms: brief socio-demographic data and eligibility criteria
   o Registration forms: more detailed socio-demographic data and eligibility criteria
2. Referral and placement data: LDP and UK Youth's database to calculate
   o The number of referrals received and the proportion deemed eligible
   o The proportion of eligible young people who take up placements
   o Retention and drop-out rates of young people
   o The number of youth worker check-ins completed
3. Attendance data:
   o Payroll data: collected via timesheeting processes and details of hours worked by young people
   o Participant records: record logs of the three scheduled check-ins with youth workers, including any details on whether the participant dropped out

5.4.2.   Qualitative data collection

A total of 43 interviews and four focus groups were conducted with key stakeholders, including young people who participated in the programme, youth workers, LDP managers, staff employed as in-placement supervisors or mentors, and representatives of referral agencies. Fieldwork took place during August and September 2024.

We used a case study approach to generate in-depth insights on programme delivery. Our cases were LDPs, and we selected three LDPs, who were selected purposively to achieve diversity in terms of geographical location and size and type of organisation. Within each case study, we conducted interviews with each of the stakeholders outlined above (a breakdown of the sample in each case study is presented in Table 3 below). We chose a case study approach so we could develop a rich understanding of how programme delivery worked in the sites sampled to generate learnings for future waves of delivery. LDPs were different, and we suspected there would be some heterogeneity in both the young people engaged and how the programme was delivered. A case study approach also allowed us to carry out data collection in person, which we hypothesised would be important for engagement. Where possible, we used a matched case design to interview the supervisors of the young people who had participated.

Table 3: The breakdown of participant groups interviewed in each case study.

	LDP characteristics		Participants interviewed				
ID	Area	Size/type	Young people	Youth workers	Programme leads	Employers	Referral agencies
B	North West	Small charity with one youth centre	2	1	1	2	0
G	West Midlands	Organisation with multiple youth centres	5	1 (paired)	1	4	2
E	London	Social enterprise with one youth centre	5	2	1 (paired)	3	1

We encountered challenges recruiting stakeholders in one of our case studies (B), which partly reflects the smaller sample of young people and employers within the North West due to UK Youth being less successful in securing employment placements in this area.

To supplement the data gathered through the case studies, we carried out additional interviews and focus groups, which spanned the wider sample of delivery partners (see Table 4). These were carried out towards the end of the case study data collection. These interviews included:

- Interviews with two employers offering a large number of placements (>10) and one employer who declined to take part – these interviews aimed to explore the barriers and facilitators to employer engagement and generate learning to inform scaling of the programme
- Focus groups, two in-person with young people, one online with youth workers and one online with the UK Youth employer recruitment team. These allowed us to gain a broader range of experiences of the programme and source ideas for improvements in future years
- Additional interviews with young people, LDP programme leads and referrers to address gaps in the data from the case studies and pursue emerging areas of interest, such as those emerging from the quantitative data around eligibility criteria and the nature of placements

Table 4: Non-case-study qualitative data collection participants

Participant group	Interviews conducted	Focus groups conducted
Young people	4	2
Youth workers	N/A	1
LDP programme leads	2	N/A
Employers	4	N/A
Referrers	1	N/A
Other[24]	1	1

For each of the stakeholder groups, the sample was intended to achieve a mix of key characteristics, e.g. sex, ethnicity. A breakdown for each group can be found in Annex C.

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[24] An interview with a local authority representative, and a focus group with the UK Youth team.

Approach to conducting interviews and focus groups

Topic guides were designed to structure the interviews and focus groups. These listed the key topics, themes and prompts to be covered with each participant group.

Table 5: Key topics covered in interviews and focus groups with each participant group

Participant group	Key themes
Young people	- Contextual information - Motivations and expectations - Views of preparation week - Experience of placement: - Attendance - Travel, hours and pay - Relationship with supervisor - Youth worker support - Perceived outcomes - Suggestions for improvement
Employers	- Contextual information - Sign-up and motivations - Experience of onboarding and training - Experience of delivery - Relationship with LDPs - Perceived outcomes - Suggestions for improvement
Youth workers	- Contextual information - Experience of training and preparation - Young person recruitment and registration - Experience of preparation week - Delivery of one-on-one support - Relationship with employers - Perceived outcomes - Suggestions for improvement
Referral agencies	- Contextual information - Understanding and impressions - How young people were referred to the programme - Experience of the referral process - Views on programme design - Young person engagement and perceived outcomes

Interviews with young people were conducted in person either at the site of their LDP or the site of their employment. LDPs supported us in engaging with the young people to confirm interest in completing an interview and a time and location for the interview to take place. Interviews were scheduled for 45 minutes, but in practice, lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the young person's level of engagement. For the young person interviews, interviewers had some physical assets (a graphic depiction of the journey the young person took on the summer jobs programme and emotions scales) that they could use if they felt these assets would support the young person's engagement. In practice, these were not often used, as young people were able to comfortably engage in interviews without them. Young people were told that at any point in the interview, they could leave or decide not to answer a question; however, both of these occurrences were rare.

Interviews with other key stakeholders were conducted in person or online.

All interviewees were provided with an information sheet before the interview and offered a chance to ask questions before being asked to give consent and before the interview started. After an initial introduction and giving of consent, interviewers started recording interviews on a dictaphone. Interviewers recorded short interview notes to aid preliminary results discussions. However, analysis was subsequently completed after all interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Further details of the analysis approach are provided below.

Limitations

● We had initially planned to conduct interviews with young people who dropped out of the programme in order to understand the reasons for dropping out and barriers to engagement and receive suggestions for programme improvement. However, we were not able to secure an interview with any young person who dropped out of the programme. This was due to a combination of challenges: there was a relatively small sample of young people in this category, and in some cases, youth workers had lost contact with these young people. As a result, insights on this topic are based on the accounts of employers and youth workers.

● Initially, we planned to take a longitudinal approach to case study interviews, interviewing respondents twice: soon after work placements began and at the end of the programme, with the aim of capturing changes in views and experiences over the course of the programme. However, due to the short timeline of the intervention, this was not possible. Instead, we decided to interview stakeholders towards the end of the programme. This did mean that in some cases, young people had limited recall of the early stages of the process, which had taken place at least two to three months prior.

Participatory panel

To assist with the process of interpreting our findings, we recruited a panel of 11 young people who participated in the programme from two LDPs. The Young Person Advisory Group met for a four-hour session to share and discuss our emerging findings. The aim of this session was to sense-check and validate the accuracy of findings and to gather further insight into key topics emerging from our completed data collection and analysis.

We approached two LDPs in similar locations to support us in recruiting young people for the participatory panel. We created a WhatsApp image and role description to aid our recruitment; these were shared with the LDPs, who then engaged directly with young people.

We determined the areas of focus in the participatory panel through discussion with UK Youth, agreeing on three core areas of focus:

● What do young people need to be ready to participate in the Summer Jobs programme?
● Are our findings and our interpretations of these findings valid?
● What changes would young people make to the programme?

To answer these questions, we completed a variety of activities, including smaller group/pair activities, open group discussion, individual written reflections and character-based activities (e.g. where young people were presented with a character facing particular barriers to participation). The variety of activities allowed young people with different engagement styles to participate in the session.

5.4.3. Qualitative data analysis

We used the framework approach[25] to manage and analyse the qualitative data. Widely used in applied social research, this involves developing a framework consisting of a hierarchy of themes and subthemes under which to organise raw data. Each interview was transcribed; these were then summarised and displayed in the framework matrix.

Each participant group had their own thematic framework. The design of these frameworks was determined by the research questions, the topic guide and the key themes emerging from the data. Once the frameworks were completed, data from each transcript was 'charted' into themes. The charting summarises the data from the transcript and captures the key views of the participant in each of the determined themes.

5.4.4. Enabling participation

We compensated young people for their time spent participating in research activities by providing them with shopping vouchers for each of the following research activities:

- £10 voucher per survey for the time taken to complete the end-line surveys (estimated to take 20–25 minutes)
- £20 voucher to participate in a 30- or 45-minute interview[26]
- £30 voucher to participate in a two-hour focus group discussion
- £50 voucher to participate in a four-hour workshop

If a young person consented to taking part and attended the interview or focus group but then changed their mind and withdrew either during or afterwards, they still received the incentive.

We did not provide incentives to other groups (i.e. youth workers, employers, referrers), as we did not expect their participation in the evaluation to add a significant burden beyond what is already required in their role. Additionally, providing compensation to these stakeholders risks being perceived as providing an incentive to (intentionally or otherwise) bias responses.

In addition to providing incentives to young people, we attempted to minimise attrition by:

- Ensuring that evaluation activities were designed to be low-impact in terms of burden and time
- Where needed, utilising the relationships that delivery partners have built with local authorities to facilitate access and cooperation with staff and referring agencies

5.5. Racial diversity and inclusion

The Lab is committed to conducting research in which equality, diversity and inclusion principles are firmly embedded across all stages of evaluations. During the co-design phase, we strove to ensure that both the content and the delivery of the Summer Jobs programme were informed by cultural, racial and other relevant demographic sensitivities, including seeking the views of YEF's Race Equity associates.

Throughout our work, we focused on the following:

Groups included in the programme and evaluation

We worked with UK Youth to ensure that inclusive practices were central to the recruitment process and that participant well-being was promoted by being considerate of the vulnerabilityies of the participants

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[25] Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nichols, C.M., & Ormston, R. (2014). *Qualitative research in practice*. London: Sage. (2nd Edition).

[26] This applied only to interviews that took place after participants had completed their placements.

during recruitment and providing young people with welcoming, informative documentation which provided all necessary information about data security, anonymity and the reasons for undertaking research in plain English.

In order to understand whether certain groups were under- or over-represented in the programme, we analysed data to explore whether referrals to or acceptance of the programme varied across certain demographic groups.

Inclusivity in data collection

To ensure that the principle of inclusivity was adhered to, we worked with UK Youth to:

- Use inclusive and accessible language in all survey and interview questions and guidance.
- Ensure that youth workers were informed about baseline survey data collection and could provide support or instruction as required if young people completed it in their presence.
- Strive for equality of access by enabling online (remote) participation in interviews and offering different locations and times for interviews to facilitate access.
- Ensure researchers completed the NSPCC's Introduction to safeguarding and child protection training and a pre-interview training on interviewing best practices with the lead qualitative researcher, Emma Forsyth.

Wellbeing and safety during surveys and interviews

Young people who engage in the evaluation could be vulnerable to negative and stressful impacts of the research process. We worked to ensure the well-being and psychological safety of individuals during data collection by:

- Designing interview questions to minimise harm and maximise comfort
- Allowing the participants to choose their environments for participation
- Reminding participants of anonymity and data security

6. Findings: deliverability

6.1. Introduction

Before an intervention can undergo impact assessment, it is important to establish that it can be delivered as intended. As part of the feasibility study, we set out to understand:

- **Recruitment and retention –** Can UK Youth and its LDPs recruit and retain young people at risk of youth violence to the programme?
- **Fidelity** – Can LDPs and employers deliver the programme as designed by UK Youth and the Lab?

6.2. Recruitment and retention

Findings on recruitment and retention come from the administrative data as well as interviews and focus groups with LDP staff, young people, referrers and employers.

6.2.1. Recruitment of local delivery partners

The programme was delivered by 14 youth organisations, known as LDPs. LDPs were recruited by UK Youth, which, alongside YEF, advertised the opportunity to its existing networks through email and social media. This was typically how LDPs in the qualitative sample heard about the programme. In addition, to reach a wider pool of organisations, UK Youth also carried out research on local provision within the selected areas and approached suitable organisations directly.

LDPs had to meet a set of criteria to be eligible.[27] The criteria were designed to ensure that the organisations were capable of recruiting and supporting a cohort of young people in the delivery locations as well as participating in the evaluation. UK Youth assessed applications using a standardised scoring matrix. Organisations were given a percentage score. UK Youth felt that the correct criteria were used but that more emphasis should have been placed on relationships with relevant referral partners and experience in working with the key demographic as opposed to experience in working on work experience/employment programmes. These considerations were weighted equally in year 1. The selection was also guided by the desire to recruit a diverse range of organisations, including those working in multiple locations.

In our interviews with programme leads from LDPs, we found that organisations were attracted to the concept of the programme, which was aligned with their organisational priorities and the young people they typically work with. LDPs also saw this programme as an opportunity to support a highly vulnerable cohort of young people during the summer period when young people are typically exposed to risk.

Nevertheless, LDPs had some initial concerns about the feasibility of delivery. Most notably, they recognised the risk of young people dropping out of the programme and the impact on employers should any problems arise.

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[27] LDP eligibility criteria: Working in one of the programme locations, commitment to youth work principles, credibility and track record of effectively working with the target profile of young people, capability to recruit between 40 and 50 young people of the intended profile in year 1, capacity to provide the necessary support for young people, ability to process payments to young people on a weekly basis, existing partnerships and relationships with referral partners (especially youth offending teams), commitment to the evaluation process, open learning and experience of monitoring systems, ideally a range of organisation sizes and primary organisational focuses (e.g. some violence specialist and others more general).

"I thought, I need to deliver this in a way that 1) it doesn't all blow up – that the young people are just too high-risk that they end up dropping out or they cause employers too much headache."
(Programme lead, case study G)

A further concern for smaller LDPs was the capacity to deliver the programme to the intended number of young people. There were also reservations about the feasibility for employers who would need to put in a lot of work to support young people. LDPs' perceptions of the programme are discussed in more detail in the acceptability chapter.
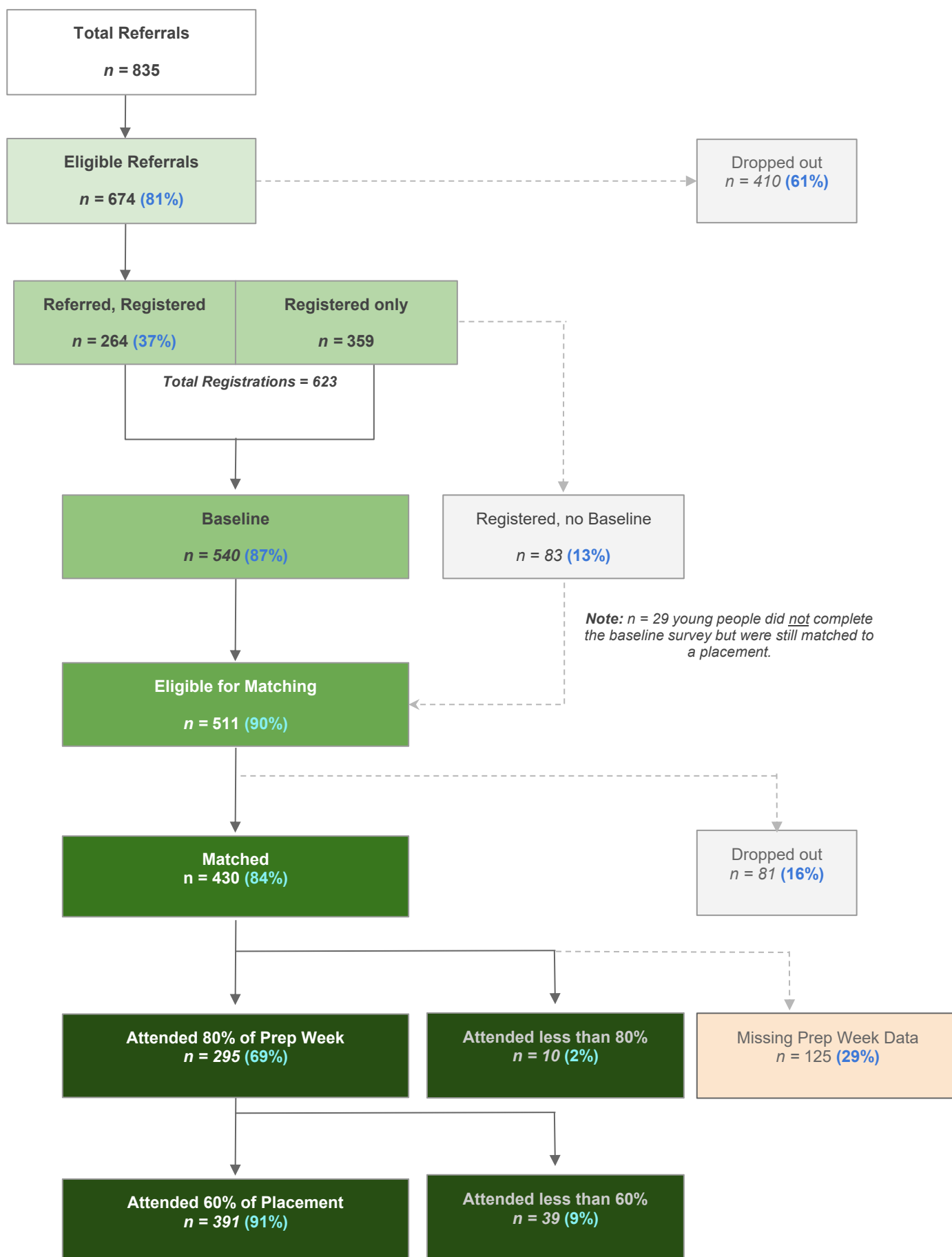
6.2.2. Young people

Recruitment

One of the key delivery aspects that we wanted to establish was whether there was sufficient demand from eligible young people to support a future impact evaluation. The aim in year 1 was to provide up to 600 placements across the three delivery areas, with over 400 registrations by mid-July as a prespecified progression criterion. Given that there is a strong financial incentive for young people to participate in the programme, we expected demand to be high.

This was the case, as 623 eligible registrations were recorded, 540 of whom completed baseline assessment (87%), and 511 were matched to a placement (90%) (see Figure 2, further detail in Annex D). In addition, 410 eligible participants were referred into the programme but never registered (63% of eligible referrals).[28] Although, in many cases, this will be because the LDP was unable to make contact with the young person or the young person chose not to engage, we also know from our qualitative interviews that LDPs struggled to cope with the number of referrals they received (see the acceptability chapter for more detail) and because employers were recruited late, it was unclear how many placements would be available.

We therefore conclude that **the demand from young people who meet our eligibility criteria in terms of age and risk factors which are associated with vulnerability to violence is sufficient to support a future impact evaluation**.

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[28] Referral and registration were two separate stages. The referral form was a very short form, which was designed to be used by external referral agencies to refer young people to the programme. This form would be assigned to an LDP, who would then follow up with the referred young person and complete a longer registration form with them. It was not essential to complete the referral form, and UK Youth anticipated that LDPs working with young people already would go straight to the registration form. However, from the qualitative data, we know that some 'external' referrals went straight to the registration form. Data in the referral form is also difficult to interpret, with over half of the external referrals being completed by young people rather than referral agencies.

Figure 2. Participant flow diagram

Total Referrals

n = 835

↓

Eligible Referrals

n = 674 **(81%)**

- - → Dropped out
n = 410 **(61%)**

↓

Referred, Registered	**Registered only**
n = 264 **(37%)**	*n* = 359

Total Registrations = 623

↓

Baseline

n = 540 **(87%)**

Registered, no Baseline

n = 83 **(13%)**

Note: *n = 29 young people did not complete the baseline survey but were still matched to a placement.*

↓

Eligible for Matching

n = 511 **(90%)**

↓

Matched
n = 430 **(84%)**

- - → Dropped out
n = 81 **(16%)**

↓

Attended 80% of Prep Week *n = 295* **(69%)**	**Attended less than 80%** *n = 10* **(2%)**	Missing Prep Week Data *n = 125* **(29%)**

↓

Attended 60% of Placement *n = 391* **(91%)**	**Attended less than 60%** *n = 39* **(9%)**

Factors influencing recruitment

In our qualitative research, we explored the process for young people entering the programme. Two key factors emerged:

- The source of referral into the programme
- The process of selecting participants for the programme

These are discussed in turn below, alongside other factors such as timescales, capacity and buy-in, which acted as barriers or enablers to reaching the target demographic.

Referral pathways

LDPs recruited young people to the programme through two main pathways:

- **Internal referrals** – Delivery partners could refer young people who they were already in contact with to the Summer Jobs programme.
- **External referrals from other agencies** – LDPs were strongly encouraged to work with statutory agencies and other services, such as pupil referral units, youth offending teams and social services, to generate referrals.

The use of multiple referral routes was intended to give LDPs the best chance of reaching sufficient numbers of eligible young people in relatively short timescales. The approach taken varied across LDPs, reflecting existing relationships with the target demographic and/or referral agencies.

Internal referrals

LDPs already working with the target demographic had existing relationships with a large number of potential participants. In one example, an LDP was able to fill most of its spaces internally through its ongoing work with young people at risk of violence.

> *"Almost all of the work and everything that we do is pretty much this cohort of the people."*
> *(Programme lead, non-case-study, delivery partner N)*

Young people who came through this route tended to fall into the following two categories:

- Existing service users, such as young people who were attending a youth centre run by the LDP
- Young people who previously received support from the LDP, such as through previous employability programmes

External referrals

This was an important pathway for LDPs that worked with a broader cohort of young people (not specifically those with the eligibility criteria) and those that typically worked with external agencies (e.g. youth offending teams) to identify eligible young people for their services.

The types of organisations that provided referrals included youth justice teams, social services, job centres and alternative provision units. LDP staff prioritised working with organisations with which they had an existing relationship and those that were closest to the types of young people they wanted the programme to reach.

> *"We felt that we would be able to ensure that young people working with youth offending services would be beneficiaries of it." (Programme lead, case study E)*

LDPs took different approaches to informing external organisations about the programme. This ranged from having discussions with a select few agencies that they already worked with to creating flyers that could be circulated more widely. The former was perceived to be more efficient by organisations that had these existing working relationships.

There were also examples within the qualitative sample of young people who heard about the programme from friends/family or directly from placement providers (these were youth centres/clubs that offered placements).

Box 1 summarises how the referral process worked.

Box 1. How did the referral process work?

The process of informing young people about the programme and making referrals varied considerably:

Informing young people: referrers shared information about the programme with young people over WhatsApp/email and/or during one-on-one meetings. The approach taken was generally aligned with how they would usually advertise programmes. However, sharing information directly with young people was not always felt to be appropriate. Referrers who held this view felt that the information was targeted at professionals rather than young people themselves, who may not see themselves as being "at risk of violence". **Adaptations to materials may, therefore, be needed to support professionals in sharing programme materials with young people.**

Making referrals: the programme was set up so that local organisations could refer young people to the programme via a referral form sent directly to LDPs. In practice, it was evident that there were various methods of making a referral, which ranged from accompanying young people to an open day hosted by the LDP to completing the referral form or submitting a referral by email. The findings suggest that there is scope for improving how referrals are managed. LDP staff shared feedback on the spreadsheet system, which they found difficult to use. Referrers also mentioned the lack of an online system. Emails were harder to keep track of, and referrers did not always get an update or response. **Improvements to the system for managing referrals would support the larger number of referrals which will be needed in years 2 and 3 of the programme.**

LDP staff who took part in the qualitative research reported receiving a high number of external referrals, which was attributed to having these links with agencies that worked directly with the target demographic *and* saw the value of the programme. Having this buy-in was an important facilitator.

> *"My initial thoughts for why we got a massive [number] of young people interested was because where [name of delivery lead] marketed it…he went out to the children's trust. He went out to the youth offending team…. These sorts of organisations have got those sorts of young people". (Youth worker, case study G)*

Of the 674 eligible referrals, 43% were completed by a young person, 13% of whom reported being referred by an external agency. The remaining 57% were referred by a professional. The most common source of professional referral was social worker (16%) and then career advisor (14%) and youth justice (11%). Of these eligible referrals, 264 (37%) were registered for the programme. An additional 359 young people went straight to registration, which is 58% of all registrations. To progress straight to registration, young people still had to meet the eligibility criteria for the programme, and we can assume that the majority of these registrations are internal, i.e. were known to the LDP prior to the scheme. A higher proportion of those starting the preparation week were internal registrations (65% vs. 35% who completed a referral form), meaning that there was a significant drop in external referrals between registration and the start of the pre-employment preparation week.

The qualitative research can help to explain the reasons for this:

First, the number of referrals exceeded the number of available placements. LDPs did not have the capacity to respond to every referral, which, in some cases, led to challenges in managing the expectations of professionals, who assumed that the young people they referred were guaranteed to receive a placement.

> *"There didn't seem to be a cap on the referrals that could be made, so we were really oversubscribed. So what happened then was [for] a lot of young people, obviously, the referrals were put in, but it wasn't possible to contact every single young person who'd put a referral in". (Youth worker, focus group)*

Second, there were issues with the availability of information to support the referral process. The programme leads and youth workers did not have the answers to some of the questions that referral partners had about the programme. For example, youth justice teams required specific information on where young people would be placed to inform risk assessments. This information wasn't available due to the fact that young person and employer recruitment were happening in parallel. Although not directly stated, this may have been a barrier to young people referred by these agencies receiving the programme.

In addition, LDP staff said they had wanted more detailed information on the young people being referred from external agencies to inform the delivery of support and safeguarding measures. This was seen as especially important due to the compressed timescales, which made it difficult to build relationships before the programme began.

> *"I would say the challenge then was perhaps not having a full picture of that young person, how to accurately safeguard and support that young person…I think there's probably more that could be asked at that stage for us to be in a better position to do that". (Youth worker, focus group)*

LDP staff also mentioned the risk of professionals not disclosing certain information, such as a young person's circumstances and risk factors, in order to give them a better chance of receiving a place. While we didn't find any evidence of this (on the contrary, referrers appeared to be cautious about who they referred), **this suggests that there may be issues of mistrust between LDPs and partner organisations regarding information sharing.**

In summary: recruitment of young people

It is clear that there is sufficient demand from young people eligible for this programme. A large proportion of participants in the first year of delivery had an existing relationship with the LDP, and while this is a valuable route to identifying and recruiting young people, young people already known to the LDP will be systematically different to those referred by external agencies and may not be the most in need of this programme (discussed further in the acceptability chapter). For these reasons, we think that consideration needs to be given to how the volume of young people entering the programme via referral from the relevant external agencies can be increased in years 2 and 3, as well as how a higher proportion of external referrals can be converted into registrations.

Selecting young people for the programme

Referral partners and LDP staff acted as 'gatekeepers' for the programme, either at the referral or registration stage. Their perceptions of readiness and suitability played an important role in determining which young people would receive the programme.

First, it was important to referrers that the young people they referred to the programme **would be able to engage with the placement and ultimately cope in a work environment.** This was judged by a range of factors, including their ability to take instructions, their communication skills, whether they had a bank account, their ability to travel independently and their wider support network.

"How they communicate with me. If they've got a bank account set up. Have they got the skills to journey plan? [Can they] travel independently? Have they got some support around them with regards to helping maybe [with] getting there or encouragement?" (Referral agency, North West)

Perceptions of risk were also key. The ways in which risk was assessed varied. Representatives from youth justice services, for example, assessed risk based on offending history and behaviours as well as current circumstances. In one example, this led them to prioritise young people with a lower level of offending, who they saw as the most likely to benefit from the programme as a form of diversion from further criminal behaviour. Assessing more complex and higher-risk young people sometimes required risk management meetings (joint meetings between youth justice services and other stakeholders).

LDP staff also saw risk in terms of the risk of harm to other young people, which informed their approach to recruitment.

"We were also very clear not to take very high-risk children. Out of all those children, we were careful not to take a child who will come and work with the other children and be at risk".
(Programme lead, non-case-study, delivery partner H)

The desire to **minimise the number of young people dropping out of the programme** meant that LDPs prioritised young people who could express their motivation to take part and their ability to commit to the full programme.

The **support needs of young people** were also important to LDPs who would be taking on a duty of care for the young person during the course of the programme. This was more of a concern the more vulnerable they were and where they had not worked with them before

"With some of those young people, they may have met 80/90% of the [eligibility] criteria. I thought that posed a level of risk in whether we were able to provide that support. Especially not knowing the young people and just having, really, that short turnaround time to build a rapport, to then put them into the workplace. I thought it posed too much of a risk". (Programme lead, case study G)

Perceptions of eligibility criteria and suitability for the programme are discussed in more detail in the acceptability chapter.

In summary: selecting young people for the programme

The gatekeeping behaviours described above were driven by the desire to give young people the best possible chance of benefitting from the Summer Jobs programme. This was coupled with the belief that it is important not to refer young people if it is unsafe to do so or they are unlikely to be able to cope with the requirements of the programme. However, it is important to remember that the rationale for developing and evaluating the Summer Jobs programme is to understand if it can support those most vulnerable to violence to avoid it. Therefore, going forward, there is a need to ensure that referrers are not overly cautious in excluding young people at genuine risk who may benefit from the programme.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Summer Jobs programme, young people had to meet at least one of the eligibility criteria, which are known to be associated with violence.[29] As Figure 3 below shows, the most common eligibility criteria was having a social worker, which was the case for nearly a quarter of participants, and

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[29] These factors are prominent within YEF's Outcomes Framework (2022) and have been shown to be associated with youth offending (for example, see Ullman, R., Lereya, S. T., Glendinnin, F., Deighton, J., Labno, A., Liverpool, S., & Edbrooke-Childs, J., (2024). Constructs associated with youth crime and violence among 6-18 year olds: A systematic review of systematic reviews. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 75, 101906.)

17% of young people met more than one criterion, which is an indicator of this being a highly vulnerable cohort. At registration, 10% had two criteria, 7% had three criteria and 10% had four or more.[30]

The second most common risk factor (which was selected for 15% of young people) was being at risk of criminal exploitation. Notably, some LDPs selected this for all or nearly all of the young people they registered, and the majority of these young people did not meet any of the other criteria. Given this and the subjective nature of this eligibility criteria, it is possible that, at times, this was used by LDPs as a justification to include young people in the programme who would benefit from a paid work opportunity but were at a lower risk of youth violence than was intended.

Figure 3. Reported eligibility criteria at referral or registration (n=1025)
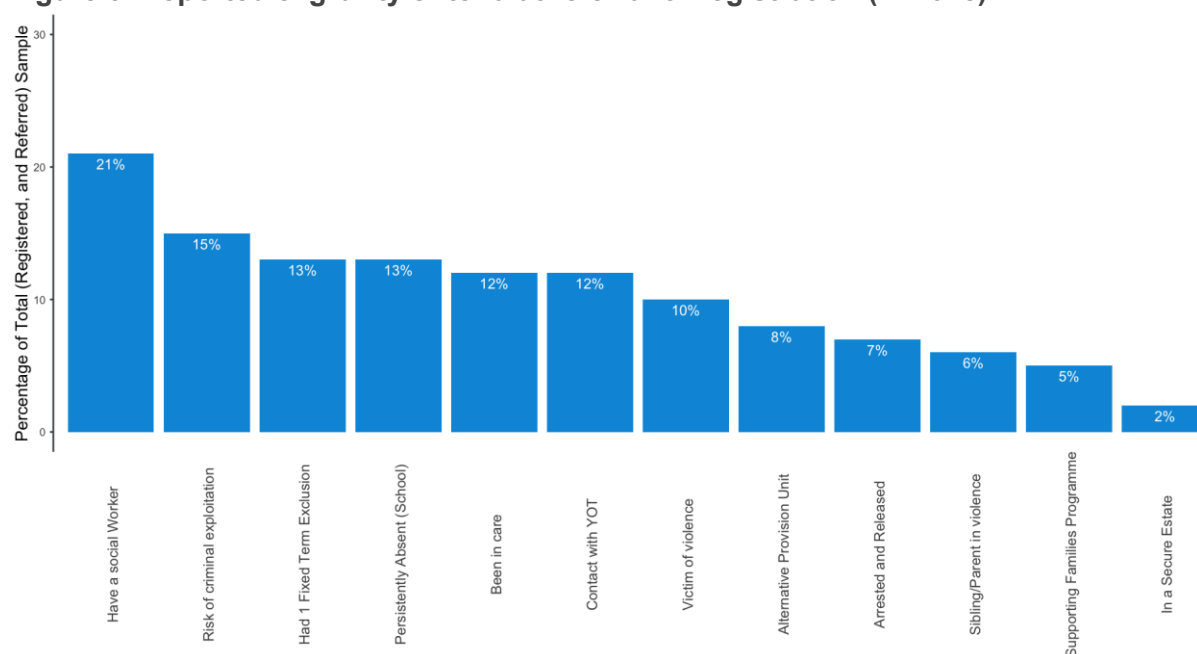
Demographics of those entering the programme

The majority of the 511 young people matched to a placement were male (67%) and aged between 16 and 20 (86%). LDPs and referrers also shared feedback on who they thought the programme should target. They saw the ages of 16 to 19 as the most critical point at which to intervene and divert young people away from exploitation and offending.

> *"I would say that from my experience, prioritising the younger people would be more helpful because if you look at the desistance literature, the older young people are getting, the less likely they are of offending as it is. If this programme's targeting young people at risk of serious violence, then they're going to be in that 16/17/18/19 band more than the ones who are older". (Programme lead, case study E)*

Nearly half of the participants (49%) recorded their ethnicity as Black British, Black Caribbean or Black African. The most commonly selected highest level of education was A level.

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[30]At the referral stage, young people were only able to select a single eligibility criterion. These percentages are derived from a sample of all those who registered (*n=623*), which includes those who were referred and then subsequently registered (*n=264*).

Retention

Of the 511 young people who were matched to a placement, 430 (84%)[31] started the programme (see Figure 2). Once the programme was started, retention was very high, with only seven young people dropping out during the pre-employment preparation week and 39 (9%) completing less than 60% of their employment placement. Indeed, most had a high completion rate, with 87% (n=381) completing at least 70% of their placement hours, 85% (n=379) completing at least 80% of their placement hours and 75% (n=362) completing at least 90% of their placement hours.[32]

There was considerable regional variation in the number of placements offered, with over half in London (see Figure 4). Even within regions, employment placements were concentrated in specific areas (e.g. Birmingham for the West Midlands). A large driver of this seems to have been the availability of job placements rather than demand from young people, as there were higher levels of drop-off between referral/registration and placement matching in regions outside London due to there being fewer placements for young people to be matched to (see Figure 5(a)). This indicates the need to focus on raising awareness and driving engagement of employers in some areas in future years.

**Figure 4. Percentage of registrations and matched sample by region**
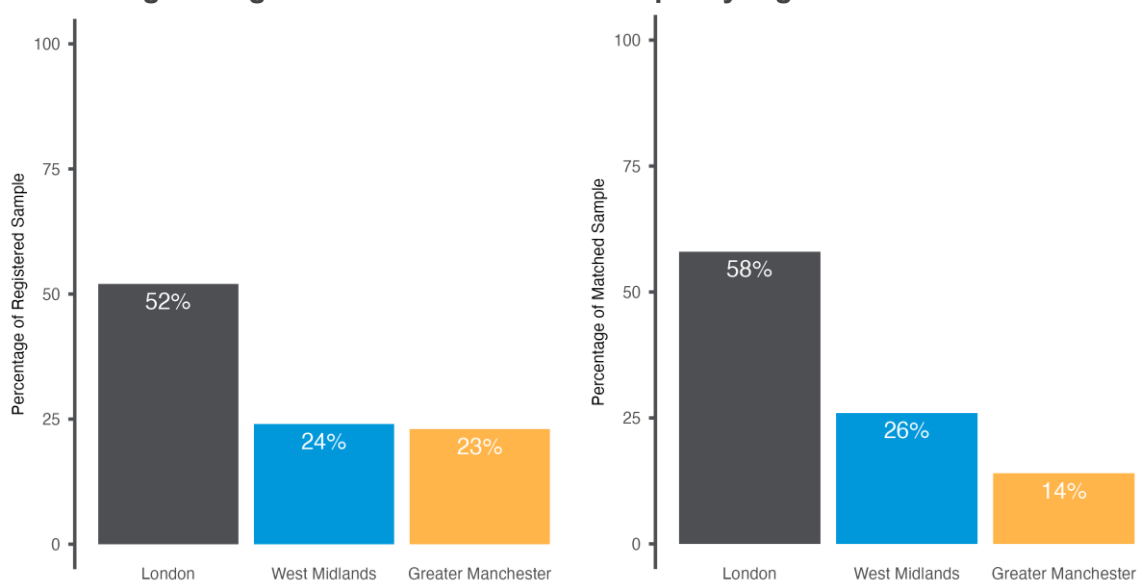
Retention between registering, matching to placement and starting placement did not differ by age or gender (see Figure 5a). However, we observed a higher rate of drop-off for young people who identified as White (see Figure 5b). This effect persisted after stratifying by region, although only in the Greater Manchester area. In London and the West Midlands, no differential drop off was seen by ethnicity.

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[31] Data on the reason for not starting is missing for approximately 60% of people. Of those for whom a reason is recorded, 30% were not able to attend or didn't come to the preparation week, 30% found another opportunity and 24% didn't turn up. The remaining people didn't fulfil the criteria (registration or DBS) or were no longer interested.

[32] Due to how data from the payroll was grouped, it was not possible to disentangle attendance at preparation week and at placement. Therefore, figures for placement hours include attendance at the preparation week (i.e. less than 60% of employment placement is less than 60% of 150 hours – 25 hours at preparation week and 125 hours at the placement.)

Figure 5a. Retention between registering, matching and participating in the programme by key characteristics (A: top left, B: top right, C: bottom left, D: bottom right
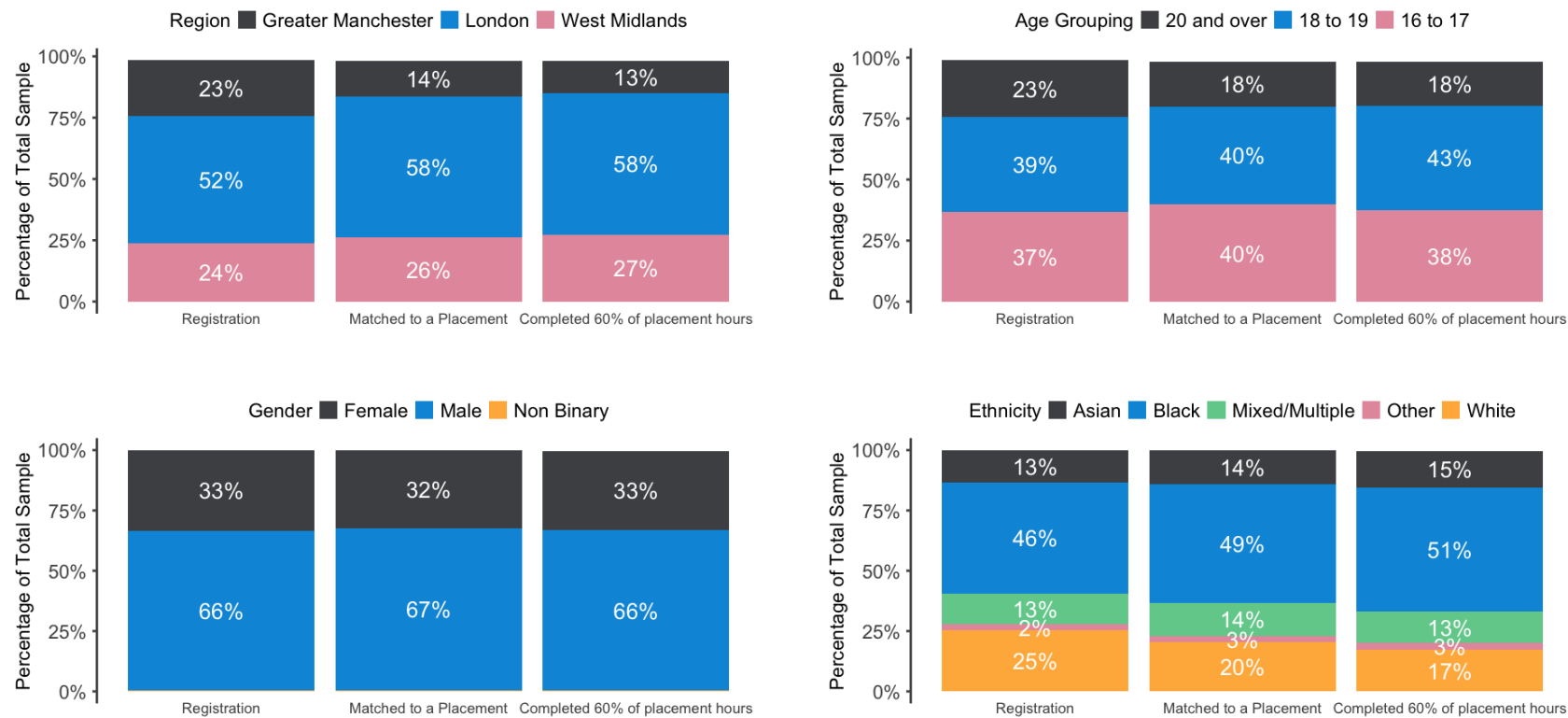
Notes for Figure 5a:

1. Number of young people: *registered = 623, matched to a placement = 511, completed 60% of placement hours = 391*
2. Figure 5a above has the following numbers of missing observations: 11 region observations, nine age observations, one gender observation and one ethnicity observation

Figure 5b. Retention between registering, matching and participating in the programme for each region broken down by ethnicity: Greater Manchester (top left), London (top right), West Midlands (bottom left)
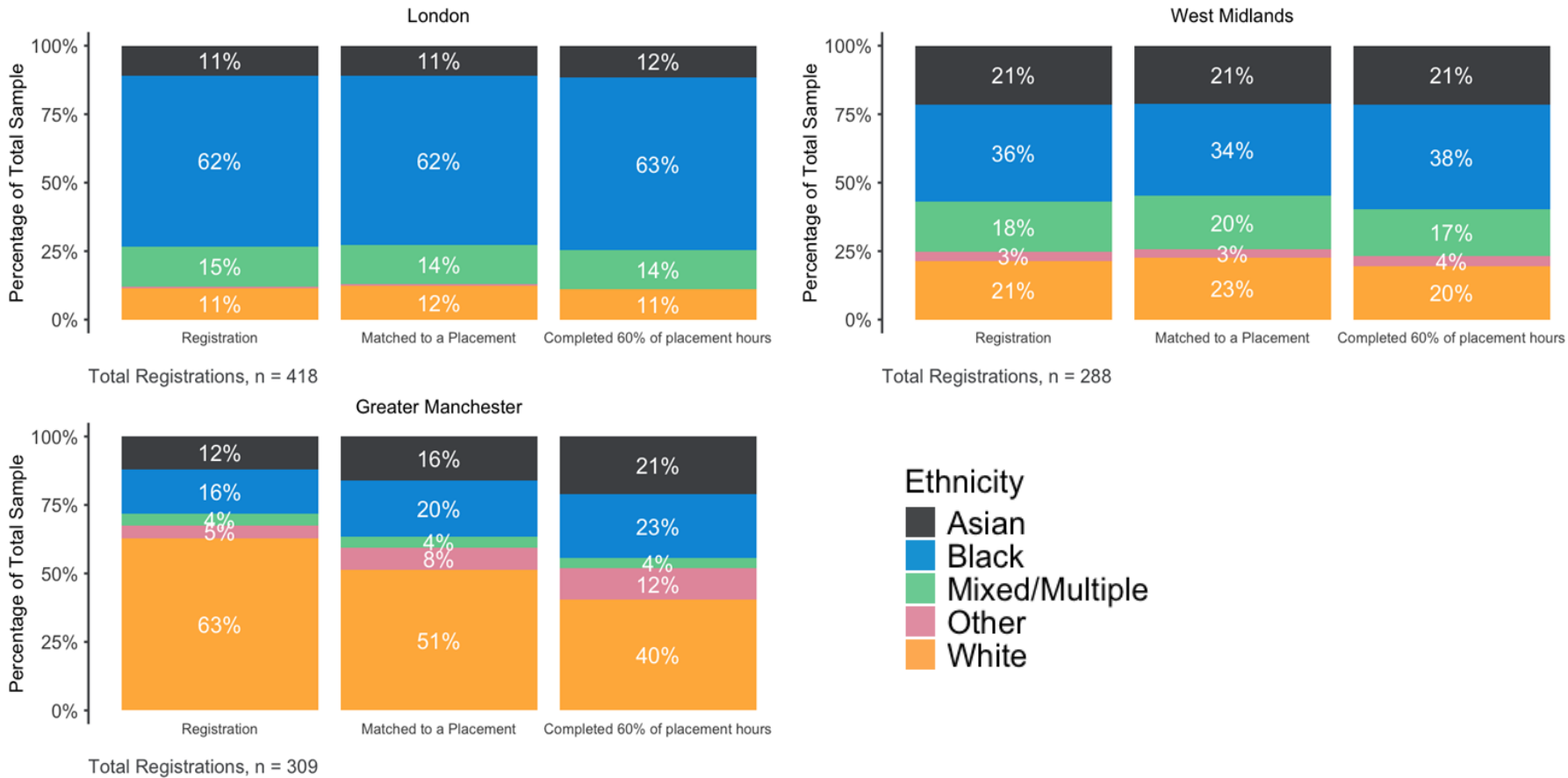
Factors influencing retention

Our qualitative research can help to explain how the programme managed to retain a high proportion of young people as well as the reasons why some young people dropped out. These insights are based on youth worker, referrer and employer accounts since we were unable to speak to any young people who dropped out.

The findings suggest there were three main reasons underpinning the drop off between registration and starting a placement:

- **Choice of placements** – where young people were not satisfied with the nature of the role/location of the placement they were allocated or the choice they had, they decided not to go any further.
- **Issues with meeting requirements for placements**, such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks – this was primarily due to the checks not being processed in time.
- **Finding jobs** – LDPs also told us that some of the young people **found a job** after signing up and went with that instead. This is likely to happen when young people are applying for the programme alongside other opportunities.

The qualitative research also identified a range of factors that served as barriers or enablers to young people completing the programme once they had started.

Support

Young people and LDP staff felt that support was key in retaining young people and keeping them engaged. This included support from employers, youth workers and young people's own networks.

There were mixed views about the quality of support provided by employers (discussed further in the acceptability chapter). LDPs who were satisfied felt that this had helped to retain young people. In one example, an LDP attributed this success to the fact that they hand-picked employers who already had an understanding of young people and the issues they face.

Young people also said that having a good relationship with their supervisor and colleagues in their work placement gave them the motivation to come to work each day.

> *"Just that motivation; I want to become better every day because I knew he was going to be there. He was the one introducing me to everyone else, like all the other managers, all his people within the workplace". (Young person, case study E)*

According to youth workers, the wraparound support was important as it offered a safety net that wouldn't usually be present. However, it was not always feasible to provide this to young people with more complex needs, which led to them dropping out of the programme. This included a young person with a challenging home life and a young person with learning difficulties who would have needed daily support.

Other LDPs cited challenges in maintaining contact with young people during the course of the placement. They were unable to get in touch with young people who would often not pick up the phone. They said that this had contributed to dropouts through not being able to talk issues through.

> *"If I could have maintained…daily contact with the two people [who] dropped out early on in Manchester, both [name] and myself are 80% certain that we could have talked through the issues because a lot of the issues they were having were overthinking and turning a molehill into a massive mountain". (Youth worker, case study E)*

This highlights the importance of informal support from the youth workers for retention.

Young people also mentioned their own support networks as being important to them, although this was exceptional within the qualitative sample. For example, where they felt obligated to complete the placement for their family or even where they had the support of a sibling also on the programme.

Other factors which young people identified as supporting them to take up and remain in the programme include the following:

- **Being paid** was mentioned by both LDPs and young people as an important motivating factor.
- Having the **access fund** was important to young people who felt they would have struggled to travel to work (this was, however, not applied consistently across LDPs).
- **Preparation week** was also stated to be important by LDPs, who said it had eased young people into the programme and built their confidence.

These factors are discussed more in the acceptability chapter.

The employment placements

The findings suggest that the quality and suitability of the placements themselves can act as an important enabler or barrier to retention. Enjoying the work and feeling comfortable were mentioned persistently by young people when asked what had kept them engaged. On the other hand, LDPs noted instances of a lack of information sharing contributing to withdrawal from the programme. This occurred where a young person's needs were not shared with an employer, resulting in them being placed in a role which they found difficult to sustain. This is discussed further later in this chapter and in the acceptability chapter.

Personal circumstances

Young people's individual circumstances also affected retention. Youth workers shared examples of where an individual young person's personal life affected their ability to stay on the programme. This included having distractions outside of work during the weekend, which interfered with their ability to work, or having mental health issues.

External factors

According to youth workers, the riots that took place in towns across the UK during August 2024 led to some young people missing work or dropping out of their placements due to feeling unsafe.

In summary: retention of young people

Despite the vulnerable characteristics of the cohort, once a placement was accepted, retention of young people in the Summer Jobs programme was very high. This is likely to be largely due to the fact that this was a paid placement, although it is clear that elements such as the access fund, youth worker support and the preparation week were also important parts, and retaining these in future years is important. Nevertheless, there was a significant number of young people who dropped out of the programme during the stages prior to accepting a placement, and **addressing issues such as choice of placement and the time needed to complete pre-employment checks is likely to help address this.**

6.2.3.   Employers

Employer recruitment approach

Employer recruitment was slower than anticipated, and no placements had been formally secured by the beginning of May 2024. Given that it was not possible to extend the employer recruitment period by moving the programme start date back, UK Youth became more formally and actively involved in employer recruitment at that stage, utilising existing relationships with employers and encouraging LDPs to make introductions to potential employers. The majority of the placements were secured by the beginning of July,

although LDP connections continued to provide small numbers of placements up until the programme start date.

Employer recruitment by UK Youth and individual LDPs took the following approach:

- UK Youth sourced placements by drawing on its networks with large corporates and other youth/voluntary and community sector organisations. However, this approach was not fully utilised until later in the recruitment period (May 2024).
- LDPs were not funded to source employment placements; however, there were instances where they supported the recruitment of employers, such as in the following examples:
    - Where from the outset, they approached existing partners who they felt would be well placed to accommodate the needs of the young people and deal with issues, such as impunctuality, in an appropriate manner.
    - Where they became aware of challenges in sourcing placements and were concerned about the viability of the programme. This led them to ask employers that had already signed up if they could offer additional placements, contact local employers to see if they could provide placements at short notice and offer internal placements which were not originally planned for.
    - Where LDPs had support from the local authority to advertise the programme. In this case, having a local authority representative who was passionate about the programme and able to advocate for it was an effective way of reaching employers. A participant in the research who supported in this capacity also saw it as necessary, given the constraints of smaller youth organisations that may otherwise lack the means to make these connections.

    "Often, they don't have the systems and ways of working to always execute it how it needs to be done. So, being able to support in that way was great…We had adverts out. I think I contacted all of the voluntary organisations on my list, saying, 'Look, we need some placements for these young people now'". (Local authority partner, non-case-study, delivery partner H)

While these avenues helped to increase the number of placements, LDPs told us they were unable to fully utilise their networks of potential employers due to the short amount of time between when they were selected as a delivery partner and the programme beginning.

Despite the overall success of the programme in creating hundreds of paid placements in a very short period of time, there were issues with the availability of employment places, especially in the North West. This meant that some young people who were eligible for the programme were left without a placement, which we discuss more fully in the acceptability chapter.

Summary of placements

Of the placements secured for the programme in year 1 (see Figure 6), there was a roughly even split between those within charities, not-for-profit or social enterprise organisations (35.5%), within one of the Summer Jobs LDPs (32.3%) or in a private company (32.3%).

Figure 6. Placements by organisation type (n=499 placements)

Placements by Organisation Type
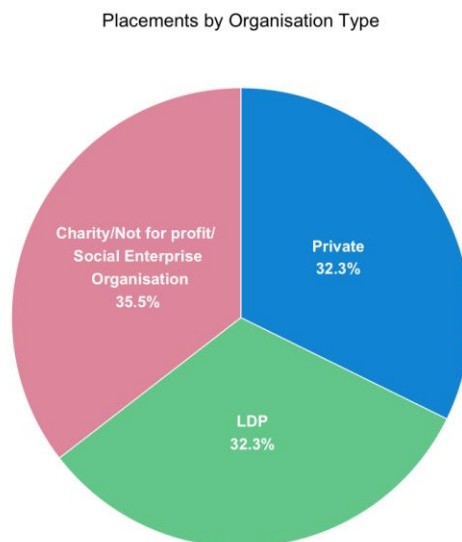
Of the placements offered by private companies, 18% of these were from fast food chains, 17% from sports companies, 14% from the creative industry and 11% from the retail industry. Other types of organisations provided less than 10% of placements each. These types included education, hospitality, events, housing/construction and waste management organisations. Of the roles offered, 25% were office/support roles, 23% were supporting childcare/summer programmes, 13% were in youth work and 8% were in retail. Other role types, such as marketing, creative roles or mixed roles, were each less than 5% of roles.

Motivations and enablers

Although the recruitment of employers was slower than anticipated, UK Youth and LDPs were able to recruit enough for the programme to go ahead as intended. Employers were strongly attracted to the ethos of the programme and genuinely wanted to play their part by providing placements. This was especially important to employers already working with young people, those with a track record in similar schemes or those with a commitment to start doing something in this space. In these instances, the programme aligned well with their values, which often meant that employers were willing to overcome some of the challenges (discussed further below) to be involved in the programme.

The prospect of additional staff was also attractive, especially to employers with a seasonal element to their work, including visitor attractions and children's holiday clubs, and employers with staffing issues.

> *"We've had our staff team drastically reduced since May. So, for us, it's been a godsend".*
> *(Employer, case study G)*

There was also a range of enabling factors that contributed to employers' decisions to take part in the programme. These included:

- **Having an existing relationship with LDPs/UK Youth** – some employers were convinced to offer placements by LDPs that they had a long-standing relationship with. Others, who were current partners of UK Youth or had received funding from them previously, saw the programme as part of their ongoing partnership or as a way to strengthen it in the future. Continuing to make use of these relationships should help to further expand the pool of employers in years 2 and 3. The approach to recruiting employers, which drew on the networks of LDPs, can also help to explain why year 1 employers were predominantly third/voluntary sector organisations.

- **Having previous experience working with young people** – this helped to lessen concerns about working with this group and gave employers the confidence to take on young people, knowing they had the means to support them.

    "We've got a great staff team here to be able to work with young people with perhaps some additional needs". (Employer, non-case-study, delivery partner J)

- **Specific programme features incentivised employers** – most notably, the fact that it was funded reduced the financial risk to them and simplified the sign-up process by removing the need to find the budget for this. This made their involvement more feasible and was important given the short lead-in time and placement duration.

    "The burden of actually having to think about the payment as well was obviously incredibly appealing and allowed us to really focus, then, the resource on all the other parts". (Large employer, working with multiple LDPs)

- **The involvement of youth organisations was an attractor** – it added credibility to the programme and reassured employers that both they and the young people would have access to additional support.

Barriers to engagement

In this section, we describe some of the concerns expressed to us by employers that signed up for year 1 of the programme, as well as the reasons why other employers chose not to take part. These insights are based on feedback from the UK Youth employer recruitment team and from an employer that chose not to sign up. Barriers varied and included perceptions of workload, the length and timing of the programme and risks associated with working with this particular cohort. In some cases, these concerns did not stop employers from participating but may have influenced the number of placements they offered.

Capacity and workload: employers expected to invest a lot of time in supervising young people. The capacity to do this was a particular concern for smaller organisations and limited the number of placements they could offer

> *"I was a bit concerned that it would take up a lot of time, and being such a small team, we don't have a huge amount of time and were very much reacting to things that happen in our centre, so it's quite hard to plan things out. That makes it a little bit difficult when it comes to giving somebody constant supervision". (Employer, case study B)*

It was not only the time needed to support young people but also the prospect that they may not see the benefits of this investment in five weeks. This was mitigated by seeing it as an opportunity to train a new member of staff who could potentially join the team on a part-time basis in the longer term.

Programme length: this was a consideration for organisations that offered existing (shorter) work experience programmes. They speculated about the risk of young people disengaging over the course of the five weeks. It also felt more intensive to an employer whose existing programme was limited to two days per week. However, this did not deter organisations that, through their existing work, were strongly committed to social value. The timing of the programme, i.e. over the summer months and school holidays, was also difficult for some employers due to staff taking annual leave. In these cases, this did not stop them from taking part but had implications for the continuity of staff working with the young people.

Timescales: the short timeframe between recruitment and the placements beginning deterred employers that would expect to start planning their involvement months in advance. This included those that already ran an internship programme which was in the process of being set up for the year ahead. Reservations about the quick turnaround time were also widespread among employers that offered placements, especially when they came into the programme later on. However, they were prepared to move quickly, for

example, when they saw it as a favour to an LDP they had an existing relationship with and/or were passionate about the cause.

Risk: employers also spoke of their concerns over health and safety and safeguarding, especially in customer-facing roles.

> *"It was just really around if it was going to be [a] youth that maybe [is] violent or if they had a criminal background…how are the [employees] going to deal with that person if they were going to get angry or something happened". (Large employer, non-case-study, multiple LDPs)*

There were also concerns about the capabilities and behaviours of the young people who would be placed with them and how other members of staff would receive this.

> *"Am I going to get someone that's not going to want to sit down, not want to go to work?" (Employer, case study E)*

Having a key individual responsible for championing the programme and the support of senior managers within the organisation helped combat these concerns. The recruitment team noted that this was a more important blocker for employers in certain industries which tend to be more risk averse, such as construction and financial services, due to issues of liability and security.

Screening: not being able to screen candidates through an application process was a concern to employers who saw it as a way of diversifying their recruitment pipeline in the longer term, although this wasn't a primary aim of the programme. The UK Youth recruitment team observed that this was particularly relevant to corporate employers and may, therefore, help to explain why there were fewer private sector employers.

> *"We have to say that the purpose of the programme is to potentially encourage young people back into education, which ultimately is a great thing, but corporates don't always have that longer vision rather than it just being, 'Well, we want to be able to show that we've got a young person into a job'". (UK Youth recruitment team)*

Employer contribution: the financial contribution was identified as a barrier to taking part for employers that may have offered large numbers of placements since it was more difficult to find the budget for this. To respond to challenges in securing employers, the fee was made discretionary. This helped to secure employers that may not have otherwise agreed.

> *"I know I had at least a few cases where that really suddenly jinxed the tone of the conversation, where they were a bit less keen, especially those that wanted to do loads of placements, then suddenly the contribution fee, kind of, yes, piled up a little bit". (UK Youth central recruitment team)*

In total, only nine out of 90 unique companies paid the contribution, raising a total of £20,000. As discussed in the acceptability chapter, employers felt that they were contributing substantial resources to the programme, even though the wage was covered, so it may be challenging to increase the contributions in year 2 while also ensuring a wider range of employers and sectors are represented within the placements.

Learning for year 2: improving employer engagement

Participants called for the use of a **more strategic approach** to recruiting employers, including tapping into corporates that have social value schemes, as well as making use of LDPs' local networks and relationships. Participants noted that the rapid set-up of the programme had prevented this from reaching its full potential. Having a **longer lead-in time** was, therefore, felt to be an easy way to get more employers on board, especially those that may need more time for paperwork, such as local authorities. A local authority representative who had taken an active role in supporting the delivery of the programme in their

area saw local authorities as key stakeholders that could both reach the target demographic and source suitable placements.

Participant suggestions for improving buy-in sought to address some of the concerns expressed by employers:

- Financial reimbursement – this was suggested by some employers for which taking on a young person was particularly resource-intensive. This was either in terms of physical resources (such as where materials for training were needed) or staff time (such as where staff would need to be reallocated from an existing training programme to accommodate young people).
- Reassurances for employers to address any concerns around taking on young people that might act as barriers to offering placements – one suggestion was to emphasise to employers that young people would receive a week of pre-employment preparation.
- Better matching of young people to placements – some employers would have liked the young people they were allocated to have had some interest in the job/sector.
- Marketing – private sector employers that participated this year suggested that increasing the visibility of the programme among larger employers could help to motivate them to offer placements.

   "Success through case studies of what's worked well with organisations this year can really help to turn the heads of other brands. I know it certainly would for me if I heard that…some other competitor brand had operated the programme like this, and it was really successful; that would mean we would look into it". (Large employer)

Summary: employer recruitment

The compressed timetable for year 1 of delivery meant that recruiting a sufficient number of employment places was likely to be challenging. This was compounded by the slow start to employer recruitment. However, UK Youth, with the support of the LDPs, was able to offer over 400 placements across a range of employment sectors, and it is clear that many employers were motivated to participate in the scheme. Building on this, there is a need in years 2 and 3 of delivery to focus on diversifying the range of employment places offered as well as ensuring a better match between employment placement numbers and referral numbers.

A longer lead-in time for year 2 of delivery should help address one of the major concerns which employers raised. However, more work is needed on how to address the concerns about the length of the placement and the risks of working with this cohort of young people. Employers made suggestions about the type of training they would have found useful (discussed in the acceptability chapter). Given the concerns raised with us and the number of employers that paid the fee in year 1, it seems likely that not all employers will pay the fee in future years, particularly if attempting to attract a wider range of organisations.

6.3. Fidelity

In this section, we describe the extent to which the core elements of the programme were delivered as intended, as well as barriers and enablers to delivery and adaptations that were made. Findings on fidelity come from interviews and focus groups with LDP staff, young people, referrers and employers.

6.3.1. Employment placement matching

The scheme was designed to allocate young people to employment places on the basis of their interests and aspirations but also taking account of their location and needs and the availability of suitable opportunities. Our qualitative research explored the factors considered when matching young people to employment opportunities.

Broadly speaking, young people in the qualitative sample were matched to placements in one of two ways:

a. **Young people chose their placements:** the exact process by which young people chose varied according to the delivery partners and individual young people. In some cases, young people were offered a range of placements to choose from. Often, they had limited information about what the roles would involve, so decisions were based on familiarity and interest in the jobs relative to others on offer. There were also examples of young people specifying the placement they wanted due to having previously worked there or asking for a job in a specific field, such as youth work or sports coaching.

b. **Placements were allocated to young people by their LDP:** in some cases, young people were referred into the programme by their LDPs and were only offered placements at the LDP.

LDPs were not always able to allocate young people to employers on the basis of choice or interest. This was primarily because of:

- The shortage of placements, which also meant that some young people were not allocated to an employer at all
- Employers pulling out at short notice, resulting in young people being reallocated at short notice
- The limited range of placements, which made it difficult to match the young people's interests to opportunities

Timescales were a further barrier to matching young people and placements on the basis of interest. Youth workers said they did not have sufficient time to build relationships with young people and assess suitability for certain placements.

Location was also an important consideration. This was a barrier to filling placements, especially in Greater Manchester, where the location of placements was often too far for young people to travel to. As well as distance to travel, LDPs took into account young people's safety. This included asking young people where they felt safe and reallocating placements to accommodate this.

In the sample of people interviewed, there were also instances where employers had a say in who they took on. Examples included where young people were previous or current service users of the employer who told them about the programme, where young people were already doing work experience placement with the employer and the employer specifically asked to have them on the placement, or where a referral agency offered a placement to a young person they referred. **It was possible to accommodate these preferences during the feasibility study, but this will not be the case during years 2 and 3 due to the fact that participants will be randomised as part of the recruitment. This should be made clear to all stakeholders at the outset.**

6.3.2.   Preparation week

In order to help them prepare for the expectations of the role and the workplace, young people received a week of paid pre-employment training. The week was led by youth workers from each LDP and included content on setting goals, preparing for work (expectations in the workplace, preparing for work experience and navigating the workplace) and writing CVs. The curriculum was designed by UK Youth but operated on a core-flex model, meaning LDPs were told which elements of the training were compulsory but had the flexibility to adapt the contents and delivery of the curriculum to the group.

Our interviews with youth workers explored their experiences of delivering the preparation week for the first time. Overall, **the flexible approach worked well**. This was because there was a need to adapt the content and delivery to keep young people engaged, mainly by condensing and tailoring the sessions to make them more interactive and conversational.

"You, kind of, want to engage them conversationally rather than, 'Here is me telling you loads of stuff.' So, we kind of modified it a bit, so it became a bit more of a conversation, which helped to build a relationship". (Youth worker, case study E)

Having different styles of delivery and incorporating practical activities, such as role play and quizzes, helped to engage young people. This was a consistent theme and can help to explain the high attendance across LDPs. A further facilitating factor was felt to be the fact that young people were being paid to attend.

While the flexibility was appreciated, looking ahead to years 2 and 3, there is a risk that this may contribute to **inconsistencies in delivery**, with some young people not receiving the core content. There were indications from the qualitative research that the preparation week was adapted, for example, to accommodate the registration process (as opposed to this happening beforehand), which affected young people's experiences. They felt they hadn't learned much. Young people's views of preparation week are discussed in more detail in the acceptability chapter.

Youth workers encountered challenges when planning and delivering the preparation week. First, there was felt to be **a lot of content to cover**. There were also some uncertainties about the delivery, specifically confidence about the teaching element and, more generally, feelings of being unprepared. This points to a need for **more support and guidance for youth workers** delivering preparation week, especially for LDPs with limited experience of running employability workshops/training.

"I was unsure of what the preparation week – what we had to do with them. I knew what it was about, but I wasn't sure about what I had to do with them". (Youth worker, case study B)

We also heard from referrers who felt the **content of the preparation week wasn't appropriate for the cohort**, many of whom lacked any previous work experience.

"I read some of the induction pack, and I was like, 'What relevance does this have?' You're tailoring it to a bunch of young people who have never even had work experience". (Referrer, case study E)

LDPs would have liked to **tailor the content of preparation week to specific placements,** but this wasn't always feasible (due to late onboarding and matching).

"We had conversations about what might go wrong on your placement and what…you need to do to plan and prepare for your placement, but I think if you've got something that's much more bespoke or the ability to tailor it so that it is more bespoke, that would work so much better". (Programme lead, case study E).

Youth workers also observed differences in engagement during preparation week. Youth workers observed that **young people who had been referred by a professional, such as their social/youth offending team worker, could be less receptive and trusting**. Addressing this by emphasising that they were there voluntarily, worked well and broke down some of these barriers. Preparation week was felt to be **less engaging for those at the upper end of the age range** for this programme; they were more familiar with some of the content (writing CVs and cover letters). Young people's views of preparation week are discussed further in the acceptability chapter.

6.3.3. Access fund

LDPs were responsible for administering the £5 per young person per day access fund. The qualitative findings suggest that it was applied inconsistently between LDPs. We found that there were young people

in the qualitative sample who were unaware of and/or did not receive access funds.[33] They fell into two categories:

- Young people who had no immediate need for this for travel to work (as they had access to other forms of support, such as a bus pass or a lift) but could have benefited from the fund for buying new clothes/shoes for work
- Young people who did not have any help with travel and could have benefited from this, such as those who had lost their Oyster card and were relying on bus drivers letting them on the bus

Others received the access fund and considered it essential for them to be able to attend their placements. This was echoed by LDP staff, who saw it as necessary to remove barriers that young people would otherwise face, especially participants who were on low incomes and receiving benefits.

The fact that it did enable some young people to take part suggests that it is **an important component of the programme which should be retained and more closely monitored.** This is supported by the feedback gathered from the young person's advisory group (YPAG). Participants were asked to reflect on what they felt young people needed to be able to participate and agreed that material/physical resources could be a barrier to engaging with the programme.

6.3.4.   Work placements

Our qualitative research highlighted variations in young people's experiences of the placements, especially in relation to the variety and amount of work, the tailoring of roles and adaptations, and the provision of in-work support.

Variety and amount of work

Young people were supposed to be offered roles that provided meaningful employment over the five weeks of the programme. Ideally, jobs were to be matched with young people's interests.

The extent to which employers could provide sufficient, varied work for the five-week period differed and had a bearing on young people's experiences of the programme. As discussed further below, this was influenced by a range of factors, most notably the type of employer and setting.

At one end of the spectrum, there were examples of young people not being given enough work to do or too much of the same type of work. This was associated with negative experiences, as young people found the work boring and repetitive and, in turn, felt they had gained limited skills.

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[33] In one example an LDP had access to free bus passes, which they provided to young people to help with travel, and so the access fund was not required and was instead put towards the end of programme celebration event. In other cases, it is unclear how the access fund was used, but it is possible that young people did receive it but were not aware, such as if it was paid as a lump sum.

> **Case illustration A**
>
> Jane was part of a larger group of young people (10+) working for a local community organisation. They described not having much to do and feeling like the work they were given was insubstantial.
>
> *"It seemed like they didn't have anything for us to do, so they just made up something for us to do on the side". (Young person, focus group 2, delivery partner A)*
>
> Here, the number of young people placed in the organisation is likely to have contributed to this. Indeed, youth workers shared their concerns about a lack of work for young people and thought that this was more of an issue in placements taking on a larger number. It is also worth noting that employers who said they found it challenging to provide sufficient and meaningful work attributed this to the placement length (they felt it was too long and found it difficult to fill) and the lack of planning time, which, if longer, would have meant they could plan and save work up for the young person to do.

The analysis also points to instances where young people valued their placement's lighter-touch responsibilities. These tended to be youth-work-based placements at LDPs, where young people were helping to run holiday clubs or activities. This possibly reflects the blurred lines between young people as participants in the Summer Jobs programme and young people as staff, which is unique to this type of role and may have led to young people viewing the roles less seriously than those placed with external employers. Youth workers and employers in this sector commented on the challenge of young people not taking the work seriously and the need to address this with young people.

> *"They'd stand and talk among themselves while the young people are doing the activity. That's not observing the young people. So, it was just reiterating the roles". (Employer, case study G)*

Having a sufficient workload and being exposed to different tasks/areas was associated with a positive experience of placement. This is discussed more in the acceptability chapter.

> **Case illustration B**
>
> David completed their placement at a local visitor attraction. They said they had been doing different tasks every day and learning a range of different skills. Their supervisor described this as a strategy to retain high levels of engagement:
>
> *"It's not giving them just five days of something that can bore them. It's trying to keep them engaged with the programme, with the work, and so they don't just get bored if they don't like it and just don't turn up".* (Employer, case study G)

On the other end of the spectrum, there were also examples of where the workload led to young people feeling overwhelmed and stressed. This was primarily a result of the type of workplace (fast paced, customer-facing environment) combined with the choice of location (busy, high footfall areas).

Tailoring or adjustments

The qualitative research found evidence of employers tailoring roles to suit a young person's needs and interests and making adaptations and adjustments in the workplace.

There were examples of jobs being tailored to young people's interests and needs (such as employers co-creating a job description with the young person or asking the young person during check-ins what they were enjoying). Where this was limited, the main barrier, especially in advance of the placement starting, related to the sharing of information on young people's needs and interests.

Employers offering multiple placements across different locations experienced **inconsistencies in the information they received** – they were sent background information on some young people and not others. This may have been driven by the differences in how LDPs communicated with employers. In this case, the member of staff coordinating the company's involvement emphasised how important it was to be able to share information with branch managers in advance, not only to help them manage the placement but also to secure their buy-in in the long term.

> *"I just think you need to be transparent with the managers and things because if you want them on board and to go ahead and help you out again with placements, then they need to know who they're getting and what the situation is. If not, then it puts them off next time, saying, 'Yes, I'll take somebody on board'". (Large employer)*

These data suggest that employers were motivated to create placements that met young people's needs and interests where possible. There were a range of examples in the qualitative sample of employers making adaptations and adjustments. Both employers and young people shared the following:

- **Gradually introducing expectations** and easing young people into the workplace

> *"I'll be honest, for the first two weeks, I took it a bit easy with them. I didn't want to scare them too much. Then, after the second week, I had a proper chat with them. I said, 'Look, the gloves are off now; you've had time to embed yourselves. Get your feet under the table. There are certain things that you need to change'". (Employer, case study G)*

- **Allowing young people space to deal with their emotions** – this included noticing when they needed to take a break or had found something difficult
- **Having a lenient approach to addressing punctuality** – cutting young people slack when it came to lateness

> *"You don't go harsh on them because they're 10 minutes, 15 minutes late. You say to them, 'Why were you late?'" (Employer, case study E)*

Some employers who gave these examples said that their approach was informed by previous experience working with young people or other vulnerable populations. This suggests that an employer's experience in this area should be considered when assessing their involvement in the programme or that employers could be provided with more guidance on potential issues and how to handle them. Employers themselves who felt inexperienced said they would appreciate training on how to work with young people (see the acceptability chapter). Youth workers also felt that voluntary or youth sector organisations had been better equipped to offer this flexibility and understanding. However, they also attributed this to other factors, including the following:

- Having been prepared well by LDPs in advance of taking part – this included briefing them about some of the challenges they were likely to face (such as with punctuality) and managing expectations.
- Having motivation – this included employers liking the programme in general (motivated by the social purpose) and being happy to provide support.

Youth workers did note variations in the approach of employers and said that some employers lacked empathy and understanding. They shared examples of young people being turned away from work for being late or due to safeguarding issues, which they felt were escalated without reason. For this reason, they felt that **working with employers who could take a more flexible approach to managing young**

people in the workplace should be a priority for year 2. They also recommended further training for employers on managing young people.

Summary: work placements

Ideally, the Summer Jobs programme should offer young people a realistic experience of the workplace and carrying out productive work. It is clear that many employers were able to offer stimulating and stretching roles and worked with young people to shape the roles; this was not always the case, and some young people reported having little to do. Beginning recruitment of employers and young people earlier for years 2 and 3 of delivery should make it easier to match young people to placements based on other areas of interest, and providing employers with more information on the background and experience of young people is likely to help. However, in future years, there should be a focus on working with employers to ensure placements are stimulating opportunities to carry out genuine tasks, as well as providing employers with training on how to effectively support young people in the workplace.

6.3.5. In-work support

Employers were required to provide young people with access to a workplace supervisor responsible for monitoring their attendance and performance during employment and, wherever possible, a workplace mentor to support them in adapting to the role.

The nature and frequency of communication between young people and employers was not always clear from the interviews with these groups, in some cases due to limited recall. Despite this, the qualitative research identified a range of methods of communication, which are listed below. It was typical for young people and employers to communicate via multiple methods, depending on the need.

- **Group/staff briefings and debriefs –** these were a key method of communication for youth-work-based or front-of-house roles, where daily staff briefings are standard practice. These focused on task allocation.
- **Messages** – .employers used text messages to send reminders to young people about start time, travel and uniform
- **One-on-one check-ins** – there was evidence of these taking place to varying degrees and frequencies. There were cases where young people said they were offered this and did not take it up, while others did not remember having any check-ins beyond being given their tasks. Where they did take place, the focus was primarily developmental, including training/instruction, feedback on performance and advice on future training and careers.
- **Ongoing informal conversations** – these were conversations that happened outside of formal meetings on an ad hoc basis in response to need. These were also developmental and well-being focused but also consisted of non-work related conversations, which were important for building rapport.

There were limited cases of young people in the qualitative sample being assigned a formal mentor. Instead, managers performed a hybrid role. There were examples of the supervisor and/or other members of staff taking on this role and providing pastoral support. These relationships had a positive impact on young people's overall experiences of the programme (discussed further in the acceptability chapter).

The analysis explored how and why the type and quality of in-work support varied. A number of factors were identified:

Relationships between employers and LDP/youth workers – where this relationship existed, it helped employers provide feedback in a supportive way. For example, an employer reported having ongoing conversations with a programme lead, which helped the youth worker prepare the young person to receive their feedback

"I think what was quite handy was [that] I think the youth service [has] had that discussion with [name], and then [name] kind of prepped her, so then the following day when she's come in, and we're having this meeting, she's kind of known what I'm going to say anyway, and she's kind of on the ball to receive it". (Employer, case study G)

It is worth noting that employers did not always feel supported by their LDPs, which affected their satisfaction with the programme. This is discussed further in the acceptability chapter.

Staff capacity problems acted as a barrier and were somewhat linked to the number of placements offered. An interviewee from a small organisation with limited capacity said that taking on more young people than planned had made it more challenging to provide support. Annual leave and staff absences were also a barrier to providing continuity of support, which, in one example, had negative repercussions for a young person who had formed a relationship with their line manager, who then went on annual leave.

Type of organisation/previous experience – as discussed above, employers with previous experience working with young people felt this helped them meet the support requirements of the programme. Having an existing employment programme also facilitated this – employers described adapting existing materials to support young people's onboarding and professional development. Youth workers also felt the quality of support was higher where individuals were clearly committed to the programme's social purpose and/or had been involved in the organisation's sign-up.

Summary: in-work support

Alongside the quality of the role, the support that they receive in the workplace is likely to be a significant factor in how successful a young person's placement is. It is clear that many employers were able to provide high-quality support, which was valued by young people. Ensuring this is the case for all young people as the programme expands will be a key determinant of how successful it is going forward.

6.3.6. Youth worker support

Having a dedicated youth worker assigned to each young person was a core component of the programme. LDPs were instructed to deliver three check-ins with young people to provide them with support in adjusting to the role and the expectations of the workplace, as well as an initial one-to-one in which they would help the young person complete registration forms and check their right-to-work documents. The qualitative research highlighted varying levels of adherence to this model as well as differences in the amount of support provided.

The feedback from youth workers and young people suggests that there was some variation in how the wraparound support was delivered.

Within the qualitative sample, high fidelity was characterised by LDPs delivering the initial one-to-one followed by three formal check-ins in weeks 1, 3 and 5 (and, as discussed further below, additional support on top of this). The initial one-to-one happened either at the point of registration or later during preparation week and was important for establishing a relationship and getting to know the young people on an individual basis. Providing youth work services as standard practice was a key enabler here, as it meant LDPs were set up in a way that meant they had both the staff and expertise to deliver the check-ins. In these cases, youth workers spoke of the check-ins as normal practice. While caseloads varied among youth workers (in the user satisfaction survey, LDP staff reported supporting an average of 11 young people), this did not seem to affect the delivery of the check-ins – the needs of young people appeared to be more influential and affected the amount of additional support required on top of the check-ins, rather than the check-ins themselves (explored further below).

There were examples of where the delivery of support varied from the intended model. These adaptations and the driving factors are discussed in turn.

For some young people who completed a placement with the LDP, their point of contact was often acting in the capacity of work supervisor and youth worker.

LDPs who had not planned to offer placements in-house found this challenging. While this concern wasn't reflected in the feedback from young people themselves, LDPs expressed concern that young people didn't have access to external, independent support, which they saw as one of the strengths of the programme.

> *"That's actually a strength of the programme, the one-to-one check-ins, because it gives them that space to have somebody to speak to outside of the organisation. It just needs to be considered. If we're hosting that placement, the young people aren't getting the same support". (Programme lead, case study B)*

In exceptional cases, youth workers had a remote relationship with young people due to geographical distance. In these cases, they relied on text messages and phone calls.

This made it difficult to maintain contact with young people. In the user satisfaction survey, 86% of LDP staff reported having had in-person check-ins, while 12% tailored their approach to the young person, and only 2% conducted them online (n=43).

Support was sometimes delivered in conjunction with the agencies who had referred young people to the programme.

This took various forms. In some cases, young people had the support of the professional who referred them (e.g. their pupil referral unit teacher) alongside the youth worker assigned to them by the LDP. In others, young people had the contact details of the LDP but were not necessarily assigned a youth worker. Instead, their support workers carried out check-ins as part of their existing visits or kept in touch with young people informally via texts/phone calls. This approach was taken by an LDP who felt this was the most efficient way to deliver the programme. They also noted it to be beneficial for the young person to have joined up support.

> *"If they've got support workers already, then that for me is a better way of delivering things because it just makes it feel a bit more rounded for all of them". (Programme lead, case study E)*

This was not seen negatively by the young people we interviewed, who had good relationships with their support workers. However, it is unlikely to be a feasible delivery model for referral agencies working to full capacity (discussed further in the acceptability chapter).

Youth workers from across LDPs agreed that the three mandatory check-ins were not sufficient for all young people.

The amount of additional support needed varied from person to person. Young people who received additional support needed help with a range of things, including communicating with their employers when running late, completing timesheets and dealing with problems at work. This took the form of additional check-ins and ad hoc phone calls/messages.

Youth workers saw this as their responsibility to provide and felt it was critical for retaining young people.

> *"If we'd have just done the one-to-one support and only done that and not been there for ad hoc, these young people would fail, and that would be down to us not supporting them correctly". (Youth worker, case study G).*

The capacity of LDPs to tailor the amount of support offered should be considered, especially if changes are made to the eligibility criteria in years 2 and 3.

6.3.7. Summary of adaptations made to the programme

Our research suggests that the Summer Jobs programme was generally delivered with fidelity to the original model; however, there are ways in which the programme was adapted, which we have highlighted above. The preparation week was adapted as designed by UK Youth with the core and flex approach, and youth workers appreciated this; however, in some cases, it was used for registration activities, limiting the time for preparation. In terms of placements, sometimes these appeared to have been constructed for the programme rather than having the structure to be genuine employment. Youth workers adapted the check-ins, conducting more check-ins with young people who needed them, conducting check-ins remotely with young people whom it was not possible to meet in person and in some instances, the youth worker support was provided by the external referral agency rather than an LDP youth worker. The access fund was inconsistently used but would have been beneficial for young people to reduce barriers to placement.

6.4. Key findings

- Despite the short timeframe for year 1 of delivery, UK Youth achieved all the prespecified targets for recruitment of young people, employers and LDPs.
- Retention of young people offered a placement was very high. However, a significant number of young people referred to the programme were not offered a placement or did not take one up. The reasons for this are likely to vary significantly and include challenges securing placements in some areas, young people not wanting to take up the placement they were offered, finding alternative employment or not responding to initial contact from the LDP.
- Overall, the cohort was highly vulnerable and displayed many of the characteristics associated with serious youth violence. However, we suspect some of the more subjective eligibility criteria may have been misapplied, possibly to ensure that young people who are some distance from serious violence could participate. In future years, setting requirements for increasing the volume of referrals from external agencies and the take-up of the programme among this group should help ensure the programme is reaching those most vulnerable to violence.
- Many of the placements were in third sector employers, and there is a need in year 2 to diversify the range of opportunities available and ensure more placements are offered in private and public sector employers.
- Some young people reported having little to do in their placement, so in year 2, there needs to be a focus on ensuring all placements provide meaningful work opportunities.
- Overall, the programme appears to have been delivered with a good level of fidelity. However, we identified some concerns about how the pre-employment training was delivered by some LDPs and the consistency with which the access fund was used.

6.5. Conclusion

Overall, we conclude that it is possible to deliver a programme which provides short-term, paid employment with high-intensity youth worker support to young people who are vulnerable to violence. Demand for the Summer Jobs programme from LDPs, employers and young people was high, and all the prespecified criteria for recruitment and retention were achieved. While a range of areas which could be improved in future years were identified, overall, the programme was delivered broadly as intended with a high degree of fidelity. This is a considerable achievement given the novelty of the scheme and the limited time available for design and mobilisation this year.

7. Findings: acceptability

7.1. Introduction

In order to more fully understand the value in continuing to deliver and evaluate the Summer Jobs programme beyond year 1, we explored whether it was seen as acceptable and valuable by the key stakeholders: young people, employers, youth workers, LDPs and referral agencies. The specific research questions are detailed within each section below.

Findings on acceptability for these stakeholder groups come from satisfaction surveys that young people, employers and LDP staff were asked to fill out at the end of the programme, as well as a series of interviews and focus groups with these groups. Below, we describe the findings by the stakeholder group and our suggestions for changes to increase acceptability next year.

7.2. Young people

We explored young people's views on the acceptability of the programme through five research questions:

- Did the young person feel the Summer Jobs programme is a valuable opportunity which develops skills and broadens experiences?
- What, if anything, in the programme could be changed to make it more valuable and acceptable?
- Were the employment placements on offer attractive, acceptable and a good match for the young person?
- Was the payment and the access fund enough?
- Did the young person receive the right amount and type of support to fully engage with the programme?

We set out their perceptions and experiences below, including about the employment placements, payments and support, and then detail their suggestions on changes which would make the programme more acceptable in future years. For the user satisfaction survey, we received a total of 149 responses from 396 young people who completed 60% of their placement (37%). Of these, 97% (n=145) were complete responses.[34] The satisfaction survey covered questions ranging from satisfaction with the Summer Jobs programme to how supported the young person felt and how helpful they found the programme.

7.2.1. Perceptions of the programme

Young people's motivations for signing up to the programme

Through our qualitative work, we identified three key motivators that influenced young people's decisions to take part.

1. **The summer period was a key attractor**, especially for younger people in the interview sample. They saw it as a chance to be productive or simply do something fun or new at a time when they would usually have little to do.

   "I just didn't want to be in the house doing nothing all day. I just wouldn't really be doing anything. I'd be going to the gym, maybe, but then after that, I'd just be lying in bed watching TV. I'm glad I can actually get something done during my day". (Young person, case study G)

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[34] Denominators throughout include all people who answered a particular question.

2. Young people saw the programme as an **opportunity to improve their employment prospects and gain experience**. For some, the programme appealed because it gave them a chance to gain experience in a specific sector or job role of interest, such as youth work or child care, and they saw Summer Jobs as a first step in a career. In some of these cases, the employer was an LDP or external training provider specialising in working with vulnerable young people (including those already involved with the criminal justice system), so the young person had an existing relationship with them, either as long-term service users or training programme graduates, and wanted to build on this relationship to gain professional skills.

For others, their expectations of the programme were less clearly defined, but it was viewed as an exciting opportunity to get real work experience, learn new skills and enhance their CVs. In particular, young people wanted to improve their communication skills and confidence. Although they did not have specific roles in mind, these young people felt the experience gained on the programme would give them more confidence to 'step into the workforce' and may lead to further opportunities in the future.

> *"I mean, I was open to anything. I literally said I was open to anything. I wasn't going to turn down anything. Obviously, if there was something that I wasn't used to or if it was new to me, I would go through with it just to get the work experience". (Young person, case study E)*

3. The programme offered an opportunity to earn money. The reason this was appealing varied for young people across the sample. It gave some the opportunity to be more financially independent. For others, it enabled them to pay for things they wanted to do over the summer. Others shared the money they earned with their parents.

As well as the practical benefit of earning money, the fact the programme was paid also made it more credible with young people, compared to a volunteering role or unpaid experience placement.

> *"We'd have a job, and I was excited that I was going to have my own job and not work experience because you don't get paid from work experience and actually do something [on] my own and get some knowledge and stuff. So yes, I was pretty excited". (Young person, case study G)*

Alongside the appeal of the programme itself, there were several factors that supported young people to sign up, including:

1. **Motivation to find employment.** Some young people had already been looking for a job over the summer when they heard about the programme. In some cases, they asked Youth Offending Team workers or other trusted adults if they could help them find work, which prompted them to discuss Summer Jobs.

2. **Encouragement from a trusted adult.** Linked to the above, for some young people, the recommendations or encouragement of trusted adults, including Youth Offending Team workers, teachers or family members, eased young people's concerns and persuaded them that the programme was a worthwhile opportunity.

> *"I know [my Youth Offending Team worker is] not going to fail me. I know they're not going to put me on to something that they know I'm not going to like. So, I was like, if they feel like I'm going to like it, I must like it type of thing. So, yes, I literally just trusted them". (Young person, case study E)*

3. **Knowing someone else on the programme.** Some young people were encouraged to sign up for the programme by friends who were also taking part.

Young people also discussed the barriers that either made it more difficult for them to take part or made the programme less appealing to them (though it should be noted that there is a potential bias since those in the qualitative sample had signed up and were on placements, we don't know the views of young people who didn't sign up and get placements). The barriers included:

1. **A lack of confidence due to limited previous work experience.** A range of concerns were raised, which included the amount of responsibility and whether they would be able to meet the demands of the job. For example, one young person who was working in a youth centre expressed concerns about whether they would be able to respond to any safeguarding incidents that occurred during their placement.

2. **The short and fixed-term nature of the opportunity.** This was particularly a barrier for young people who were unemployed and had been looking for work. They had concerns over whether taking part would lead to further opportunities or whether they would have to resume their job search after the programme.

3. **Concerns around mental health.** Young people with mental issues, such as depression and anxiety, were concerned about whether they would be able to cope with the demands of the placement. For example, a young person suffering from anxiety as a result of previous trauma raised concerns about working with other young people on the placement and, in particular, about being the victim of bullying. In this case, the young person's placement managers were able to discuss their concerns and agree on a process for supporting them in the event of any issues. This, in combination with encouragement from a relative, persuaded them that Summer Jobs would be a good opportunity to develop their confidence while gaining experience.

   > *"I think it was just not the staff but the other work placement people that were coming on to the course; I didn't know how they would react. I didn't know how they were going to be, and if they were going to be quite mean, be a bully in a way because that's what I suffered with, have been bullied". (Young person, case study B)*

4. The **location of the placements** may have been a barrier for some young people. The aim of the programme was that young people would have to travel no longer than 30 minutes. However, the time taken to travel to work varied among young people who took part in the qualitative research, ranging from less than 30 minutes to, more exceptionally, over an hour. Though this was not discussed in detail, it was suggested that the cost of the transport to distant placements was the primary concern, rather than the long travel time. In these instances, providing the cost of the travel through the access fund helped to address this barrier.

5. Some young people were **unable to get a placement in their area of interest.** During an interview with a referrer, we heard about a young person who signed up for the programme but decided not to take part, as their LDP was unable to offer them a placement in the engineering sector. For this young person, it was specific sector experience rather than general working experience that had appealed to them.

7.2.2.   Experience/satisfaction with the programme

Overall, 95% (n=141/148) of young people who responded to the survey were satisfied[35] with the Summer Jobs programme. Young people's satisfaction with various aspects of the programme is discussed in more detail below.

Registration form and survey

93% (n=137/148) of young people were satisfied with the registration process.

Note: in the qualitative research, young people struggled to recall much of the registration process, and even with prompting, it was, at times, difficult to establish which part of the registration process they were referring to.

Overall, young people in the qualitative sample found completing the registration form easy and straightforward, though some found the process quite long. They did not indicate strong feelings about the

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[35] For satisfaction questions, it includes those reporting being very satisfied or satisfied.

process and described it as boring but easy and something which they understood was necessary to take part in the programme.

Young people reported receiving varying levels of support in the registration process; some described completing forms independently online, while others did so at programme open days with support provided by the LDPs. In some cases, the referral partners (e.g. Youth Offending Team workers or teachers) either completed the registration process directly or supported the young people through the process. Young people found this support helpful for interpreting questions and providing information they may not have known how to access otherwise, such as medical information.

Some young people felt that although the process was straightforward for them, others may find it difficult. This was particularly perceived to be the case for younger applicants, who may not be able to easily access the information required to complete the registration process, such as their national insurance number or proof of address. This was echoed in the interviews with LDPs.

The main criticism of the registration process was the time it took to complete. These views appeared to relate mostly to the baseline survey. Young people also expressed concerns about some of the questions they were asked as part of the registration process. While they were not always able to recall which part of the registration process they were referring to, their comments appeared to refer to the questions asked in the baseline survey and the questions they were asked in registration to assess their eligibility (discussed further in the evaluability chapter). Linked with this, some young people were worried that answering the questions honestly may impact their place on the programme, as in their previous experiences, their responses would have been received negatively. In these cases, it helped to have the guidance of a trusted adult when completing the registration to explain the purpose of the questions and reassure young people that their answers would not negatively impact their access to the programme.

> *"She asked me over the phone whether I've ever been kicked out, and when I said…I was going to lie and say no, but when I said yes, she was like, 'That's a good thing'. I was like, 'Oh', because I thought it would probably make me lose it. That was the only weird part about it, the fact that she was all right about it because normally I've never had that response". (Young person, focus group 2, LDP A)*

This aligned with the perceptions of youth workers and LDP managers, who told us that young people found some of the questions intrusive and preferred not to associate themselves with being at risk of violence or other elements of the eligibility criteria (discussed further in the acceptability and evaluability chapters). There were concerns that this led to some young people not being able to access the programme despite meeting the eligibility criteria. **This suggests that it will be beneficial to carefully explain the purpose of both the eligibility criteria and baseline survey to young people prior to their completion.**

Placement matching

The process of how young people were matched for placements is discussed in-depth in the deliverability chapter, and in this section, we focus on young people's experiences of and satisfaction with the process. In the user satisfaction survey, **83%** (n=123/148) of young people said they were satisfied with the placement they were offered, **89%** (n=132/148) with the organisation where they did their placements and **84%** (n=125/148) with their day-to-day tasks at their placement.

The factors that influenced the acceptability of placement matching fit into two broad categories: those associated with the placement matching process and those associated with the placements they received.

The factors associated that most influenced the acceptability of the **placement matching process** were:

1. **Having a variety of placements to choose from.** Some young people said they would have liked to know more about the range of placements on offer. They felt this would have given them a greater sense of agency and an opportunity to choose a placement that was better suited to their interests and needs.

    "[It would be beneficial to have] like more broad options, and you get to choose because if you told me, 'Oh, we only have [employer 1] and [employer 2]', I'm gonna be forced to choose one of them, but maybe I could have other options and say what I really want. Because that's like trying to give someone a free will to make a decision". (Young person, focus group 1, LDP H)

Some of the young people who were given a choice of placements later said they would like a wider variety of placements to choose from.

However, being allocated a placement did not necessarily contribute negatively to a young person's experience of the matching process. In some cases, young people were allocated placements which aligned with their interests and provided an opportunity to build skills or complete placements in a familiar environment, all of which were viewed positively (discussed further below).

2. **Delays and changes to placement allocations.** There were a range of reasons for delays and changes to the placement allocations, including late onboarding and employers withdrawing from the programme or no longer being able to work with the young people they were allocated. This was a stressful experience for the young people, some of whom were unsure whether they would receive an alternative placement.

    "When it got to the last couple of days of the training period, just before we were going to placements, we were still feeling a bit, like, stressed. For me, I still didn't really know what I would be doing…I was so stressed; if I wasn't accepted, what am I going to do for the rest of the summer and everything?" (Young person, focus group 1, LDP H)

The factors associated with the **placements** themselves that most influenced acceptability included:

1. **Being allocated a placement which aligned with their interests.** This included placements in sectors of interest, such as youth work, sports coaching and childcare, and roles that the young people felt they would enjoy more broadly, such as retail work. In the case of the former, some young people had signed up for the programme with the expectation that they would be placed with a specific employer. In some cases, young people had already completed training programmes with their employers, and they had asked to complete their Summer Jobs placement with these employers specifically.
2. **Being allocated a placement that they thought would build their skills and experience.** For some young people, any opportunity to get work experience was seen as positive, and they were less concerned about the specific placement, role or employer they were matched with.
3. **The location of the placement.** Some young people did not want to be placed in particular areas because of concerns about their safety or because of people they knew in those areas that they felt would be detrimental to their placement. In one example, a young person was initially placed with an employer in an area of London they didn't want to go to. They raised these concerns and were offered another placement in a different area.

    "[There are] certain places because of where I'm from, I can't really go, but [this] isn't one of them. Even if it was the case, then I would just go to [their Youth Offending Team Worker] and tell him that, 'I don't feel like I can be in this area on a day-to-day basis because it's not safe for me'". (Young person, case study E)

Pre-employment preparation

In the user satisfaction survey, **91%** (n=134/148) of young people reported being satisfied with the preparation week. From the qualitative sample, young people's experiences and perceptions of the value of the pre-employment preparation week were mixed. Those who enjoyed the pre-employment preparation week found it fun and informative and said it helped them to prepare for placements.

> *"The week was actually fun. It felt like an induction week. We [were] getting prepared for work, but we literally all had fun". (Young person, case study G)*

Specifically, they felt it helped them:

1. **Understand professional standards and expectations.** Young people felt they learned about workplace etiquette, work ethic, punctuality and attendance.
2. **Develop skills needed for their placements.** In particular, young people felt the preparation week had helped to improve their communication skills ahead of placements.
3. **Identify skills that they felt they could improve during their placements.**

> *"It also helped me gauge what I could actually work towards and improve myself on, which helped a lot, and obviously, I started improving myself on it, based on it. Yes, it was good". (Young person, case study B)*

For these young people, the activities were relevant, challenging and engaging, and the week felt well-organised. In particular, young people enjoyed the ice-breaker activities, which helped them get to know each other and make friends. They were also seen as a good way to make the week accessible for young people suffering from anxiety or depression.

However, there were also young people who had less positive experiences during the preparation week. These mixed perceptions of the week may have been in part due to variations in content and delivery provided by the LDPs (see the fidelity - preparation week section). In particular, when the preparation week had been used to complete the registration activities, young people found it less helpful. They had difficulty remembering the week and what they learned and were unsure what the purpose was. Feedback from the YPAG suggests that the perception of preparation week was also dependent on young people's previous experiences and confidence levels.

Support in the workplace

Young people were asked to rate how supported they felt by various groups involved in the delivery of the programme. **91%** (n=132/145) felt supported by their supervisor at their placement and **93%** (n=136/146) by their colleagues.

The qualitative research highlighted that **positive relationships with supervisors and mentors** were valued by the young people and contributed to their positive experiences in the following ways:

- **Building confidence.** They helped young people to build confidence in their abilities when they were feeling nervous, as well as feel able to communicate their needs and preferences. This, in turn, enabled young people to get more out of their placement experiences.
- **Providing motivation.** Young people told us that the workplace support they received motivated them to learn and improve over the course of the placements. In particular, they described how positive relationships enabled supervisors to provide feedback and push the young people.
  - *"Just that motivation; I want to become better every day because I knew he was going to be there. He was the one introducing me to everyone else, like all the other managers, all his people within the workplace". (Young person, case study E)*

There were several factors that contributed to young people building positive relationships with their supervisors. In particular, young people appreciated it when supervisors:

1. **Took an interest in them.** Young people appreciated it when supervisors took and interest in them and got to know them on a personal as well as professional level

   "He was just trying to find out more about me and what I want to do. I feel like that's where the bond started because we had mutual interests and wants and needs". (Young person, case study E)

2. **Were reassuring and understanding**. Young people appreciated supervisors' understanding, for example, when they made errors, had personal issues which affected their work or were unable to attend placements due to illness

   "I remember that there was a time when [I was] not really being myself at work with my private issues. So my mood was really low that day, and she found out, and she told me that 'It's okay because we're all human', and she [reassured] me that if I feel that I'm not able to carry on my work, I can take a break". (Young person, non-case-study, LDP L)

3. **Treated the young person as an adult and colleague**. Young people valued being treated like adults and contrasted this with a teacher–pupil-style relationship. As an example, it was important to young people that feedback was provided in a way that was constructive and didn't make them feel targeted.

4. **Provided regular and ongoing feedback and communication.** Where there was a lack of communication (being left alone for long periods of time with nothing to do), this had a negative impact on the young person's experience.

5. **Had a strong rapport and informal dynamic.** It was important to young people to have someone who they could relate to. This informal, non-hierarchical approach may be especially important to young people in this cohort, who could be more likely to have negative experiences of authority.

   "Because in my past, I've had problems with authority, but obviously with here, he's not even – how do you explain it? You can actually talk to him and not feel like you need to step on eggshells around him". (Young person, case study B)

Some young people also discussed their experiences of negative relationships with colleagues and the impact that had on their experience. Factors contributing to these negative experiences included:

1. **Feeling excluded by colleagues.** For example, a young woman working in sports coaching felt the senior coach she worked with ignored her, possibly due to her gender.

2. **A lack of communication and support.** For some young people, this meant they didn't understand what they needed to be doing or felt there was a lack of work for them to engage in.

   "We were left on our own quite a lot, so we had to make it all on our own. It was hard because we had to constantly be asking for support for what we were meant to be doing because there was no communication between the six of us and the worker". (Young person, focus group 2, LDP A)

Youth worker

Young people's interactions with youth workers varied according to the model of delivery followed by the LDP, and in some cases, this meant that young people were not always aware they had a youth worker (e.g. when their youth worker was also acting in their mentor or supervisor role). 95% (n=140/147) of young people felt supported by their youth worker.

The qualitative research found that young people were positive about the support they received from youth workers, particularly when issues arose on their placement and they didn't feel able to discuss these

directly with their supervisors. These findings aligned with those from the qualitative interviews with youth workers, who described working with both young people and employers to resolve issues.

Young people's needs in terms of frequency of support differed, and they appreciated when the support provided matched their needs. Some young people felt the three prescribed check-ins were sufficient, particularly when they hadn't experienced any issues on their placements. Others considered their youth workers to be a safety net they could contact when they needed reassurance or support.

> *"I think it just serves to give us some reassurance, just in case we need to fall back on some of the help and someone there to help you". (Young person, focus group 1, LDP H)*

This was reflected in practice as some young people contacted their youth workers to request support with specific issues that arose on their placements. When this occurred, youth workers worked with the young person and employer to resolve the issue. For example, one young person became distressed while attempting to complete a task on their placement. They called their youth worker, who spoke to their supervisor on their behalf, prompting them to check in on the young person and provide support and reassurance.

Young people highlighted that youth workers were easy to contact and highly responsive, which was reassuring, particularly when issues occurred.

> *"It was really easy to message one of them, and then they'd message you back straight away, really". (Young person, focus group 1, LDP H)*

Salary and access fund

In the user satisfaction survey, **88%** (n=130/147) of young people reported being satisfied with the payment they received. There were two main factors contributing to this:

1. **The amount they received.** Young people described the amount of the salary as good or fair for the hours they worked. For some, particularly the younger participants, it was higher than expected, especially for their age and the number of hours they were working.

   > *"For my age, the money was really good. So it was kind of shocking because, I don't know, I was expecting it to be minimal pay, but I was actually getting over what I should for my age, so it was good". (Young person, focus group 2, LDP A)*

However, other young people felt that the salary could have been higher to reflect the fixed-term nature of the programme, as some young people had a limited window to earn money before returning to education.

> *"Pay, it was okay…As much as it's quite good for that amount of hours and our age, I feel like it could have been a little bit more, just because it's only a summer programme." (Young person, non-case-study, delivery partner F)*

2. **The way it was paid.** The salary was paid weekly, which was described as helpful and motivating. Practically, this helped young people to manage their money and meant they could cover weekly expenses, such as travel, without worrying. Young people enjoyed having a steady income, and some found this motivating.

   > *"I found it good, every week, pay, a week after, pay; I felt like I was working towards something. I was always going to work and knowing that I was going to get paid for the work that I do". (Young person, case study E)*

There were some issues across the sample, which resulted in some young people not receiving the correct or expected amount. However, where this occurred, young people reported issues to their LDPs and felt they were resolved quickly.

The access fund was applied inconsistently and at the discretion of the LDPs, which meant that there were young people in the qualitative sample who were not aware of it and did not receive it (discussed further in the deliverability chapter).

However, those who received it said it was an important factor in their attending their placements. As expected, this was particularly the case for young people who had further to travel.

> *"The transport being paid for [has helped me]; that's the only reason I can say [my attendance was] so high. If we had to fund our own transport, it would be a lot worse because, obviously, getting up here is very hard for me". (travelled up to 1 hour 45 minutes to get to placement) (Young person, case study B)*

Other young people were unaware of the access fund and did not receive support with their travel to their placements. In these cases, young people reported paying for travel from their salary but felt able to pay for travel because their salary was paid weekly.

> *"I didn't need [financial help with travel] because I was getting paid weekly. It [wasn't] like I had to wait until the end of the month". (Young person, case study E)*

The importance of the access fund was highlighted by our YPAG, who felt that the most important thing other young people needed to be ready to participate in the Summer Jobs was physical resources, in particular, to be able to travel to work and to buy appropriate clothes (or uniform).

Programme hours, length and timing

Hours

The hours were broadly acceptable to young people. They were perceived as reasonable, manageable and, in some cases, flexible. Some young people would have liked the option to work additional hours and be paid for this.

Young people enjoyed starting later in the day and finishing earlier, which allowed them time to get up and still enjoy the rest of the day after work. Some young people compared this favourably to school.

> *"[It's a good] space to work in because you get enough time to wake up. Because I don't live far, just one bus and walking down, and then after, I work until 3:00, and after 3:00 o'clock, I've still got the rest of the day left to do what I want to do". (Young person, case study E)*

However, there were also young people who wanted the opportunity to work additional hours and to be paid for this. As well as increasing their salary, they felt this would have been a useful experience, as most jobs outside of the programme would have longer working hours.

Length and timing

The programme timing was positive for young people, many of whom were looking for a job or even just something to do over the summer break. However, some of those not in education and training were put off by the fixed-term nature of the programme.

Young people at the lower end of the programme age bracket, in particular, discussed being attracted to the programme because there was nothing to do over the summer, and they wanted an opportunity to do something productive. In some cases, young people in education and training were already looking for a fixed-term job opportunity over the summer break.

However, the fixed-term nature of the programme was also highlighted as a concern for young people who were not in education or training and were looking for longer-term or permanent employment. For this

group, there were concerns that the programme would not lead to longer-term opportunities and they would need to resume their job search after the programme.

> *"I think my main concern was probably the fact that, especially for me, was that it was just a summer job programme… on the one hand, it was like, oh, this is good because it gives me something to do during the summer and earn a bit of money. On the other hand, it was like, will anything come out of this afterwards, or will I have to go back to finding a job?" (Young person, focus group 1, LDP H)*

This suggests that highlighting to young people how the programme can improve their employability and may lead to further opportunities with placement employers may improve the acceptability of the programme timing, particularly for young people not in education or training. The intent was for young people to be given a letter of recommendation at the end of the programme; however, we understand that this was not consistently used this year. This has been shown in a study of an SYEP in the US to boost employment prospects.

7.2.3.   Summary

The Summer Jobs programme was highly acceptable to the young people who participated in it. They perceived it as a good opportunity to do something productive over the summer, gain experience and earn money, although those not in education were concerned by the short-term nature of the programme. Young people would have liked a greater range of placements better matched to their interests and, in some cases, were frustrated by the limited tasks they were given in the placement. The payment was felt to be good, especially for those in the lower age range. However, there was inconsistent awareness of the access funds and more communication to LDPs around how to use this is needed next year. Young people formed positive relationships with both their youth workers and placement supervisors and felt well-supported in the programme. There were examples of youth workers acting as a bridge between young people and placement supervisors, which was especially positive.

7.2.4.   Recommendations for improving acceptability and value

Our qualitative research identified several recommendations from young people for improving the acceptability of the programme in future years. These included:

Recruiting young people

Overall, young people felt the programme was a valuable opportunity for themselves and young people 'like them' and had suggestions for how to improve the reach of the programme. In particular, they suggested advertising on social media and holding or attending local community events (such as sports tournaments) to make more young people aware of the opportunity.

Though the recruitment approach was carefully designed to reach the young people most at risk of violence, **these approaches may support recruitment in an efficacy trial if the existing channels fail to result in sufficient referrals.**

Registration

The qualitative findings highlighted that young people found some of the questions in the baseline survey weird or random and wanted more communication and clarity on how their answers would be used. Similarly, there were concerns about eligibility questions. In some cases, young people reported questioning whether to omit key information because of concerns it may negatively impact their application.

This suggests that young people should be given **explicit communication on why these questions are being asked and how their answers will be used**. Where possible and accurate, it should be made clear that the response will not negatively impact their application.

Placement matching

There were two main suggestions for improving the matching process:

1. Provide young people with a **wider variety of placements** and, where possible, give them an opportunity to choose or request a placement that aligns with their interests. In particular, young people would have liked to have seen a broader range of sectors included in the placement options and specifically mentioned construction and engineering.
2. Tailor **placements** more closely to young people's interests.

Pre-employment preparation

Based on the mixed experiences of young people in the pre-employment preparation week, there are several areas for improvement for the pilot and efficacy trial.

1. **The purpose and importance of the pre-employment training week in preparing young people for their placement should be made clear**, as some participants told us they were not aware of this. It may help to outline what content will be covered and how this will support them on their placements.
2. Linked with the above, the **registration process should be completed before the pre-employment preparation week** to allow the week to focus on training and preparation.
3. Where possible, the preparation week could include some **tailoring to young people's placements.** In particular, young people would like:
   a. More and earlier information about their placements, such as where they would be placed, what their roles might involve and whether there are any additional requirements (e.g. uniforms or dress codes)
   b. Activities or training to prepare them for their placements specifically
4. **Some tailoring of the content to the needs and ages of the young people would be useful**. In particular, older or more experienced applicants may benefit from activities tailored more specifically to their needs and experience.

Placement

Our work highlighted two main recommendations for improving the acceptability of placements:

1. **Ensure young people are supported** by colleagues, supervisors and mentors (discussed further in the deliverability chapter).
2. Provide young people with a **defined role or responsibilities** and ensure they have enough work to do. Some employers may benefit from training on this.

7.3. Employers

The three research questions explored with employers were:

- Do they feel this is a valuable scheme which they want to continue to engage with?
- Do they feel the support they are given is sufficient to support the young people?
- Do they make the financial contribution requested? Is the level of financial contribution acceptable to employers of different sizes, and are changes needed to optimise the number and size of employers participating?

We first present perceptions of different aspects of the programme, including support and the financial contribution, and then make suggestions for ways to improve acceptability. From employers, we received a total of 55 responses to the user satisfaction survey, of which 85% (*n*=47) were complete responses. This includes 42 unique responses[36] out of 90 companies to which young people were matched and started a placement.

7.3.1.   Perceptions of the programme

Overall ratings of satisfaction from employers were strong, although lower than for young people, with **80%** (n=39/49) saying that they were satisfied with the overall programme.

Onboarding

Just over two-thirds (**69%**) of employers said that they were satisfied with the onboarding process (n=34/49). The qualitative interviews highlighted some of the issues experienced, the main one being that employers were onboarded very close to the placements starting: in some cases, only the Friday before young people began their placements on Monday. Because of this, employers felt the lead into the programme was rushed, which meant they received information later than was ideal and that they had limited opportunities to ask questions and prepare for the placements.

To address this, employers suggested a **longer lead time for the programme**. This was driven by wanting more information about the young people they were likely to be working with so they could adequately prepare for the placements. Some employers felt that the information that was provided lacked sufficient detail.

> *"The passport[37] included a few things…frustrations…. We knew a little bit, but as I say, coming from my educational background and working with SEN [special educational needs] and statemented young people, the information you would normally receive about a young person is a lot more in-depth CAMHS [child and adolescent mental health services] statements and things like that mental health and what have you. There's a lot more to go out in terms of preparation for triggers for young people and that side of things. We had none of that information". (Employer, case study B)*

Some employers, including those with high levels of experience, suggested it would be helpful to have at least one **meeting with the young people they would be working with prior to placements starting.**

> *"Crucially, with at least two meetings of the young person within that four weeks [suggested lead in time]. Normally, with our training programme, I meet people three times before they start: once in their space, once in a neutral space and then once here with the tour, like I gave you today. Then somebody comes back for an hour's induction, and then they do an hour first shift in their chosen station before their role commences properly. So, I would expect no less than that, really. It doesn't matter how long it is, but to have met the person three times at least before they begin training". (Employer, case study E)*

Without this, employers felt they didn't know enough about young people's skills and interests, which in some cases, made it difficult to place them in the organisation, match them to an appropriate supervisor and plan for their placement time.

While these issues were perceived to be largely due to the limited lead-in time, employers who were registered for the programme earlier also expressed a desire for more proactive communication after they had signed up and during the onboarding phase. This suggests that **providing clarity around what to**

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[36] Here, we define unique as a unique company. Some companies had multiple staff members who responded to the survey. Please note that where young people worked at the same company in different regions, this company has only been counted once.
[37] The passport was information provided to the employer by the LDP about the young person.

expect and when and providing employers with the opportunities to ask questions would be beneficial to employers regardless of when they registered.

Employer training

Employers were provided with training prior to young people joining their organisation. This included a background to the programme, an opportunity to meet their LDP, programme logistics and resources available, how to support young people, and safeguarding. They were also provided with the following resources: a one-to-one checklist, a young person placement workbook, mock interview questions and guidance on giving feedback. Employers' perceptions of the pre-programme training were mixed. Some felt the training was good and prepared them sufficiently for the placements, while others felt it lacked information on how to work with the young people engaged in the programme and opportunities to ask questions and troubleshoot problems.

There was some correlation between the experience employers had working with young people similar to those participating in the programme and the extent to which the training met their needs, though there were exceptions to this: some more experienced employers did not find the training helpful.

Employers who found the training less helpful felt both the content and delivery of the training could have been improved. Regarding the content, they felt that this was vague and focussed too heavily on processes, such as payment and safeguarding, and there was a lack of information about how to work with the young people. Specifically, they would have liked more information about what to expect from the young people, how working with them would be different from working with other employees and how to support them when issues arose. This was particularly the case for employers with little experience of working with young people like those on the programme.

> *"I didn't find it particularly useful, personally. It didn't really tell me what to expect or who [we] would be working with – or what we needed to do…. As someone who's never given work experience to anyone, and we've just agreed to go on this programme, I would have preferred scenarios or examples of what we could be doing". (Employer, case study G)*

Employers also noted that some of the content covered in the training related to processes that were later changed and that these changes were not communicated clearly to them.

There were two key issues highlighted with the delivery of the employer training.

1. **Format.** The training was delivered in a three-hour online seminar, which employers described as long and intense. Some found it hard to engage with the training and, due to the number of employers attending, felt unable to ask questions and left part way through.

   > *"I'll be honest, I didn't attend all of it. It was a very intense, very long course. I know it's impossible to have it just for one company, but I would have preferred a one-to-one, to be honest with you. There [were] quite a lot of other people, and we've all got different ways of managing. I didn't feel confident. I didn't feel happy. There were a lot of strong characters in the meeting. You didn't have a chance to ask a question". (Employer, case study E)*

2. **Timing.** The initial training was conducted before some of the employers were onboarded. These employers were able to access a recording of the online training. Views of the recording were mixed, with some employers finding this both helpful and sufficient and others highlighting that it meant they were unable to ask questions and troubleshoot issues.

Some employers, particularly those with high levels of experience working with young people, were more positive about the training, and some found it helpful. These employers highlighted the clear direction of key processes, such as timesheeting and documenting young people's progress.

During registration and pre-placement

Support and communication from UK Youth was generally perceived to be good, but employers would have liked more support from LDPs. In particular, they noted the following challenges:

Primarily, as detailed above, **employers wanted more information about the young people** they were working with in advance of the placements so that they could tailor placements to suit the young people and put support in place for them.

While employers had good relationships with UK Youth, **they were unsure of who their LDPs were and did not have direct contact details for them**. This may have been more of an issue for large employers who offered a large number of placements across multiple areas and, because of this, worked with several LDPs.

> *"We didn't feel like there was a clear line of who was the point of contact when things weren't going totally right with those young people. So we did have a contact at [LDP], but I know there probably was also a local youth services contact, but I don't feel that we had a really great introduction with which teams we should reach out to when we were having challenges engaging with the young people". (Employer, case study E)*

Because of these issues, some employers also would have liked **more structured support from LDPs, particularly during registration and at the start of the placements, when they felt issues were more likely to occur**. These employers felt an introductory call with the LDP would have given them an opportunity to ask for additional information about young people, provide some information about their organisation and their expectations and discuss how to support young people during placements.

However, despite the perceived lack of proactive support from LDPs, employers did find them highly responsive and helpful when questions were raised with them. In some cases, employers phoned LDPs, and this gave them the opportunity to ask questions about the young people they would be working with.

During placement

Overall, employers also found LDPs and youth workers highly responsive during placements and found the support they received to be helpful. In some cases, employers worked closely with youth workers and referral partners to support young people. For example, one employer told us that when they told a youth worker about some issues with the young person's performance, the youth worker spoke with the young person directly and prepared them for the feedback that they were going to receive. The employer felt this helped the young person to take the feedback onboard.

> *"The youth workers kind of prepped [the young person], so then the following day when she's come in, and we're having this meeting, she's kind of known what I'm going to say anyway, and she's kind of on the ball to receive it". (Employer, case study G)*

Despite the positive reactive support, some employers expected more guidance and support from LDPs and youth workers and would have liked a more structured approach to collaboration, for example, an introductory meeting, particularly earlier on in the placement.

In some cases, employers did receive this more regular support. For example, after a safeguarding incident occurred earlier on in a placement, one young person's youth worker checked in with the employer via weekly phone calls. The employer described this level of support as the right amount.

There were also examples of employers who described receiving very little proactive support but not finding this an issue, given previous experience working with vulnerable young people and adults more broadly.

The qualitative research findings suggest that in future years, the employer–LDP relationship may benefit from more structure, particularly during registration and earlier on in the placements, but that this structure could be tailored towards the employer's individual experience and needs.

Young person engagement and attendance

In the user satisfaction survey, **77%** (n=38/49) of employers said that they were satisfied with young persons' attendance and **80%** (n=39/49) with their fulfilment of tasks. Of employers responding to the survey, **79%** (n=38/48) agreed or strongly agreed that the young person added positive value to the existing team.

Our qualitative research helps to explain the lower satisfaction with attendance and the actions that employers took to support young people. They found that issues with attendance occurred for a number of reasons, including:

1. **Lack of professionalism or engagement with placements.** In some cases, young people didn't turn up to placements without providing a reason or letting employers know.

2. **Planning and process issues.** In one example, two young people did not show up for their placement in the final week, and employers were unable to get in touch with them. They contacted their youth workers and asked if they could get in touch with the young people and later found out that the young people had returned to college. The employers found this frustrating, as they had arranged at short notice for the young people to complete the final week of the placement with the team they had most enjoyed working with.

3. **Personal situations.** In some cases, this was thought to be due to complex home lives or personal situations. For example, we were told about a young person who had to leave their placement to look after their brother after their mother was called into work at short notice.

   "There was a time when he had a phone call from his mum saying that she'd been called into work, so he had to go home and look after his brother, so I had to let him go and look after his younger brother, but I then had a discussion with him about how this placement is important. That it's a paid placement, that it's him bringing money into, bringing income into the household as well, about giving him opportunities". (Employer, case study B)

Employers took steps to support young people's attendance, including:

1. **Setting expectations.** Employers spoke with young people early on in placements or after issues had arisen to clarify the importance of attending on time and letting supervisors know if they would be unable to attend

   "We had quite honest conversations with the young people, and I supported the officer in my team to…she felt anxious about it because she's not managed someone before, so we did script a bit of a conversation about the importance of coming in to work on time and making sure that you come in ready to work, and that if you're going to be late, you'll inform us. That did make things better, and it was good for them to understand that this isn't turning up to a youth club". (Employer, case study E)

2. **Providing reminders.** In some cases, employers phoned or messaged young people every morning to remind them to get up and leave for work and to check that they would make it into the placement.

There was a wide range of engagement reported by the employers interviewed. For employers, good engagement was typically characterised by young people with good attendance, punctuality, enthusiasm and willingness to work and attempt new tasks and those making contributions to team discussions. For example, an employer described a well-engaged young person as:

"Actually, a really nice young lad. Quite quiet as you would imagine coming into any kind of work-based scenario but very proactive from the outset. He actually sought out tasks [and] didn't sit on things – was sort of what we'd describe as a bit of a grafter. He was at his best when he was cracking on and doing things". (Employer, case study B)

At the other end of the spectrum, employers found that some young people struggled with engagement, which was typically characterised by issues with basic professionalism (using phones during working hours, refusing to do tasks, talking back to or arguing with colleagues, and not understanding professional boundaries).

"The other one is quite negative and is quite difficult to get motivated. Everything's always really boring, they don't want to do it. There are always negative comments about it; they're always just sat on the phone. So, it's managing that in a way that they'll respond, which is quite difficult because, obviously, we can't force them to do anything. We're still trying to find what motivates them to want to work!" (Employer, case study G)

There were various barriers that employers felt made it difficult for young people to engage with placements. These included:

1. **Difficulty understanding and adjusting to professionalism**. Though task completion was not a direct focus of the interviews, some employers felt that young people's abilities to engage with certain tasks were limited due to their lack of some basic professional skills. These included setting up meetings, sending professional emails, responding to and making calls with a professional telephone manner and needing general advice about how to behave at work. Employers felt this could be addressed by providing information and training on these skills during the preparation week.

2. **Placements that did not align with the young people's interests.** For example, an employer found that a young person experienced an intense emotional reaction to the office environment they were placed in earlier in the placement and struggled to engage because of this. However, when the young person joined a team that did physical work later in the placement, the team found they were much more engaged.

3. **Other responsibilities that the young people had.** In some cases, young people were asked to look after or support family members, which impacted their ability to attend or engage with their placements.

4. **Aspects of the young people's lives which affected their ability to engage with their work.** For example, one employer found that a less engaged young person was coming into work tired every day, worried that they were not sleeping much. This resulted in the young person putting their head on the desk and sleeping during a meeting.

5. **Lack of confidence, particularly at the start of the placement.** Employers felt this impacted their ability to engage with and contribute to meetings.

In the qualitative sample, though employers did not mention the young people's ages as a contributing factor, we note that where employers experienced issues with engagement, they tended to be working with those aged 16–18. Despite this, there were also examples of employers who found that young people within this age range engaged well with their placements.

Some employers found it difficult to manage young people who engaged less well with their placements. This was particularly the case for those with limited experience of participating in employability programmes with vulnerable young people. However, there were facilitators which employers felt helped young people to engage. These included:

1. **Setting clear expectations** at the start of the placement on professionalism and following these up with young people where needed. Linked with this, some employers said young people completed a

rigorous induction process and had clear lines of support and that this may have supported engagement.

2. **Providing key information,** such as weekly rotas, in an accessible way was perceived to support attendance and punctuality. For example, one employer created a WhatsApp group with the young people and pinned their weekly rotas in the chat.

3. **Treating young people as adults** and giving them real responsibilities within the team. This aligns with the findings from the qualitative research with young people, which discussed the supervisors' behaviours that made them feel supported.

4. **Encouraging and validating young people's contributions** to help them feel part of the team

   "Getting them to contribute to those team meetings, because we're like, 'You're a team member. You're one of us. Your contributions are valued and valid'. So, we would say what we're asking, and then we'd be like, 'We're just going to give you a minute to think about it, and everyone's going to contribute'". (Employer, case study G)

Financial contribution

The financial contribution by employers was explained to them as a contribution towards the cost of the young people's wages. It was set at between £200 and £750 per placement, depending on organisational turnover. This had two roles: helping towards the overall cost of the programme and generating commitment from employers. The requirement for employers to pay the contribution was lifted to address challenges with securing sufficient placements for the programme. Only nine of the 90 employers paid this contribution. We set out to explore views of this contribution, although our findings are limited by the low number of employers participating in our qualitative work who either paid it or were aware of it.

For those who paid the financial contribution, the amount paid was perceived as fair, particularly given the young people's wages and the pre-employment preparation that was covered by the programme.

However, despite a perception that the amount paid was fair, some employers would have preferred not to make a contribution and thought that it could have been a barrier to participation for other decision-makers in their organisations. This was particularly the case for large employers, some of which were already contributing financially to a number of other 'schemes' and said they would not have taken part if the contribution was mandatory. In the employer satisfaction survey, **60%** (n=29/48) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: 'the resources invested in hiring the young person(s) were proportionate to the value they added'.

Programme length and timing

Length

Views on the programme length varied and were linked with other factors, such as how engaged employers felt young people were and what, if any, other employability programmes and work experience they offered.

For example, some employers that typically ran shorter placement schemes felt that five weeks was too long for young people who were less engaged with their placements, citing examples of participants who left placements after three weeks. Linked with this, some found it hard to find enough work for young people to do over the five weeks, particularly where placements coincided with busier times for the individuals responsible for allocating tasks and managing the young person.

In other cases, where employers felt young people were engaging well with placements, they felt they may have gained more experience from a longer placement, as they felt the first week was mostly taken up by induction processes.

Some employers were concerned that the fixed-term nature of the placements could be detrimental for young people if clear next steps and follow-up opportunities weren't provided. Without this, employers felt young people were at risk of regression. To address this, employers also suggested arranging a wrap-up meeting between the LDP, employers and young people to discuss follow-up opportunities and next steps.

Timing

Employers' perceptions of the timing over the summer varied according to their business needs and experience working with vulnerable young people.

Employers, such as youth centres with high levels of experience in working with vulnerable young people, recognised the summer as a time when they are most vulnerable and saw the programme as an opportunity to prevent them from becoming involved in violence.

Logistically, the timing of the programme worked well for employers that run summer-based schemes (e.g. playgroups, sports camps). For these employers, having young people as additional members of staff was helpful and meant they could offer multiple placements.

Other organisations that were busy over the summer expressed concerns that it made it hard for them to plan the placements as effectively as they would have liked. This was linked with the need for a longer lead-in time to placements discussed earlier in this chapter.

Employers also felt that staff annual leave over the summer months limited the number of placements they could offer and made it harder to guarantee consistent support and points of contact to young people throughout their placements.

7.3.2.   Recommendations for improving acceptability and value

Our qualitative research findings have generated several recommendations for improving the acceptability of the programme for employers. These included:

1. **Onboarding employers earlier**

Many of the issues employers experienced during the onboarding process stemmed from or were exacerbated by the lack of time they had between registration and placements. The amount of time employers felt would be sufficient ranged between four weeks and two to three months based on factors such as their experience in working with vulnerable young people.

2. **Providing employers with more information about the young people they're working with**

Employers felt that having more information about young people would have helped them tailor placements to young people's interests and needs more effectively. Specifically, it would have helped them place young people more effectively within their organisations, assign supervisors who could get the best out of the young people and plan how much support or responsibility to give. Some employers felt it would have been beneficial to have had one or more opportunities to meet the young people before the placements started.

3. **Providing more training for employers**

Employers wanted more training and support in working with vulnerable young people. Specifically, they would have liked more information about what to expect from the young people, how working with them would be different from working with other employees and how to support them when issues arose. They wanted training to be tailored more to the experience level of individual employers. They also wanted multiple sessions or follow-up drop-in sessions for those unable to make the initial training.

4. **Providing more training for young people**

Employers also felt that the young people could have benefitted from more support in advance of the placements to get them ready to work. In particular, they felt that more training on basic skills and professionalism would reduce the amount of time they needed to spend supervising young people and helping them get the most out of their placements. The qualitative findings also suggest that this may provide reassurance to employers and address their concerns about taking on vulnerable young people.

5. **Matching young people with placements that aligned more closely with their areas of interest**

Employers felt this would improve young people's engagement and maximise the value they got from the programme. In one example, an employer felt that having a young person whose interests aligned more closely with theirs would be essential to them taking part in future.

6. **Providing more structure for the relationship between employers and LDPs**

Specifically, employers suggested:

- An initial introductory call to ask for additional information about young people, provide some information about their organisation and discuss how to support young people during placements
- Organised touch-points earlier on the placement, particularly weeks 1 to 3, to troubleshoot any issues arising on the placements and a call between the employer and youth worker after each placement visit

7. **Providing young people with continued opportunities for development after the programme ends**

There was a concern for some employers that the lack of continuation and follow-up opportunities for young people could have a detrimental impact on their progression and well-being. Employers suggested that LDPs could provide ongoing professional mentorship and support with activities such as CV building.

> *"They need some sort of continuity and also some motivation and long-term prospects, not someone – I know [it] sounds very, very negative – walking into their life, showing them something amazing and then it all being taken back again, and they're left at square one". (Employer, case study G)*

This is also linked to concerns expressed by some employers about a lack of a formal exit process towards the end of placements. To address this, employers suggested an end-of-placement meeting between the young person, the employer and the youth worker or LDP to provide structured feedback and discuss next steps. The YPAG also highlighted the importance of more support after the programme had ended to find work.

8. **Updating employers on the programme's progress**

Employers expressed an interest in receiving updates from YEF on how the first year of the programme went and what the next steps for the programme will be.

7.3.3. Summary

Overall, employers reported that they found the Summer Jobs scheme to be valuable, and most of those completing the user satisfaction survey said they would participate again. There were mixed results in terms of whether they felt that the support they were provided with was sufficient to adequately support the young people, with suggestions made for additional content for employer and young person training as well as better communication between the LDP and the employer, particularly before and immediately after the

start of the programme. We found that few employers reported paying the financial contribution, and there were mixed findings as to whether this was an appropriate amount; however, employers did highlight that despite the wages being covered by the programme, the programme required significant contributions from them, and so it is unclear whether a higher proportion of employers would pay the contribution in future years.

7.4. LDPs and youth workers

The research questions on acceptability we addressed with youth workers and LDP managers were:

- Do youth workers and LDPs feel the programme is acceptable and a helpful offer for the young people it seeks to target?
- Do youth workers and LDPs feel adequately compensated for their work?

Staff at each LDP was asked to complete a satisfaction survey. We received 46 responses, of which 89% (n=41) were complete responses. Satisfaction was generally high overall, with **86%** (n=37/44) reporting being satisfied with the programme and UK Youth. However, lower levels of satisfaction were expressed with specific aspects of the programme.

7.4.1. Perceptions of the programme

Registration

Registration forms

Only **59%** (n=26/44) of respondents to the satisfaction survey were satisfied with the registration process and **61%** (n=27/44) with the baseline survey and with the referral process. Some LDPs felt the registration process was well beyond the capabilities of the young people the programme was targeted at and that asking young people to engage with so much documentation early on in the process may act as a barrier to participation unless support was provided. Because of this, some LDPs chose to complete the registration form and processes during the pre-employment preparation week, when they could provide that support, while others invited young people to an open day, where they discussed the programme and helped them complete the eligibility checks and registration form.

> *"The documentation that the young people have been required to complete has been, by and large, well beyond their capabilities, and we did not appreciate the extent to which young people would be required to engage with this sort of material. We're actually used to really limiting that. We know young people have got very limited functional skills generally, so we don't present them with a massive barrier at the start". (LDP programme lead, case study E)*

Young people did not always receive support with the forms, and LDPs felt this posed problems. In some cases, young people's external support workers referred them to the registration form on the UK Youth's portal, and they completed it directly. This was an issue, as some young people didn't understand what information they needed to disclose, which resulted in them being processed as incorrectly ineligible. LDPs were then asked by referral partners why the young people they had referred did not get on to the programme.

Right to work and DBS checks

Most placements required young people to have DBS checks, which LDPs felt were difficult because of the need to provide a utility bill or bank statement as proof of address, which was difficult for some to obtain. This was particularly the case for those aged 16–17 and looked after young people. LDPs felt this created unnecessary stress and made it harder to find placements for young people without those documents.

"Tempo said they needed a, oh, God, what was it, a [utility] bill [for] the DBS checks. Young people of 16, they don't have these necessary documents that they needed, so it was a bit tricky trying to find them placements when we couldn't give them those documents. Yes, it was very tricky". (Youth worker, case study B).

Overall, LDPs felt that being able to organise DBS checks themselves, rather than going through Tempo, would have made the process easier.

Placement matching

LDPs thought that placement matching was an important part of the process, as they felt it was important that young people gain experience in an area of interest and that this would help them decide what to do after the programme. They also felt young people were more likely to complete the programme if they were doing work they enjoyed and found interesting. Only **60%** (n=26/43) of youth workers responding to the satisfaction survey reported being satisfied with the placements. Our qualitative research with LDPs and youth workers offers some insights into this lower score.

Overall, LDPs felt that there were several barriers that made it difficult to match young people to placements effectively. Primarily, this was perceived to be due to a **lack of placements and the late onboarding of employers**, which limited the extent to which matching to young people's areas of interest could be done. LDPs had to source some of their own placements at short notice, and their primary concern was ensuring that all young people would have a placement.

The late onboarding of employers also meant that LDPs did not know what placements they could offer, and matching had to be done much later than expected. For some, these issues were exacerbated by not knowing or having enough information about the young people they would be working with until preparation week.

Linked with this, LDPs felt there was a **lack of variety in the placements** that were available. Many were in the youth and community sector, which made it hard to tailor placements to young people's interests. This aligned with the views shared by young people in qualitative interviews.

Another issue highlighted by LDPs was **placement location**. LDPs had to ensure that placements were located in an area that the young people felt comfortable in and safe travelling to. For some young people, there were postcodes that they felt unsafe working in. This aligns with the views expressed in interviews with young people, some of whom rejected placement offers on the basis of their location.

Supporting young people through the programme

The support provided by youth workers was perceived as important for young people's progression through the programme. In particular, the following areas were highlighted:

Preparation for the programme

Youth workers and LDPs felt that the pre-employment preparation training helped young people to prepare for work in the real world. Overall, **89%** (n=39/44) of those who responded to the satisfaction survey were satisfied with the preparation week. Specifically, they felt the preparation helped to provide them with the basic professionalism they would need to start work, although employers did not necessarily feel the same. Some youth workers and LDPs provided additional training where needed to prepare young people for specific placements.

Progression through the programme

Youth workers felt they provided an important safety net for young people, which helped them progress through the placements. The regular check-ins gave young people the opportunity to discuss how they were feeling about the programme with someone outside the workplace. The impact of these varied by

need, and youth workers acknowledged that some young people rarely contacted them when things were going well. However, youth workers reported being contacted frequently when issues arose and felt that this ad-hoc support played an important role in young people's retention and completion of the placement.

> *"If we'd have just done the one-to-one support and only done that and not been there for ad hoc, these young people would fail, and that would be down to us not supporting them correctly".*
> *(Youth worker, case study G)*

This support helped employers work through issues with young people, which was perceived to be particularly helpful for employers who had less ability to deal with issues on their own. In these instances, youth workers felt they were able to communicate with young people about issues and challenge them in a supportive way. This view was reflected in the interviews with employers, some of whom said youth workers helped them to deliver difficult messages constructively to young people.

Providing support beyond the programme

LDPs and youth workers also found they could use the relationships they had built with young people to discuss next steps and provide support beyond the end of the placement.

Eligibility

In the staff satisfaction survey, **84%** (n=36/43) of LDP staff agreed that the Summer Jobs programme was successful in reaching the most vulnerable population of young people, and **81%** (n=35/43) agreed that it was equally accessible to eligible young people from different backgrounds.

However, LDPs and youth workers had mixed views on the eligibility criteria. There were three main perceptions:

1. Some LDP staff felt that the criteria were successful in identifying those at risk of violence.
2. Some shared the perception of referral partners (see below) that young people who met most or all of the criteria would be too high risk to successfully engage with the programme without an additional step to prepare them for work. Because of this, some LDPs attempted to screen young people based on a perception of their readiness for work (discussed further in the referral pathways section).

   > *"I thought, okay, how can I have a bit more control over meeting the criteria but, also, the types of young people and making sure that they're not just suitable for the programme, in terms of the criteria, but they're suitable, as well, and that they're ready to make this leap for this second opportunity, and it's not something that's just given to them because they fit into a [criterion]".*
   > *(Programme lead, case study G)*

3. There were also some who felt that the criteria themselves were fine, but young people having to self-identify as eligible in the referral process was a problem. During the registration process, LDPs reported finding that many young people didn't want to identify themselves as at risk of violence, and because of this, some may not have been able to access the programme despite being eligible.

   > *"You know, branding these children was a problem. Then, they would hide a lot of things that they've done and all that. Some of them didn't [tell] the truth, so we didn't know the thing".*
   > *(Programme lead, non-case-study, LDP H)*

This view was reflected in the qualitative interviews with young people.

Training of LDPs by UK Youth

Overall, only **68%** (n=30/44) of those responding to the satisfaction survey were satisfied with the training provided by UK Youth. LDP staff felt the training they received from UK Youth would have been more

effective if it contained less information overall and had been delivered closer to the start of the programme. LDPs felt that the training contained too much information, and some of the information provided felt less relevant to the delivery. Some found the amount of information provided overwhelmin, which made them concerned about the amount of work that would be involved in running the programme. LDPs also felt the timing of the training could be improved. The training sessions were described as quite spaced out[38] and were delivered approximately two months before the programme started, which was too long for some LDP staff, who felt they had forgotten important information by the time the programme began.

However, despite the high amount of information provided, some LDPs with lower levels of experience in running employability programmes still felt unsure how to deliver certain aspects of the programme, such as the pre-employment preparation training. LDPs with low levels of experience in running employability programmes reported reaching out to the UK Youth team for additional information and support and found this to be very helpful.

7.4.2.   Recommendations for improving acceptability and value

Employer recruitment

LDPs told us that they thought employers should be recruited earlier. Timelines for this varied, but some LDPs suggested starting the process in January. The primary reasons for this were:

1. **To limit the risk of disappointing young people.** LDPs shared referrers' views that disappointment would have a disproportionately negative impact on the young people who are eligible for the programme.
2. **To facilitate better placement matching.** The late onboarding of employers was perceived as a barrier to aligning placements with young people's interests.
3. **To enable LDPs and referrers to conduct risk assessments.** Risk assessments were needed to offer placements to vulnerable young people.

Beyond timeliness, LDPs had other suggestions for improving the recruitment process. First, they wanted to be more involved in the employer recruitment process to leverage their local knowledge and connections. They felt this would both increase the number of employers that could be recruited and facilitate earlier recruitment of employers. Doing this effectively would also require beginning the employer recruitment process earlier.

> *"[External recruitment teams are] never going to be as entrenched and have the right partnerships as I will…in [city name], so just as I turned over employers, just like that within 24 hours, they've been spending months on it and didn't have the list that I had". (Youth worker, case study G)*

There were also factors that the UK Youth recruiters should consider during the recruitment process. These included:

1. Whether employers can offer young people continued employment or other opportunities after the programme finishes. LDPs felt this would be preferable.
2. Whether the employers would be able to provide enough work for the young people during their placement. This was perceived to be particularly important when multiple young people were attending the same placement.
3. Whether employers have experience working with and managing vulnerable young people. This was seen as preferable and likely to lead to better outcomes. Where employers do not have this experience, training should be provided on how to support the young people they will be working

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[38] Training sessions were delivered on 23 April (Introduction to Summer Jobs and Evaluating Summer Jobs) and week commencing 3 June (logistics, curriculum and evaluation)

with. This reflected the findings from the qualitative interviews with employers, particularly those with less experience working with these types of young people, who felt that more information on what to expect and how to support young people would have been helpful in the employer training.

4. Whether incentives could be provided to employers to gain a greater range of placements. One LDP felt it was important to recognise that the programme may add to, rather than reduce, employers' workloads. Findings from the qualitative research with employers suggest this was the case for some, but others found the work of the young people to be helpful.

"I'd like to see an incentive for the placements other than free labour because they're not actually getting free labour. They're turning their place of work into a school for five weeks…You'll get a more varied placement structure". (Youth worker, case study E)

Young person recruitment

LDPs also felt that young people should be recruited earlier, ideally three to five months before placement. This would help them get to know their needs and interests more comprehensively, which would facilitate better placement matching.

It should be noted that views varied on whether young people or employers should be recruited first. While some felt that recruiting employers first would limit the possibility of young people being disappointed, others felt that with enough time, they would have been able to source placements to meet the needs and interests of the young people.

Referral

LDPs wanted to limit the number of referrals that could be made to make the workload manageable and avoid disappointment. The qualitative interviews with referrers also suggest this may be beneficial, as referrers were frustrated by receiving a lack of responses and updates on referrals.

LDPs also wanted more discretion to assess eligibility internally and have greater control over which young people were selected to take part. LDPs felt young people who should have been able to access the programme did not because they either did not understand it or chose not to disclose information relating to their eligibility.

LDPs wanted to receive more comprehensive information from referrers or young people themselves via the registration form to enable youth workers to provide more tailored support to them.

Placement matching

In addition to recruiting employers earlier, LDPs felt that the placement matching process could be improved by offering a wider variety of placements and sectors. Specifically mentioned were barbering, mechanics and public sector work, but LDPs also suggested starting with young people's views on what types of placements they would like. LDPs felt this was important to support engagement and retention.

Registration

LDPs made several suggestions to improve the registration process. These included:

1. Making the baseline survey and registration forms less intrusive and explaining the purpose of these clearly to the young people
2. Reducing the amount of paperwork for young people and LDPs to complete[39]

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[39] It should be noted that while some LDPs felt that there was too much paperwork, others found young people were able to complete the paperwork without issues.

3. Streamlining the DBS process for young people and, if possible, allowing LDPs to do this themselves rather than using external agencies or platforms such as Tempo

Programme design

Some LDPs suggested the programme should adopt a traineeship model in which young people receive sector-specific training provided by third-party industry experts. In these models, young people would split their time on placements between work, training and well-being support. The benefit of this model for LDPs is that young people are often employed at the end of the programmes, having received a more comprehensive and relevant training programme and, in effect, having completed a probationary period while on placement.

LDP training

LDP staff suggested conducting training closer to the start of the programme so key information is fresh, as well as reducing the overall amount of information while providing more information on the process. Specifically, some LDPs, particularly those with less experience, wanted more explicit guidance and clarity on how to deliver certain aspects of the programme, such as the pre-employment preparation week.

Pre-employment preparation week

LDPs felt that, where possible, the pre-employment preparation week should be made more specific and tailored to placements. One suggestion for doing this was to co-design some of the materials with businesses. Some LDPs also felt more time should have been spent discussing contextualised risk and how to keep themselves safe.

Some felt that young people would have benefited from visiting employers before starting their placements. This aligns with some of the views of young people in the qualitative feedback who wanted to know more about their placement.

Supporting young people during placements

Some youth workers suggested asking young people to complete diary reflections that could be used in one-to-ones with youth workers and supervisors. They felt this might provide more content for discussions than the workbook.

Some youth workers who were supporting young people remotely found it difficult to get in contact with some of the young people and suggested that one way to address this would be for youth workers to authorise young people's hours and pay. They felt this would help incentivise young people to speak with them over the phone, even when there were no issues on their placements.

Pay

LDPs suggested simplifying the pay system to reduce the number of issues caused. To do this, they suggested:

1. Giving LDPs oversight of young people's logged hours so they could do payroll themselves
2. Paying young people fortnightly rather than weekly to allow LDPs the opportunity to fix any issues that arise. However, in interviews with young people, it was noted that the weekly pay helped them manage their money and pay for travel.

Post-programme

LDPs felt there needed to be some post-programme support and continuation for young people, including preparation for job applications, CV building and mock interviews.

7.4.3. Summary

Acceptability for many aspects of the programme was lower for youth workers and LDPs than other groups, although satisfaction scores were generally good for UK Youth. Youth workers did not suggest substantial changes to the programme, although there were frustrations with elements such as right-to-work checks and payroll, but they did say that it might be too much for some more vulnerable eligible young people. Youth workers felt the programme would be more valuable with a greater variety of placements, which would allow young people to gain experience in an area aligned with their interests. Interviews highlighted a range of suggestions for improving the programme next year, including having longer timelines for the recruitment of employers, young people and youth workers; streamlining training from UK Youth; streamlining the registration process; and limiting the number of referrals.

7.5. Referrers

The three research questions explored with referrers were:

- Do local referral agencies think this is a helpful offer?
- Is the intended profile of young people accurately capturing the young people at the highest risk of violence and those who could benefit from the programme?
- Was the referral process easy and efficient?

Results from qualitative interviews are described below.

7.5.1. Perceptions of the programme

The programme offering

The programme encouraged LDPs to form connections with organisations such as youth justice teams, social services and alternative provision units, which were working with young people who would be eligible for the programme, to identify programme participants. These referrers recognised the potential value of the programme for the young people they worked with.

> *"I thought to myself, this is a fantastic programme for any child that we're working with [who] is at risk of being exploited". (Referrer, case study G)*

They felt that the programme could provide opportunities to gain work and experience that wouldn't normally be possible due to the young people's ages, lack of experience and, in some cases, criminal histories.

Referral partners were particularly positive about the fact that young people did not need to interview for the roles; they felt that this encouraged young people to apply, as they could avoid the anxiety of the interview process and feeling like they had to present themselves to an employer.

> *"I think the reason why we had a great uptake – in fact, we had actually up to 25 young people who actually signed up – was because of the fact that they did not have to do an interview. I think that was the key factor. They didn't have to do an interview, so there was no need to dress up, have anxieties around presenting themselves to an employer by themselves". (Referrer, case study E)*

They also felt that the characteristics making young people eligible for a programme would normally prevent them from being chosen during an interview process.

While this was perceived positively, it did impact the young people who were referred. Some referrers described the programme as being more appropriate for young people who they perceived to be ready to

engage with and benefit from the opportunity. This included low-risk young people who could understand and meet the basic requirements of the placements, such as attendance and punctuality (discussed further in the eligibility and referral pathways section).

> *"So I was very cautious…it was more for those who were able to engage, able to turn up, knew punctuality, how to speak at work, job-ready". (Referrer, non-case-study, LDP L)*

Some referrers also felt that the practical aspects of the programme made taking part more accessible for young people. These included flexibility in the hours that young people worked, placements that were tailored to interest and the fact that LDPs aimed to find young people placements close to their homes.

Length and timing

Referrers felt the length and timing of the programme were good. They recognised the summer holiday as a time when young people lose routines and have less to do, which makes them particularly vulnerable to becoming involved with youth violence and crime. Because of this, youth offending teams felt the programme offered a positive diversionary activity at a timely moment and meant that they could keep in contact with the young people they worked with through the summer holidays.

Programme delivery

As discussed in the deliverability chapter, LDPs adapted the programme delivery in various ways. This included relying on the support workers who had originally referred young people to the programme to provide wraparound support. The referral agencies that had taken on this role and supported young people through the programme felt that the programme was lacking an intermediary who would serve as the link between young people and employers.

> *"They would be the ones between the employer and the young person, so they would be the ones checking on the young person's attendance, daily attendance, or [seeing] them at their venue, [seeing] them in work". (Referrer, case study E)*

Alongside feedback from young people who valued support from their youth workers, this highlights the importance of having a dedicated individual whose role it is to provide wraparound support. Ensuring this is delivered more consistently across LDPs is likely to improve the acceptability of the programme to referral agencies.

7.5.2. Eligibility

Perceptions of eligibility

Referrers felt the eligibility criteria were fair but did note that other factors influenced their decision about which young people they referred (discussed further in the referral pathways section). There was a perception from some referral partners, particularly those in youth justice services, that despite meeting the eligibility criteria, some of the young people most at risk of violence – described as medium-to-high risk and characterised as young people actively involved with gangs or drug dealing – would not have been able to engage successfully with the programme and may have put themselves and their employers at risk.

Instead, they felt the programme was more suited to young people who were at risk of becoming involved with gangs or criminal activity, as it provided diversion for them. This included:

1. Young people who had been excluded from school or absent for long periods of time.

2. Young people who had experienced difficulties or who had difficult relationships with families.

3. Young people who had committed lower-level offences, such as minor robbery or shoplifting.

Similarly, referrers felt the ideal age for young people being referred to the programme was 16–18. This was an age at which young people would be able to successfully engage with and benefit from the programme and was also considered a junction in young people's lives when they were at risk of engaging in more dangerous activities.

> *"It's also 16-to-17-year-olds, like I said, by that time, they've seen some things; they've experienced some things, some of them traumatic, and they know that they're a year away from being 18. They know that 18 is the legal age for everything, and they know that everything gets serious. They know that there's zero support. After that, you're in the adult estate. No one cares. You're going to jail. They know that, so they would like to put the brakes on their life spiralling out of [control]. They would like to see opportunities by that time". (Referrer, case study E)*

Suggestions for improving the eligibility criteria

Some referrers felt some of the young people who accessed the programme were not those who were most in need of support. They felt that more clarity in the eligibility criteria and specific communication around which young people the programme should be targeting would help to prevent this in future. One specific suggestion for this was targeting and prioritising organisations that work with harder-to-reach groups, such as youth offending teams, care leaving teams, police, social workers and children's trusts.

7.5.3. Referral process

The referral process varied according to the referral partner and the LDPs they worked with (discussed further in the referral pathways section).

Despite the differences in process, the qualitative research highlighted some key issues with the referral process as well as some aspects that referrers felt worked well for themselves and young people.

For referrers, the main issues identified with the referral process were:

1. **Employers were not onboarded early enough**

There were two main impacts of this. Practically, it meant referrers did not know where the young people would be placed, which meant they could not provide any information to the young people or conduct the necessary risk assessments. This was particularly important for referrers based in youth offending teams and youth justice services.

Referrers were reluctant to discuss the programme with the young people they worked with before employers were confirmed because this created a risk that young people may be disappointed. They felt that promising opportunities and then disappointing young people would have significant negative consequences for them, particularly as they knew many of the young people they worked with had already had negative experiences of rejection.

> *"We [in the youth justice services] cannot afford to casually disappoint our cohort because it leads to repercussions. These are young people who have had several different levels of neglect and rejection, so to promise them something and then take it away, we are like every negative influence in their life". (Referrer, case study E)*

2. **Poor communication from LDPs**

There was a perception that LDPs were stretched, and referrers felt that because of this, there was poor communication and a lack of clarity from them throughout the referral process. Specifically, some referrers did not receive responses to referral emails and had to chase LDPs multiple times to get them to confirm whether young people would receive placements.

The qualitative interviews with LDPs found that they had been inundated with referral emails and lacked the resources to respond to them all. This suggests that there may need to be some adjustments to the referral process to either limit the number of referrals that can be made or manage referrers' expectations regarding responses.

There were exceptions to this. Some found LDPs highly responsive and felt they always made time to speak to the referrer when support was needed.

3. **A lack of clarity and transparency in the referral process**

Linked with the issues around communication, some referral partners lacked clarity on how to refer young people and how this would impact whether they were selected to take part. For example, some referrers told us that they were told that young people would gain a place if they attended the open day and completed a referral form. However, despite having followed this guidance, one referrer found that only a small number of the young people they referred received places on the programme, while other young people who did not attend the open day also received places.

4. **There was a lack of shareable materials to inform young people about the programme**

While the programme open days and the presentations LDPs delivered were described by referrers as really good, referrers felt there was a lack of materials that they could share with young people to inform them about the programme. As an example, referrers made a comparison with another employability programme called Hatch, delivered by UK Youth for young people who have faced barriers to employment, which provided brochure-style materials that referrers could forward to young people directly. One issue with programme posters shared with referrers was that they discussed young people as being at risk of violence, which meant some referrers did not feel comfortable sharing them with potential participants.

5. **The registration forms were long and intense, and some referrers experienced technical issues**

Referrers felt the registration forms were quite long, and some felt they needed to support young people to complete them. In some cases, referrers didn't understand the relevance of the questions young people were being asked.

Despite these issues, there were parts of the referral process that referrers thought were positive enablers to young people taking part. These included:

1. **The programme open days were informative and encouraged young people to sign up**

Referrers felt the programme open days were really good and provided young people with the opportunity to hear about the programme firsthand and ask questions.

2. **Where communication with LDPs was good, this was perceived to be a strength of the referral process**

In some cases, referral partners felt communication with LDPs was excellent. For example, an LDP visited the school that a referrer worked at to discuss the opportunity with young people directly and answer any questions they had. This discussion was considered influential in encouraging young people to sign up.

7.5.4.   Summary

Referrers were positive about the programme and offering for the young people they work with; in particular, the timing of the programme (as a diversion), the lack of need to interview (which they felt enabled participation) and the flexibility (in terms of hours worked). They felt changes could be made to the eligibility criteria to ensure that those with the most need of help were able to access the programme. For

this, they suggested targeting organisations working with these groups. However, they also felt the programme was more appropriate for lower-risk young people and that some young people they worked with would not be able to participate. They suggested a younger age range to ensure engagement and benefit and to offer a diversion. There were some issues with the referral process which could be addressed next year with more transparency, specifically why particular questions were being asked, as well as materials which could be shared with young people. Programme open days and visits from LDPs to settings, e.g. alternative education provision, were felt to be a good way to engage young people in the programme.

7.6. Conclusions

There were good levels of acceptability of the Summer Jobs programme from all key stakeholder groups. Referrers and LDPs felt the programme addressed a need for young people, providing opportunities that they would not otherwise have had, and that it provided a good diversion during the summer. They felt that it reached young people who were vulnerable, but as we have flagged elsewhere in this report, there were concerns that this summer, it wasn't necessarily reaching those most at risk of youth violence.

There was no clear feedback that any of the core design features of the programme should be changed (e.g. weekly pay, number of hours per week, overall length). Although challenges and suggestions for change were expressed relating to all of these, feedback was not consistent.

Despite the pay being covered, employers did not see the programme as cost-neutral, so it may be challenging in years 2 and 3 to secure enough placements where the financial contributions from the employers are made. In this year, only a small proportion of employers reported paying the contribution.

There were a number of areas identified for improvement in year 2. These included:

- **Timeframe:** a longer period of time should be allocated to onboard employers and for the recruitment of young people.
- **Training:** there should be changes to the training for LDPs, employers and young people to address some of the challenges with the programme in year 1; this includes the timing of the training for LDPs and the content being more focused on the practical aspects for employers of how to support young people in the workplace and professional expectations for young people. This may be more important in year 2 if a greater range of employers is reached with less experience in working with young people and in similar schemes.
- **Eligibility criteria:** the programme was seen to be more acceptable to younger participants, i.e. those still in or just out of education, for whom it didn't raise the same challenges of what would happen after the placement. Referrers also felt that 16–18 years was an age at which young people would be able to successfully engage with and benefit from the programme and considered this a junction in young people's lives.
- **Recruitment of young people:** links with key organisations were felt to be helpful, as well as having open days and doing outreach at educational settings. Documents that could be used to target young people were recommended.
- **Registration:** streamlining the referral, registration and baseline process to minimise the burden for young people, LDPs and referrers was a consistent theme of our work.
- **Increased interaction between LDPs and employers:** in order to prepare employers for the placements, they recommended interaction with the LDPs and the young people prior to the placements starting. Where it worked well, LDPs were able to support the relationships between the employers and the young people. This suggests that the employer–LDP relationship may benefit from more structure, particularly during registration and earlier on in the placements, but this structure could be tailored towards each employer's individual experience and needs.

- **Placements:** an increased range of placements should be offered to meet young people's needs and interests.

7. Findings: evaluability

7.1. Introduction

A key aspect of our assessment of feasibility was to gauge whether there were any barriers to conducting a large-scale assessment of impact via an RCT. Specifically, we set out to explore:

- **Demand and capacity** – whether there would be sufficient demand from employers, referral agencies and young people to achieve the sample size required for an adequately powered RCT, which would provide a robust estimate of impact
- **Evaluation questions** – how randomisation should operate in subsequent years and what business as usual would look like for the control group
- **Feasibility and acceptability of evaluation** – the factors likely to impact young people's and LDPs' willingness to participate in randomisation and whether it is possible to gather the outcome data needed to measure impact
- **Theory of change** – the extent to which our theory on the mechanisms which drive change and the key mediators and moderators are endorsed by the views of stakeholders (young people, youth workers, employers and referral organisations) and quantitative data

7.2. Demand and capacity

As we set out in the deliverability chapter, there was strong demand from LDPs and young people to participate in year 1 of Summer Jobs. Employer recruitment was slower, and there were areas where insufficient placements were secured. However, UK Youth recruited a large number of placements in a short time, relying on their and their LDPs' existing networks. It is possible that demand from employers may have been higher if UK Youth had more time to promote the scheme and recruit employers, and the track record of successful delivery from year 1 combined with the changes to the programme to address concerns will drive more employers to participate in years 2 and 3. In order to understand whether the demand we saw in year 1 will be sustained, we explored the views of employers, LDPs and young people who participated in the feasibility study. These are covered in detail in the acceptability chapter, along with suggestions for how some of the concerns could be addressed.

Employers: we surveyed all employers who participated in year 1 of delivery, receiving responses from 55 people and 42 out of 90 companies to which young people were matched and started a placement (47%). Overall, the results paint a positive picture of the scheme and future demand, with 49% saying they would definitely participate again and 32% saying that they would *most likely* take part. However, some concerns were raised regarding the financial contribution, with only nine employers contributing. Qualitative data suggests that some employers would not have participated if the contribution was required.

As detailed in the acceptability chapter, the employers we interviewed were broadly positive about the programme. However, they did identify areas for consideration for year 2 delivery, including earlier onboarding, changes to the training for themselves and young people, and measures to strengthen the relationship between LDPs and employers. They also expressed that the programme required significant contributions from them, despite the fact that the wages were covered, so it is unclear whether a higher proportion would pay the contribution in future years. Many of the placements in year 1 were from the third sector, and a key focus for year 2 (to meet feedback from LDPs, referrers and young people) will be to source a broader range of employers. Attention will be needed in terms of how to bring on board a more diverse range of employers for which an alignment with their corporate social responsibility goals may be less likely to be a motivator for participation.

LDPs were very positive about the Summer Jobs programme, as it offers vulnerable young people valuable experience of paid employment, an opportunity which is not provided by other programmes and interventions which are targeted at this cohort. Our survey showed that 86% were satisfied with the

programme overall, although there were lower levels of satisfaction with the referral, registration and baseline survey processes. LDPs recommended earlier recruitment of both employers and young people, a more diverse range of placements to choose from and a streamlining of the registration process. LDPs reported in interviews that they struggled with the volume of referrals received for the programme (see the acceptability chapter for more details). Ways to manage the workload of the LDPs while ensuring that the programme receives referrals from a diverse range of organisations will be important for year 2 planning.

Young people: participants in year 1 of delivery expressed high levels of satisfaction with the programme. 95% said they were satisfied or very satisfied overall with the programme.

Our interviews and focus groups with participants generally endorsed these views, with young people generally speaking positively about the key elements of the Summer Jobs programme. Suggestions for improvement included increased diversity of placements on offer, clear roles and responsibilities within placements – some young people felt they weren't really working within their placements – and ensuring that the pre-employment week is for training rather than registration.

7.3. Evaluation design

As the Summer Jobs programme progresses from establishing feasibility towards measuring impact, a number of new delivery and evaluation challenges will materialise. Aspects of the evaluation design which will need careful consideration in future years include:

- Defining the eligible sample for analysis
- Retaining the control group and measuring business as usual
- Presenting the approach to randomisation
- Collecting data

7.3.1. Eligible sample

Referrers and LDPs were generally positive about the selection criteria for the programme, although not the self-selection of it by young people. As we noted in the deliverability chapter, we think that the number of referrals from external agencies that took up the programme was low (less than 20% of those starting preparation week were referrals from external agencies). Some referrers also felt that some of the young people who accessed the programme were not those who were most in need of support. The reasons for this are likely to be complex and varied, but given that those who are already receiving services from a youth work agency are likely to be systematically different to those who are referred from a pupil referral unit, youth offending team or similar agency, this is a concern.

In an RCT, randomisation would ideally occur after a young person's eligibility for inclusion has been established (i.e. checking they are the right age and meet at least one of our eligibility criteria), they have consented to be part of the evaluation and they have completed baseline data collection. However, one challenge is that employment checks occur after this, and young people who are not eligible to work or are unable to complete DBS checks are then not offered a job. In this feasibility study, 16% of young people who were matched to a placement didn't take up the placement. Randomising after baseline data collection would mean that in an intention-to-treat analysis, a substantial proportion of those in the treatment arm would not have received the intervention, reducing the likely effect size of the intervention. In a per-protocol analysis, ineligible participants in the treatment arm are excluded from the analysis. This differs from intention to treat, where all participants are included. However, excluding ineligible participants can lead to imbalances between the arms, as those who fail employment checks may differ systematically from those who pass. The control group, on the other hand, retains all participants since employment checks are not part of their process.

In our view, increasing both the volume of referrals from external agencies and the proportion of those referrals who agree to participate in the programme is a key factor in ensuring Summer Jobs is being delivered to young people who are most vulnerable to violence. Alongside this, careful consideration should be given to the point at which randomisation should occur; whether it is possible to complete preliminary employment checks as part of eligibility screening or baseline data collection or, if not, at least to confirm that young people are still interested in being considered for the programme at a point closer to the time of randomisation; and how to analyse the data from those who are randomised to receive Summer Jobs but are subsequently found to be unable to take up employment.

Due to the variability at the LDP level in both the delivery of the programme and the cohort of young people going through the programme, we recommend that within-LDP randomisation and a restricted randomisation procedure (such as blocked randomisation) are used to ensure that treatment and control groups within each LDP are the same size – this is important for statistical power but also gives LDPs some level of certainty on the number of young people they will be delivering to.

7.3.2. Retaining the control group and measuring business as usual

As our study did not have a control group, we have not explored the feasibility of collecting end-line data from the control group. Retention of control group participants in an evaluation is a common problem, so careful consideration will need to be given to how best to approach this, what incentives might be required for data collection and approaches to handling missing data.

We are confident that at a national level, there are no alternative schemes to Summer Jobs which offer vulnerable young people short-term paid employment. However, care will need to be taken to understand what, if any, schemes might be operating locally to support young people into employment and to measure whether those randomised to the control group engage with this support. It will also be important to understand what young people in the control group do in the absence of being offered a job and whether they find paid employment via other routes. Interviews with young people suggest that they had limited expectations of finding work over the summer without the Summer Jobs project. Finally, any trial would need to try to capture, for both the treatment and control arms, any other relevant support received, in particular any interventions that seek to prevent youth violence or address associated risk factors.

7.3.3. Randomisation

A key aspect of understanding the feasibility of an RCT is assessing LDPs' and young people's levels of comfort with being assigned to the Summer Jobs programme or the control group at random. LDPs expressed some concerns with this, as randomisation, by definition, means that some vulnerable young people – including young people who are known to the LDP and who youth workers believe will benefit from the opportunities that Summer Jobs provides – will not receive the programme. Specifically, youth workers were concerned that by applying and then not receiving a placement, young people in the control group would be in a worse situation than if they had not applied. There was discomfort at the thought of being a part of this but also recognition of the value of gathering evidence through an RCT.

> *"It's probably a necessary evil to try and ensure that we get programmes that are going to make a difference, are funded for other young people and increase the number of potential beneficiaries that there are further down the line". (LDP lead, case study E)*

Young people were more comfortable with randomisation, telling us that this wouldn't deter them from applying for the programme since a 50% chance of getting a job is better than nothing. They said it would be exciting to wait to find out but admitted that they would be disappointed if they didn't get a job and said that other young people might struggle to manage this. In this case, they said it would be important to have an alternative on offer. We also found in our YPAG that everyone agreed with the statement, *'I would still apply to Summer Jobs if there was only a 50% chance of getting a job'.* They discussed needing to give

themselves a chance by applying and also that rejection is a very normal part of life and something they will have to face at some point anyway.

These results indicate that significant work will be needed with LDPs to communicate the importance of randomisation and the benefits of robust evaluation. This could be done in an evaluation co-design phase. It will also be important to ensure that LDPs are clear in their communications with young people that enrolling in the scheme is not a guarantee of paid employment and that processes are in place to prevent randomisation from being circumvented. In this feasibility study, we provided training for LDPs on how to inform young people about the study as part of the registration process and recorded a short training video for youth workers on this topic, as well as a video of a young person reading the information sheet with a youth worker, which could be used alongside the study information sheet. However, it seems that some young people were not aware of the purpose of the questions they were asked, and the qualitative data suggests that youth workers did not take them through the registration process as was intended. Ensuring that LDPs provide relevant information to young people should be a focus going forward.

In our view, ensuring that the scheme is over-subscribed (i.e. there are more people enrolled than there are jobs available) will be key to ensuring randomisation is seen as acceptable, as hopefully, all parties can agree that random allocation is the fairest way to allocate places. However, if, in any areas, young people or LDPs become aware that there are more jobs available than there are young people to fill them, then acceptance of randomisation is likely to fall. Careful consideration of what the control group receives could, therefore, help with the acceptability of randomisation so that there is not a feeling among stakeholders that they are left with nothing.

7.3.4. Data collection

Completion of the baseline data survey was a prerequisite for participating in the programme. Although participants could refuse to answer questions, generally, completion rates were high, with 98% of participants completing at least 80% of the questions. On average, participants took 25 minutes to complete the baseline survey. The median completion time was 14 minutes. Those who were shown the SRDS took slightly more time to complete the survey, with a median of 15 minutes (n=129).

As is common in evaluations, our response to the survey we conducted after the programme had been completed was lower. Young people were offered an incentive of £10 to complete the survey, and a response rate of 59% was achieved. Descriptive analysis indicates that those identifying as White (20% of the matched sample; 17% of end-line respondents), 22 and older (9% of the matched sample; 6% of end-line respondents) and male (68% of the matched sample; 62% of end-line respondents) were slightly under-represented in the post-programme data collection. The completeness of data collection was also relatively lower than at baseline, but of those who responded, we received relatively high completion rates, with 82% answering at least 80% of the questions.

The SRDS contains sensitive questions; however, it is a standard approach used by YEF to measure youth offending due to it having the best psychometric properties of the self-report measures. We administered the SRDS to a random sample of around 20% of survey participants at both baseline and end-line in order to explore the acceptability of this measure among the sample. In total, 24% of all respondents to the baseline survey (*n*=129/540) were shown the SRDS, and the response rate to questions in the SRDS was quite high, with a minimum completion rate of 80%, with 92% of people completing all questions. Completion of the SRDS at end-line was also quite high on average, with a minimum completion rate of 40%. Please see Annex E for more details on the baseline and end-line data collection.

A key theme of our qualitative work with young people was exploring how they felt about the volume of data we requested and the sensitive nature of the questions. Young people who were able to recall and comment on their experiences of completing the survey (this was limited in the qualitative sample) were

unsure of the purpose of the questions they were asked. They also found it time-consuming, but they completed it, as it was a requirement of the programme.

Some young people reported feeling uncomfortable with what they described as weird or random questions and did not understand why they were being asked these questions or how their answers would be used.

> *"I'm not quite sure how to say that, but they seem a bit lengthy, and it will be better if the surveys, the questionnaires, can be very clear at the beginning, like how our answers can provide some insights for the programme or what the research is about in more depth. For me, it will provide more clarity". (Young person, case study B)*

Youth workers generally held more negative views about the survey, although views were mixed. Overall, 61% reported being satisfied with the baseline survey process. Some LDPs felt that both the length and content of the surveys were fine, and they were able to support young people in completing them without issue. However, there were two main criticisms of the baseline survey:

First, it was perceived by some to be **intrusive.** LDPs recognised the value and importance of the information being gathered but felt that young people identifying themselves as being at risk of violence could be negative when they're trying to break away from it. LDPs were concerned that young people were reluctant to disclose certain information, and being asked to do so was triggering for them.

> *"I can totally understand why gathering this information would be really useful, but in practice, getting those young people to really properly think about all those things, it's far too big an ask for those young people". (LDP lead, case study E)*

Some LDPs also felt the **length and content** may not be accessible for some of the young people they worked with. LDPs found that young people felt the baseline survey was very long, and although young people were able to complete it, some needed support. It should be noted that the median completion time for the baseline survey was 14 minutes (interquartile range (IQR) 10–20), and for the end-line survey, it was 9 minutes (IQR 6–13). There were also concerns that the content may not be accessible for some young people, particularly those with dyslexia/SEND. Although we encouraged youth workers to support young people in completing the survey if needed at baseline, at end-line we provided an audio recording of the longer text sections to support completion.

Although we limited the questions asked in the baseline and end-line surveys to minimise the burden on participants, this feedback suggests that further efforts are needed next year to reduce the length of these surveys to support their completion as well as to ensure that participants are fully informed about the purposes of the survey. Our information sheet and survey landing page included some information on this; however, the feedback suggests young people would have benefited from clearer information. Useful lessons are likely to be available from other studies.
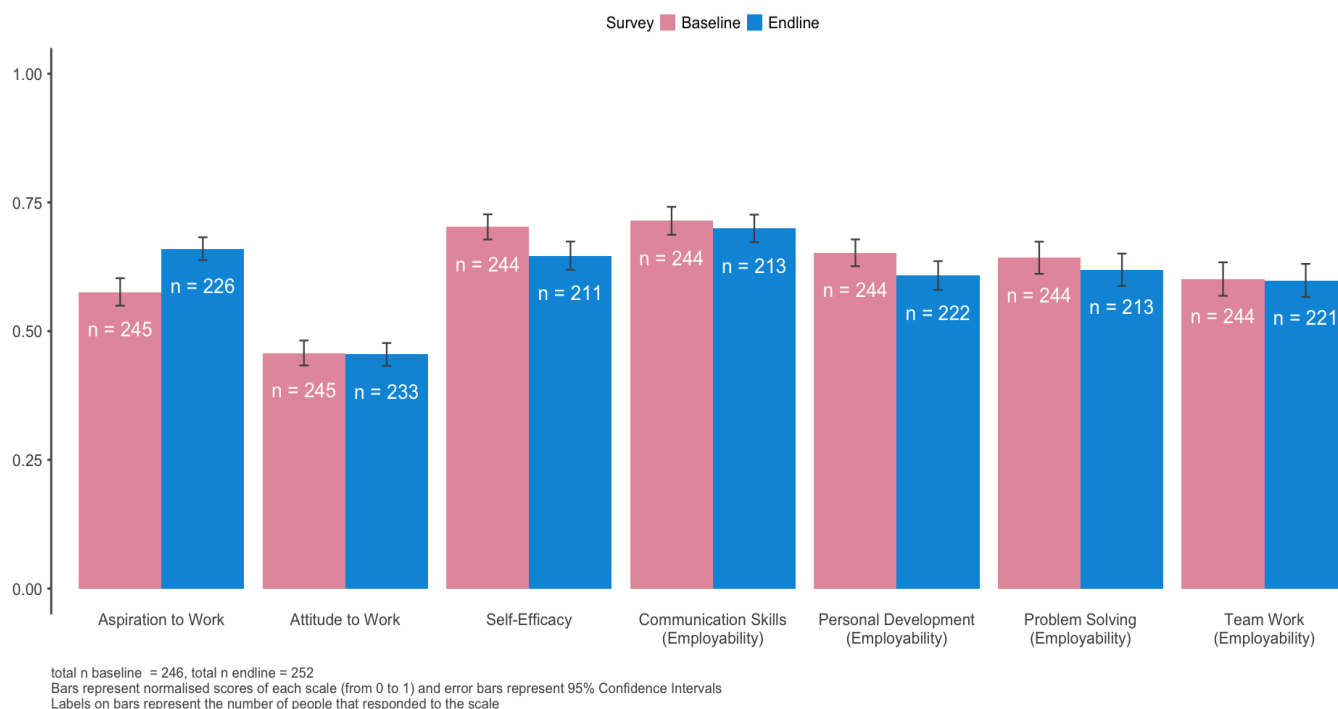
7.4. Theory of change

In the theory of change that we developed in collaboration with UK Youth, we hypothesised that Summer Jobs would deliver a long-term impact on youth violence, employment and engagement in education by driving improvements in areas such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy and aspirations.

Figure 7 shows the pre-test/post-test analysis of our key outcomes, with changes as normalised scores across each measure. The data shows positive changes in some of the key questions on aspiration to work[40] measured at baseline and end-line. For other measures, there is little difference between the surveys, while for others, there is a slight reduction. We would caution against making any conclusive

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[40] The scales featured here are (1) NPC Journey to Employment (JET) Framework questionnaires on aspirations and employability skills and (2) the new general self-efficacy scale.

statements about these results for several reasons. Primarily, there appear to be no significant differences between the two groups, as most measures, with the exception of work aspirations, have overlapping confidence intervals. Second, the sample captures those who responded to the survey at baseline *and* end-line, which is only 59% of the sample that accepted a placement. Finally, in the absence of a control group, we cannot conclude that these changes are caused by engagement with the Summer Jobs programme.

Figure 7. Normalised mean scores of aspirations, employability skills and self-efficacy at baseline and end-line

total n baseline = 246, total n endline = 252
Bars represent normalised scores of each scale (from 0 to 1) and error bars represent 95% Confidence Intervals
Labels on bars represent the number of people that responded to the scale

Interviews with young people, youth workers and referrers also sought to understand the impact of the programme on young people. Separately, we explored the impact of the programme on employers. Overall, young people, youth workers and referrers perceived the programme to be a valuable experience with a range of positive outcomes. Outcomes expressed by young people broadly fit into three categories: personal development, professional development and financial support. Interviews with youth workers and referrers identified the same categories.

7.4.1. Personal development

1. *The opportunity to do something productive over the summer*

Young people felt the programme provided them with an opportunity to do something fun and productive, particularly during the summer, a time when they lose routines and structure and often feel they have nothing to do. For some, the programme provided the structure they felt they lacked during this time and helped them establish a routine. Others felt that being busy over the summer would help them avoid negative behaviours.

> *"It kept me busy. It kept me out of the streets, and I feel like that's what I needed". (Young person, case study E)*

2. *Improvements in self-esteem and mental health*

Some young people felt the programme had improved their self-esteem and mental health. There were a variety of reasons for this, including:

A. A sense of accomplishment. This came from a feeling that they were doing something productive

"When you finish work and that, sometimes it gives you that good feeling. It's like, yes, I went to work today, done something productive". (Young person, case study E)

B. A feeling that their work was valuable and made a positive impact on the people they worked with

C. Positive feedback and recognition from employers on their progress and skill development

"[Employers] constantly congratulated me and said well done and stuff like that because I've shown them leadership skills and teamwork skills. The things that I thought I'd never be able to progress, I've progressed, and it's the satisfaction as well of being told, 'Okay, you're doing really, really well'". (Young person, case study E)

Referrers noted that young people had grown in confidence. Some described the programme as giving young people a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Youth workers noticed the young people's confidence and self-belief had grown, and they were more hopeful about the future. This was evidenced in the way young people's communication and body language had improved and how they were more able to manage issues such as anxiety.

"[Young people's] body language, their facial expressions, their verbal greetings are very different to the ones we started with". (Youth worker, case study G)

LDPs felt that there were several factors that had contributed to this. First, the programme was perceived to be forward-thinking, and young people felt they could come into the programme with a clean sheet, being treated equally and without judgement.

LDPs also felt that young people's experiences on the programme had changed their perceptions that opportunities were not available to them and that no one would give them a chance.

This, along with the routine and stability of the programme and the fact that young people were successful in completing it, were thought to have positively changed young people's mindsets and given them more of a sense of self-efficacy.

"The Summer Jobs Programme does nothing more than remove idle hands from people who shouldn't have it, and by the end of it, lets them know that those idle hands are capable of making your life better by earning you a salary". (Youth worker, case study E)

LDPs and youth workers also linked pay to young people's increased confidence, as it gave them a sense of independence that some of them had not had before.

"I feel just like even generally, the fact that they were now earning their own money was a major part of their confidence as well. Some of them, as we've already mentioned, they never really had a paycheque before; they always had to rely on someone else. Now that they are making their own money, I feel that naturally made them more confident". (LDP N lead, non-case-study)

3. *Improved communication and soft-skills*

Young people also felt the programme had helped them develop and improve their soft skills. In particular, they felt their confidence and communication skills had improved as a result of their placements, and they found they were expressing themselves more and feeling able to contribute to conversations at work. Referrers also noted that communication skills had improved.

Young people perceived these improvements in confidence and communication to be a result of exposure to the working environment and having gained some experience to draw on. The young people's roles often required them to interact with lots of people, both colleagues and customers, and they felt that the regular interaction had contributed to their improvements. For example, a young person who had been placed in a café felt the experience of talking to customers every day had improved their confidence and communication.

Linked with this, there were also examples of young people who felt more resilient as a result of their placement experiences, having overcome issues at work. They felt that this would help them approach applying for work in the future:

> "The confidence that I've gained through the process, it also allowed me to be more resilient in [the] face of any rejections during the summer and during the job application process". (Young person, case study 2, LDP L)

Lastly, young people felt the programme had helped them develop their teamwork and leadership skills. As with other soft skills, these developments were linked to everyday interactions in the workplace, which support skills such as public speaking and specific roles and placements, such as leading a group of young people in a youth centre.

7.4.2.   Professional development

Young people also felt the programme had helped them develop professionally and improved their employability.

A key reason for these improvements cited by the young people was that the programme offered them an opportunity to gain real experience of professional life. Young people differentiated real work – a paid job with genuine responsibilities – from volunteering or unpaid work experience. This was perceived as an opportunity that would not have been available to them without the programme, particularly for young people who had not worked before.

> "I was trying to find maybe a part-time job, something on Saturdays or Sundays, but nowhere was really hiring. As well, even if they were, they probably weren't picking me because of the lack of experience. So, that's why I'm very grateful for this placement, and it gives me the experience that I need so that I can get hired in the future". (Young person, case study G)

According to the young people in the qualitative sample, this real work experience contributed to their professional development in the following ways:

First, it provided them with an opportunity to gain professional skills and experience. These included:

1. Sector-specific skills, such as sports coaching, preparing food or looking after children and young people. For example, one young person working in a youth centre described how they had learnt new approaches to behaviour management, which they had then been able to successfully implement with the young people they were working with later in the placement.
2. General professional skills that they could apply to future roles. Young people felt they learned to manage their own time more effectively, work more collaboratively with others and work more effectively under pressure as a result of their placement experiences.

Second, young people felt their experience would add credibility to their CVs and support them in gaining employment in the future.

> "The opportunity to work with kids. I've never done that before. So, getting experience in an area of expertise that I've never worked in before. Now, the fact that I've got that experience, I can put it on my CV". (Young person, case study 1, LDP G)

Third, for some young people in the qualitative sample, the programme helped them find or develop new professional interests and aspirations. Some of the young people enquired about roles with their placement employers, and others looked into further training opportunities in sectors of interest.

These outcomes also contributed to a more general feeling that the programme had made young people more employable and ready for work. Young people felt more motivated and confident in looking for employment as a result of the experience they gained on the programme.

> *"I feel like I'm more motivated now just because I got like a touch of working. I'm more motivated to go get a job, full-time work, and stay there instead of doing it for six weeks or a day thing or a couple months. I want to be able to stay in a job". (Young person, case study 3, LDP E).*

Supporting this, some young people were offered permanent employment by their placement providers.

Aligning with the perceptions of young people themselves, LDPs felt that for some young people, the placements had fostered professional interests and aspirations and given the young people the confidence to look for further opportunities in these fields.

> *"[She's] looked for apprenticeship positions within the same field, and she's put in three or four applications. She never would have done that before the Summer Work Programme". (Youth worker, case study 3, LDP E)*

In some cases, particularly where young people had been placed in youth centres, youth workers felt the young people had become passionate about youth work and, in some cases, had offered young people jobs after placements.

There was also a perception that the placements may have had benefits for some of the young people who started but did not complete them. In one example, a youth worker felt that although a young person withdrew from the programme after two weeks, the experience had prompted them to think about the future, which led to them deciding to go to college.

> *"She only lasted a couple of weeks, but it allowed her to figure out what she wants to do, and she's now going to college this year. If she'd not done that, she wouldn't have had a bit of time to think about it and could potentially still be in a chaotic life right now". (Youth worker, case study 3, LDP E)*

Referrers also shared examples of the programme leading to professional and educational opportunities for some young people, including apprenticeships, college and volunteering with the placement organisation. They felt that taking part in the programme had prompted young people to think about their futures.

Linked with this, referrers felt the programme had helped some young people become more independent, and they were relying less on their referral partners.

> *"They're feeling like they've grown up a little bit in the sense that they're starting to see the value in doing something positive and a positive activity for themselves and things like that. Although they still don't want to go to college and things like that, they're looking at different avenues, and they've started applying themselves, and they've not needed me as much, which I think is really good. It promoted independence". (Referrer, case study 1)*

The positive outcomes young people experienced, particularly with regard to professional development, were not universal, however. There were young people in the sample who felt they had gained little real work experience and had learned less from their placements as a result of this. There were two main factors that contributed to these experiences:

1. A lack of sufficient work or real responsibilities. In one example, young people described being left alone a lot, having nothing to do at their placement and feeling like they constantly needed to ask for direction. This led to a feeling that their placement was more similar to a volunteer role than real work experience.

   "It just didn't really feel like we were working. It just felt like we were going there to volunteer or something, and then we did get paid for it, but there was no structure to it, so not a lot of actual work experience". (Young person, focus group 2, LDP A)

2. Being given work that was not challenging or interesting. Young people were given basic tasks which were easy to complete, such as cleaning equipment, and when this was done, there was nothing else for them to do. Because of this, they felt like they didn't learn much from the placement.

These findings suggest that pay alone did not constitute real work experience for the young people and that structure and responsibilities were also important. It also suggests that some employers may benefit from more guidance on how to structure placements in a way that supports young people and provides them with a sense that they're both working and developing professionally.

7.4.3.   Financial support

The placements provided young people with the opportunity to earn money, which they felt they may not have had access to without the programme. This was valuable to young people, even those who felt they gained less from the placements themselves.

Young people reported feeling more financially independent as a result of the salary they earned and enjoyed having money to spend over the summer. Details on exactly how they used the money were not discussed in depth, but young people did report using the money they earned to:

1. Buy things they wanted or needed, such as clothes
2. Support family members; for example, one young person said they gave some of their salary to their mum
3. Pay for transport to and from their placements

Similarly, pay was highlighted by LDPs as a significant motivator for young people. They were drawn to the opportunity not only to gain real work experience but also to be paid while doing it. Because of this, they learned about financial management. LDPs felt it was particularly helpful that pay was dependent on punctuality and attendance, as it helped young people understand the importance of these things.

Because of this, LDPs felt that paying young people was an important contributing factor to their engagement with and completion of the programme, which, in turn, contributed to other personal and professional outcomes for young people. Our theory of change highlights that a plausible short-term impact of this programme was reduced financial precarity among young people. We did not fully explore this in our evaluation of year 1, although this is a theme which evaluators may wish to explore in subsequent years.

7.4.4.   Unintended consequences

LDPs and referrers highlighted a couple of potential adverse consequences of the programme, which may deserve some attention moving into year 2. For LDPs, these were associated with pay, notably pressure from family members for young people to give them all the money they had earned. In this case, youth workers provided support to help the young person approach the issue.

There was also a concern that the pay was too high and may negatively impact young people's expectations in moving forward due to employers being more likely to offer minimum wage. In the

qualitative research with young people, there was an example of young people declining job offers after their placements. This was partly due to the hours not aligning with college, or being offered a lower hourly rate.

From referrers, there were also perceived negative outcomes associated with young people being referred and not getting places on the programme. Referrers felt that rejecting or disappointing young people had significant consequences for their relationship.

> *"We cannot afford to casually disappoint our cohort because it leads to repercussions. These are young people who have had several different levels of neglect and rejection, so to promise them something and then take it away, we are like every negative influence in their [lives]". (Referrer, case study 3)*

The YPAG spoke positively about the feeling that having a job and having an income gave them but mentioned that once this ended, they were struggling to find employment, and this made them feel less hopeful about the future.

7.4.5. Outcomes for employers

Employers perceived the programme to be a valuable experience for young people and themselves, with a range of positive outcomes. They did, however, note that the programme increased the workload of staff and, at times, reduced organisational capacity.

1. Providing learning opportunities

The programme provided employers with several opportunities for learning and upskilling. Primarily, employers felt they had learned about supporting young people in placements. For some, this included how much support to provide and how often it should be offered. For others, it helped them learn how to support young people who lacked more basic professional skills.

Some employers also felt the programme had given them an opportunity to upskill more junior staff in people management and some of the challenges that this presents.

> *"Where that benefited me is that enabled me to give him more of a supervisory role…instead of me managing him, [a member of my team] was now managing or supervising somebody…It's only a young person, but some of the challenges where she's not here, do we need to have that conversation? What are you going to do about it, or something? That assisted me to maybe bring out his supervisory skills, bring out the skills that he needs to manage people as well, so that was quite good". (Employer, case study 1, LDP G)*

Due to late onboarding or, in some cases, being asked to take on additional placements, some employers felt they had learned how to increase their organisational capacity at short notice and build partnerships in the community. In one example, employers had taken on additional young people very close to the start of the placement. Due to their limited capacity, they had to reach out to other local organisations to request support with resources and space. They felt that because of this, the programme had helped strengthen their ties with these other organisations.

2. Noticing contributions young people made to the organisations

In some cases, employers felt that the work done by young people contributed to their organisation's work and provided much-needed additional support in busier periods. This was particularly true for employers that ran summer-based schemes (e.g. playgroups, sports camps, youth programmes).

"We were able to tell the parents that we have actually got extra staff out on the park with them and stuff. So, that was comforting for the parents as well. So, that was a particular feature that we didn't plan on having". (Employer, case study 2, LDP B)

Some employers felt that young people brought fresh ideas to their work and, in the case of employers working with children, felt the young people were good role models.

3. Recruiting full-time employees

Some employers felt that where placements were successful, the programme provided them with an opportunity to recruit full-time staff. In one example, a large employer offered 11 out of the 28 young people working with them a full-time job at the end of their placements. As well as supporting young people, this aligned with the organisational goals of giving young people careers, not jobs.

4. Taking part in a programme that aligned with the organisation's missions/goals

Employers with existing employability schemes and those in the youth sector saw the programme as an opportunity to work towards their goals of reducing youth violence, giving vulnerable young people work experience and involving young people in their organisation's decision-making.

5. Reducing organisational capacity

Some employers found that the programme had adverse outcomes for their staff's workload and capacity. For these employers, the time taken to train and supervise young people meant they had less time to complete their own tasks, and this resulted in staff working additional hours. Employers recognised that giving young people responsibilities should reduce their workloads, but their ability to do this depended on the young people they were working with and their abilities, which employers did not know in advance of the placements.

"So, there was a huge impact on us. I think we spent a lot of time supervising the placements, so our own workload suffered. We all had to put in extra hours to get through our normal workload because when we're supervising, we're not necessarily completing everything we need to be doing.... The idea is that our workload should be reduced because we're offboarding some of that onto the young people. That does take a lot of supervision, depending on the young people that you have, and you don't know that until you meet them, right?" (Employer, case study 1, LDP E)

7.4.6. Summary

Findings from the qualitative interviews with all stakeholders support the immediate outcomes and mechanisms articulated in the theory of the change for the Summer Jobs programme. Findings from young people, LDPs and referrers corroborate each other, highlighting the same outcomes. This suggests that the theory of change for the programme is a valid one to take forward to the pilot and efficacy trials. Although the sample of young people interviewed will not be representative of the young people participating in the programme, interviews with LDPs and referrers allow reflection on the impact of the programme on a broader selection of young people, adding credibility to these findings. Quantitative surveys, however, found little change in outcomes, with the exception of a small increase in employment attitudes. It is possible that there are no changes, but this may reflect issues with data accuracy and challenges with obtaining self-reported data from young people. It is also possible that the measures we have chosen in this feasibility study are not the correct ones to measure any changes. Now that we have qualitative data from this study providing more specific context to these outcomes, it will be possible to choose outcomes that reflect the mechanisms of the programme more accurately, e.g. self-confidence.

7.5.   Conclusions

Overall, we have high confidence that there is sufficient demand from LDPs, referrers, young people and employers for the Summer Jobs programme to progress to a pilot and efficacy trial. However, young people and LDPs told us that there should be a greater range of employment options in future years, but given the challenges with securing financial contributions from employers this year, there is a risk that the expected level of funding provided by this route will not be met.

There are questions to resolve on the optimal time for randomisation to take place and how to ensure that LDPs' concerns about randomisation are addressed and that they are content with the process. This would be a good area for focus in evaluation co-design work. Trial information materials will need to carefully communicate the randomisation process to minimise the disappointment that young people may feel by being placed in the control arm. It will also be important for the evaluation design for years 2 and 3 to think about how to incentivise post-intervention data collection and to consider the limitations we identified with using the SRDS and the pros and cons of other measurement options.

Qualitative data from all stakeholders suggests that the theory of change for the programme does not need major changes. However, the role of the youth worker and workplace supervisors in supporting young people's engagement with the programme was a major theme, and there may be value in considering how this can be measured as an intermediate outcome in the future.

7.6.   Cost evaluation

As part of the approval for year 2 of the Summer Jobs programme, UK Youth prepared an in-depth cost per participant for YEF. Due to a desire to focus resources on where the evaluation can provide unique data and the fact that cost evaluations are not generally provided at this stage, the cost evaluation has not been carried out for this feasibility study.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1. Key findings

We set out to establish whether Summer Jobs – which was the UK's first programme to provide young people who were vulnerable to youth violence with paid employment, alongside training and pastoral support from a youth worker – was deliverable, acceptable and evaluable. A summary of our key findings against each of these dimensions is as follows:

8.1.1. Deliverability

It is possible to deliver a programme which provides short-term, paid employment with high-intensity youth worker support to young people who are vulnerable to violence. Demand for the Summer Jobs programme from LDPs and young people was high. Demand from employers was sufficient. All the prespecified criteria for recruitment and retention were achieved. While a range of areas which could be improved in future years were identified, overall, the programme was delivered broadly as intended, with a high degree of fidelity. This is a considerable achievement given the novelty of the scheme and the limited time available for design and mobilisation this year.

8.1.2. Acceptability

The Summer Jobs programme was highly acceptable to the young people who participated in it. They perceived it as a good opportunity to do something productive over the summer, gain experience and earn money, although those not in education were concerned by the short-term nature of the programme. Young people would have liked a greater range of placements that were better matched to their interests and, in some cases, were frustrated by the limited tasks they were given during the placement. The payment was felt to be good, especially for those in the lower age range. However, there was inconsistent awareness of the access funds, and more communication with LDPs about how to use this is needed next year. Young people formed positive relationships with both their youth workers and placement supervisors and felt well-supported in the programme. There were examples of youth workers acting as a bridge between young people and placement supervisors, which was especially positive. The programme was also acceptable to employers, although they suggested additional training content and better communication with LDPs to more adequately support young people. Few employers paid the financial contribution, and it is unclear whether more would pay this in future years.

8.1.3. Evaluability

Overall, we have high confidence that there is sufficient demand from LDPs, referrers, young people and employers for the Summer Jobs programme to progress to a pilot and efficacy trial. However, young people and LDPs told us that there should be a greater range of employment options in future years, and given the challenges with securing financial contributions from employers this year, there is a risk that the expected level of funding provided by this route will not be met.

There are questions to resolve on the optimal time for randomisation to take place and how to ensure that LDPs' concerns about randomisation are addressed and that they are content with the process. It will also be important for the evaluation design for years 2 and 3 to think about how to incentivise post-intervention data collection and to consider the limitations we identified with using the SRDS and the pros and cons of other measurement options.

Qualitative data from all stakeholders suggest that the theory of change for the programme does not need major changes. However, the role of the youth workers and workplace supervisors in supporting young people's engagement with the programme was a major theme, and there may be value in considering how this can be measured as an intermediate outcome in the future.

8.2. Performance against prespecified progression criteria

Table 6 shows the performance of the Summer Jobs programme against the prespecified progression criteria. Performance against most of these criteria was reported to the YEF Grants and Evaluation Committee in September 2024, and, in order to meet the timetable for year 2, a decision was taken based on that data to progress to the pilot trial.

Table 6: Performance against progression criteria (as specified in the protocol)

Criterion	Description	Target set	RAG	Status (RAG)
Referral volume	The volume of referrals to the programme received by the middle of July	800	Red: <400 Amber: 400–599 Green: 600+	835
Referral suitability	The proportion of young people referred to the programme who meet the eligibility criteria	75%	Red: <60% Amber: 60–69% Green: 70–100%	81%
Registrations	The volume of registrations to the programme received by the middle of July	600	Red: <300 Amber: 300–499 Green: 500+	623
Capacity	The number of employment placements available by the middle of July	700	Red: <350 Amber: 350–499 Green: 500+	520
Young people take-up	The proportion of eligible young people offered a placement who accept a placement	80%	Red: <60% Amber: 60–79% Green: 80–100%	84%

Retention of delivery organisations	The proportion of LDPs who have delivered the programme to a sufficient standard who indicate willingness to sign up for the next year	75%	Red: <50% Amber: 50–69% Green: 70–100%	93%
Retention of placements	The proportion of placements which employers indicate they would be willing to provide the next year.	75%	Red: <50% Amber: 50–69% Green: 70–100%	71% (this is of unique employers in the satisfaction survey)
Retention of young people	The proportion of young people accepting a placement who completed the minimal placement requirements: they attend 80% of the pre-employment preparation, including some one-to-one time with the youth worker, they attend 60% of the placement hours and they have three check-in sessions with a youth worker.	80%	Red: <50% Amber: 50–74% Green: 75–100%	86%[41]
Retention of youth workers	The proportion of youth workers staying in their role until the end of the programme.	80%	Red: <60% Amber: 60–79% Green: 80–100%	83%[42]

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[41] Note that due to the high amount of missing data for attendance in the preparation week and one-to-one check-ins, we have calculated this for the 305 participants we have complete data for. However, we know that 92% of participants completed at least 60% of their employment placements.
[42] Excludes the two LDPs who did not provide data on youth worker retention

Fidelity	The proportion of LDPs delivering the core components of the pre-employment preparation week as intended	80%	Red: <60% Amber: 60–79% Green: 80–100%	86%
Acceptability	The proportion of young people, employers and youth workers who indicate that Summer Jobs is acceptable	70% for each group	Red: 1+ group <50% Amber: 1+ group 50–70% Green: All groups >71-100%	Young people: 95% Employers: 80% Youth workers: 86%
Outcome data collection	The proportion of young people joining the programme (i.e. attending at least some of the pre-employment preparation week)[43] who also complete >75% of the end-line survey outcome measures during the feasibility study	75% for each group	Red: <40% Amber: 40–75% Green: 76-100%	59%

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[43] We are defining the denominator as those joining the programme since we think that some people who haven't completed baseline data collection will slip through and join the programme due to the compressed timelines. In a future trial, the denominator would be those randomised.

8.3. Evaluator judgement on readiness for trial

We made our recommendation to progress to a pilot trial for the following reasons:

- The volume of referrals and registrations and the number of employment placements were high, demonstrating a high demand for the programme from young people and those supporting them and sufficient interest from employers to ensure that a similar number of placements are available next year.

- A high percentage of young people who were offered a placement accepted it, providing a further indication of demand for the programme from young people and suggesting that the placements on offer to young people were sufficiently interesting for them to participate.

- For those matched to a placement, retention in the programme was high, with over 80% of young people meeting the targets for attendance at the pre-employment placement week and their work placement.

- The data shows that young people are satisfied with the programme, with over 95% reporting being satisfied or very satisfied overall.

8.4. Recommendations for programme delivery

Our findings and suggestions from the key stakeholders in the Summer Jobs programme suggest a number of recommendations to improve the targeting and acceptability of the programme in years 2 and 3.

Recruitment of young people

We recommend refining the eligibility criteria. This, combined with increasing the volume of referrals from external agencies working closely with young people at risk of violence, can ensure the programme reaches those who need it most. It is also important to improve the proportion of those referrals that successfully enter the Summer Jobs programme. We recommend that UK Youth:

- **Considers restricting the age range for participation from 16–24 to 16–20 to ensure that those most likely to be diverted from violence are able to participate**. Lowering the age range to 20 or under would help ensure most participants are in education or training or had recently left and had little experience in the labour market. A theme of our work is that this is a critical point to intervene and divert young people away from exploitation and offending, and it is this cohort that is most likely to have a short period of free time over the summer rather than a longer-term need for a job.
- **Considers restricting the use of the more subjective eligibility criteria, such as at risk of criminal exploitation.** While those who genuinely meet this criteria are eligible for the programme, this is a subjective judgement which is open to misinterpretation or misapplication. In our view, only those who are referred from external agencies should be able to use this as the sole eligibility criterion for inclusion, and internal referrals using this criterion should only be accepted if they also meet one of the other more objective criteria. This will ensure the programme reaches its target population.
- **Reviews how eligibility is assessed and the information young people are provided.** Ensuring that eligible young people are willing to participate in and understand the purpose of the assessment and that this doesn't negatively affect their willingness to take part is crucial.
- **Supports LDPs in building relationships with the relevant external agencies to encourage referrals and support information sharing**. This should include sharing information on the success from year 1 of delivery, providing assurances on concerns that referral agencies raised

during our evaluation and discussing the changes which will be made in years 2 and 3 to better support vulnerable young people.

- **Creates accessible and appealing materials which professionals (LDPs and referrers from external agencies) can share with young people.** This will support them in advertising the programme to young people who may not see themselves as at risk of violence.
- **Improves systems for managing referrals from external agencies.** To better support the larger number of referrals that will be needed in years 2 and 3, there is a need to ensure that LDPs have the systems and capacity to manage this and avoid the issues highlighted in this report.
- **Considers restrictions on the proportion of internal referrals that each LDP can make.** Setting limits for each LDP on the number of young people who were already known to them or receiving services prior to the Summer Jobs programme should incentivise them to ensure they are driving up the volume of referrals from external agencies and the number of those referrals who enrol in the scheme.

Recruitment of employers

In years 2 and 3, there is the need to increase the number and diversify the range of employers participating in the Summer Jobs programme, as well as ensuring that sufficient placements are secured across recruitment areas. Beginning recruitment earlier will help with this, but we also recommend that UK Youth:

- **Works closely with the LDPs to develop a set of promotional materials for employers in their area.** These should focus on addressing the concerns that employers have identified, especially around the challenges of employing vulnerable young people, by providing information about the support that young people will receive during the placement and sharing case studies from year 1 to highlight successes.
- **Develops a media and communication plan to raise awareness of the scheme among large national employers.** Ensuring a greater volume and wider variety of employers are aware of the programme and want to support it will be key to diversifying the range of employment opportunities on offer and matching young people with roles which meet their areas of interest. Encouraging business networks, civil society and local and national government to share and promote the scheme will be key to raising awareness and driving demand.
- **Considers the viability of the financial contribution that each employer is currently asked to pay per placement offered.** There is a good rationale for seeking a financial contribution from employers, as it helps to finance the programme and ensures their commitment to it. However, given the low number of employers who paid this and the concerns raised by some, it is worth considering whether this is acting as a barrier to participation for some employers and whether this might affect the ability of the programme to diversify the range of placements.

Selection of young people

It is important that external agencies and LDPs continue to refer young people to the programme only if it is safe to do so and they believe the young people have a genuine chance of completing it successfully. However, it is also essential that they are not overly cautious in their decision-making and remember that the primary aim is to test whether this programme can support vulnerable young people in avoiding violence. We recommend UK Youth:

- **Reiterates to LDPs and referral agencies the primary purpose of this programme.** This should include addressing any concerns that referral agencies have about whether young people will be adequately supported and sharing case studies of vulnerable young people who completed the scheme successfully.

Support for employers

To address the concerns that employers raised with us about their ability to support vulnerable young people, we recommend UK Youth:

- **Strengthens the relationship between LDPs and employers, with a focus on supporting vulnerable young people in their placements.** This could include setting expectations for the level and timeliness of information-sharing about the young people and their needs, meeting with employers prior to placements to agree on a way of working together during the placement and following up with employers after check-ins to ensure young people's needs are being met.
- **Reviews and updates the content and timing of the employer training.** This should include considering whether different types of training are needed, depending on employers' familiarity with working with vulnerable young people, and ensuring that it covers practical issues for employers that are less used to working with this group on how to support and work with them.

Programme format

To improve the acceptability of the programme by the key stakeholders, we recommend UK Youth address the following areas:

- **Revamping the preparation week to make it more engaging and appropriate for young people**. This should include ensuring that LDPs understand the importance of this and that they are covering it in an engaging way, reviewing the materials to address concerns that content is less appropriate for older age groups and exploring the feasibility of including placement-specific content.
- **Reviewing the sufficiency of the pastoral support for young people, which the youth workers provide.** Given that some young people needed more than three support visits and changing the eligibility criteria for the programme would mean they are working with a younger and more vulnerable group, it is important that UK Youth works with LDPs to ensure they have the resources and capacity to fully support all young people on the programme in years 2 and 3.
- **Standardising the use and increasing take-up of the access fund.** We found that this was inconsistently provided, and some young people were not aware of it. LDPs should be provided with clearer guidelines on how this should be used and encouraged to make full use of it to support young people to take up their placements.
- **Providing a letter of support which young people can share with prospective employers in the future.** There is evidence from the US that an autogenerated letter can increase programme participants' chances of finding work and their earnings. Ensuring this is fully implemented in future years will be critical given the interest in the impact the programme has on employment prospects.
- **Reviewing and updating the pre-programme training for LDPs.** This will ensure that the training contains relevant information for the LDPs and provides them with sufficient support to provide good preparation week training.

8.5. Recommendations for evaluation

There will be additional complexities in evaluating the programme in future years, and through our feasibility study, we have identified a number of areas which will need careful consideration if the pilot study and efficacy trial are to produce robust results. These include:

- **Addressing difficulties in working out how young people were referred into the programme.** The approach we used led to some ambiguities in the data, and ensuring there is robust data on how young people were referred will be important to monitoring whether the volume from external agencies is increasing.
- **Defining the time at which randomisation occurs and the potential impact this has on comparability between the treatment and control groups.** This will require balancing the need for timely referrals, registrations and employment matching with the potential drop-off after

randomisation. This should include exploring whether right-to-work checks and other activities which might result in loss to follow-up can happen prior to randomisation.

- **Minimising the impact of randomisation on the control group.** Both young people and youth workers expressed concerns about randomisation and the impact on the control group. Ensuring participants are properly informed about the process of randomisation and identifying any possible control group offering will be important to minimise the impact of randomisation and to maximise the acceptability of the trial.

- **Ensuring the quantity and quality of data collection is sufficient to allow for a rigorous analysis of impact.** As is often the case with evaluations, completion of the post-intervention surveys was lower than we would have liked despite the incentive offered for responding. Given the importance of collecting this data from both treatment and control group participants, developing and testing approaches to increase the response rate is critical, and in our view, shortening the survey and/or increasing the incentive for completion is worth consideration. Other things, e.g. keeping warm calls/texts and in-person opportunities for data collection, might also be worth consideration.

- **Reviewing the questions which have lower completion rates.** This includes the SRDS and consideration as to whether this – or an alternative measure of offending, such as arrest records or Police National Computer Data on convictions – would be the best primary outcome, especially since the SRDS is not validated over age 18.

- **Ensuring that young people are informed about the purpose of the survey questions.** Given the concerns raised with us, it is clear that some people did not fully understand why they were being asked certain questions, and ensuring a better understanding of this is likely to support the quantity and quality of the data collected.

- **Considering the benefits of collecting longer-term self-report data.** Due to time constraints, we were only able in year 1 to collect self-report data immediately after young people had completed the programme. There may be value in understanding whether any of the outcomes seen at this point are sustained over a 6–12 month period and the trajectory and rate of any change.

8.6. Potential limitations and lessons learned

There are a few limitations of the current feasibility study which should be considered in interpreting the results we present.

- Due to limitations in how we collected data in the referral and registration forms, we are not able to estimate the proportion of young people known to the LDPs at each stage of the recruitment process and how and whether LDPs prioritised referrals internally. However, qualitative data and the potential overuse of more subjective eligibility criteria mean that we recommend putting measures in place to ensure that sufficient external referrals are registered and matched to placements in future years.

- The response rates to our user satisfaction surveys were not high, so results may not be generalisable to all stakeholders who participated in the Summer Jobs programme. Although the results triangulate well with the qualitative data, there are likely to be biases in who participated in qualitative interviews and focus groups.

- The findings around deliverability and acceptability are based on findings from year 1. If changes are made to the eligibility criteria or the age range for the programme or efforts are made to increase the number of referrals from external agencies and the number of these which go on to placement, this may have impacts on both deliverability and acceptability, and these things will have to be closely monitored in year 2. For example, recruiting a cohort that is less engaged with youth work services may result in higher levels of attrition at all stages of the process. Removing more subjective eligibility criteria is likely to result in a cohort with higher needs. This may result in

higher levels of dropout as well as lower levels of youth worker satisfaction if the support leads to burnout. There may also be implications for employers in supporting young people.

- As discussed in the methods section, we wanted to undertake longitudinal qualitative work in the case studies. This was not possible due to challenges with scheduling interviews. We do not think this impacts our findings since young people and employers were able to recall the duration of the Summer Jobs placement; however, the feasibility of such data collection should be considered in future years.

- We were not able to interview people who dropped out of the programme either before pre-employment preparation week or during their placement; however, we tried to capture their experiences through interviews with youth workers.

Annexes

Annex A: Summary of the programme using the TIDieR framework

Name: Provide a name or phrase that describes the intervention.	The Summer Jobs programme provides young people at risk of violence in the UK with short-term paid employment during the summer holidays.
Why: Describe any rationale, theory, or goal of the elements essential to the intervention.	Summer Youth Employment Schemes (SYEPs) are common in the US, with evidence suggesting they can reduce crime and violence and improve engagement in education. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is interested in exploring whether these findings can be replicated in the UK.

What - Materials: Describe any physical or informational materials used in the intervention, including those provided to participants or used in intervention delivery or in training of intervention providers. Provide information on where the materials can be accessed.	The following materials will be provided;
	• To the local delivery partners:
	    ○ Information pack
	    ○ Onboarding and training
	    ○ Curriculum for young person preparation week
	• To the employer:
	    ○ Employer information pack
	    ○ Young person's employment passport
	    ○ Onboarding and training
	• To the young people:
	    ○ Information pack
	    ○ Preparation week training and materials run by the local delivery partner
	    ○ Any training materials provided by the employer

What - Procedures: Describe each of the procedures, activities, and/or processes used in the intervention, including any enabling or support activities.	The programme has three core components: 1. One week of paid pre-employment preparation Each young person will complete a week of training and onboarding, led by their youth worker from their assigned local delivery partner. In this week, they will be introduced to the programme, their employer, and complete various training modules to prepare them for the workplace. They will be told about the support mechanisms available to them throughout the programme and the role of each person they will be engaging with. They will also complete practical preparation activities, such as making sure they are able to travel to their place of work, and have access to the necessary materials (technology, clothes etc). 2. Five weeks of paid employment (up to 25h per week)

	Each young person will be allocated to an employer, wherever possible on the basis of interest, but also dependent on their location, needs and availability of suitable opportunities.
	They will be paid for 5 weeks of work, up to 25h per week. Their payment will be an online transfer processed on a weekly basis, and they will be paid for hours actually worked (to be monitored by the employer).
	Throughout the employment, young people will have access to various supports:
	a. Their workplace supervisor, who will be monitoring their attendance and performance during employment.
	b. Wherever possible, employers will also be asked to provide the young person with a workplace mentor.
	3. Youth worker support
	Young people will be meeting with their youth worker three times over the course of the placement for regular check-ins and support sessions.
Who: For each category of intervention provider (such as psychologist, nursing assistant), describe their expertise, background, and any specific training given.	1. Youth worker (Local delivery partner)
	The youth worker will be the main point of contact between the employer, young person and local delivery partner. They will be responsible for ensuring that the young person is well supported within their placement, their needs are being met, and they have the adequate resources and training to engage with the employment opportunity.
	2. Workplace supervisor (employer)
	The workplace supervisor will be responsible for allocating tasks to the young person, monitoring their completion, and providing everyday support to ensure they know what is expected of them in their placement. They will also be monitoring the young person's attendance and liaising with the local delivery partner to ensure the young person is paid for their hours worked.
	3. Workplace mentor (employer)
	Wherever possible, employers will also be asked to provide an in-work mentor for the young person. This mentor will be responsible for overseeing the young person's development in the placement, and ensuring that they are being well supported in their day-to-day tasks. Their overarching role will be to advocate for the young person's needs within the organisation.
How: Describe the modes of delivery (such as face to face or by some other mechanism such as internet or telephone) of the intervention and whether it was provided individually or in a group.	The work placement will be delivered in person, on an individual basis. Some employers will be providing placements for more than one young person, but they will still be supported on an individual basis; i.e. they will each have their own supervisor, youth worker and mentor.
	The preparation week will be delivered in a hybrid pattern, with most of the sessions with the youth worker happening in-person. However, the young people will also be doing

| | some self-directed independent preparation which they can complete remotely.

The training and onboarding for employers and local delivery partners will take place remotely, in virtual sessions. |
|---|---|
| **Where:** Describe the type(s) of location(s) where the intervention occurred, including any necessary infrastructure or relevant features. | The Summer Jobs programme will be delivered in 4 Local Authorities in London (Croydon, Hackney, Haringey and Southwark) and 4 areas outside London (Birmingham Central, Coventry, Wolverhampton and Greater Manchester).

The employers and local delivery partners will be recruited within these local authorities to minimise travel time for young people; they will not be expected to travel more than 30mins to attend their work placement. |
| **When and how much:** Describe the number of times the intervention was delivered and over what period of time including the number of sessions, their schedule, and their duration, intensity, or dose. | Young people will be completing one week of preparation for employment, and then subsequently five weeks of placement work for five days per week. They will not be working more than 25h per week.

The programme will take place during the school summer holidays (July - August 2024), with some flexibility in timelines for older participants who are not restricted by school timetables. |
| **Tailoring:** If the intervention was planned to be personalised, titrated or adapted, then describe what, why, when and how. | **Preparation week**

The pre-employment preparation curriculum will operate on a core-flex model, meaning local delivery partners will be told which elements of the training are compulsory, but youth workers will have flexibility to adapt the contents and delivery of the curriculum to each young person's needs. Young people will also likely have varying training to complete in this prep week depending on the industry they are completing their placement in, and whether their role requires any specific qualifications (such as food handling, health and safety, etc.).

Placement adaptations

Each young person's placement experience will likely differ based on the industry and employer they are allocated to. They will also be receiving differing amounts of support depending on their individual needs, past work experience, and demographic profile. Employers will have the flexibility to tailor their management and support to each young person based on their needs. |
| **Modification:** If the intervention was modified during the course of the study, describe the changes (what, why, when, and how). | There were no modifications during the course of the study. |

How well (planned): If adherence or fidelity was assessed, describe how and by whom, and if any strategies were used to maintain or improve fidelity, describe them.	N/A
How well (actual): If actual adherence or fidelity was assessed, describe the extent to which the intervention was delivered as planned.	N/A

Annex B: Summary of the LDPs

ID	Area	Size/type
A	West Midlands	Small charity with one youth center
B (Case study)	North West	Small charity with one youth center
C	North West	Regional charity with multiple youth centers
D	London	National charity with multiple youth centers
E (Case study)	London	Social enterprise with one youth centre
F	North West	Small charity with one youth center
G (Case study)	West Midlands	Council-managed with multiple youth centers
H	North West	Small charity with one youth center
I	London	Small trust with one youth center
J	North East	Small charity with one youth center
K	London	Small charity with one youth center
L	Nationwide	National charity with multiple youth centers
M	East Midlands	Regional charity with one youth center
N	London	Small charity with one youth center

Annex C: Characteristics breakdown for the qualitative data collection sample

Table C.1. Characteristics of Young People participating in interviews

Characteristic	Group	Count
Age	16-18	23
	19-21	2
	22-25	2
Gender	Male	13
	Female	13
	Other	0
Ethnicity	White	3
	Asian	2
	Black	4
	Mixed	2
	Other	0
Referral Reason	Referral Agency	7
	Internal (LDP)	3
	Word of mouth	3

Table C.2. Characteristics of Referral Agencies participating in interviews

Characteristic	Group	Count
Region	North West	1
	London	1
	West Midlands	2
Type of referrer	Youth Offenders	1
	Career Agency	1
	Education setting	1
	Children's services	1

Table C.3. Characteristics of Employers participating in interviews

Characteristic	Group	Count
Region	North West	3
	London	3
	West Midlands	4
	Multiple areas	3
Sector	Private	4
	Public	2
	Third	7

Annex D. Flowchart (with additional context and annotation)
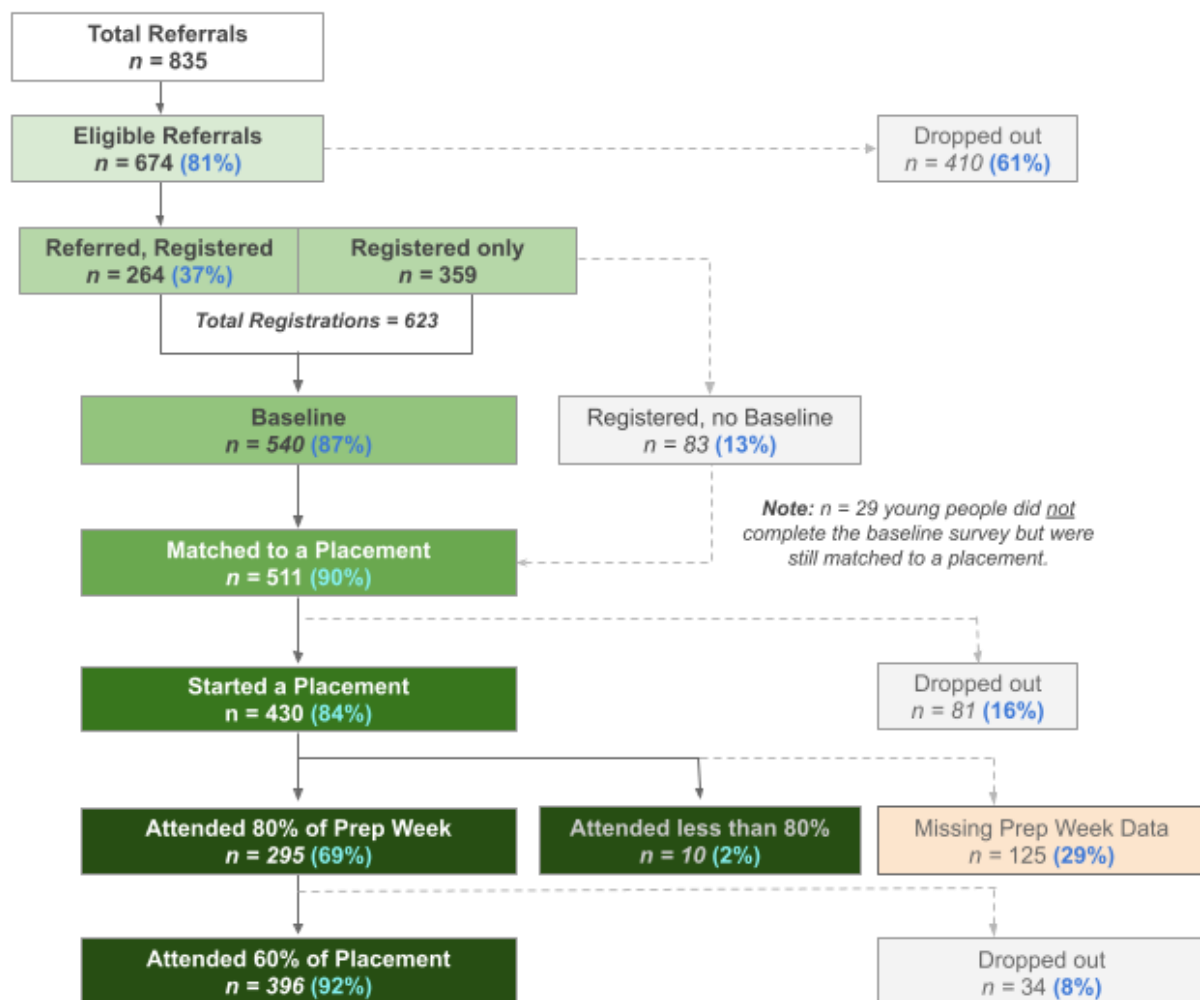
Please note the following:

- Those who are classified as "Registered only" are young people who were not referred onto the programme but still registered on the programme. We assume that these young people were already known to delivery partners and/or youth workers.
- The 90% of young people matched to a placement is calculated as a fraction of those who were *onboarded* (i.e., completed the baseline survey) and those who were also *not onboarded but still matched* (i.e., no baseline survey but a placement still offered). Thus, we calculate: 511 / (540 + 29) = 0.898 or 90%
- The data do not clearly discern whether an individual "accepted" a placement. Thus, we assume that young people who were recorded as having more than 0 hours in their payroll data as having *accepted* a placement.
- The preparation week data were filled in by youth workers and much of this data was missing
- Please note that due to the completeness of the data from different sources, the data used to calculate (1) whether a young person attended 80% of preparation week, and (2) 60% of their placement are sourced from two distinct sets of data:
  - (1) is sourced from attendance record sheets which were filled out by local delivery partners

Please note that from the "Matched to a placement" to the "Started placement" stage, young people may have dropped out for one of four reasons we identified, however, the data does not allow us to determine

the reasons: (1) DBS check failed (2) No available placement, (3) Refused placement, or (4) Young Person dropped out before start of placement

Annex E. Outcome survey statistics (baseline and endline)

In addition to measuring young persons' aspirations, employability skills, and self-efficacy (reported in main text under "Evaluability"), the baseline and endline surveys also included the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS). The SDQ is intended to capture behavioural and emotional difficulties experienced by young people. Below in Figure E.1, we visualise the results of the mean scores reported at baseline and endline. Although there is variation between the scores at the two timepoints, we would caution on two key aspects. Firstly, overlapping error bars suggest that on average, scores are highly variable and unlikely to represent true change. Secondly, young people score relatively lower on the SDQ in general.

The sub-scales of internalising and externalising behaviours are scores with a possible maximum of 20 while the prosocial scale has a possible maximum of 4 and the total difficulties score a possible maximum of 40.

Figure E.1. Average score on 3 SDQ sub-scales and total score at baseline and endline
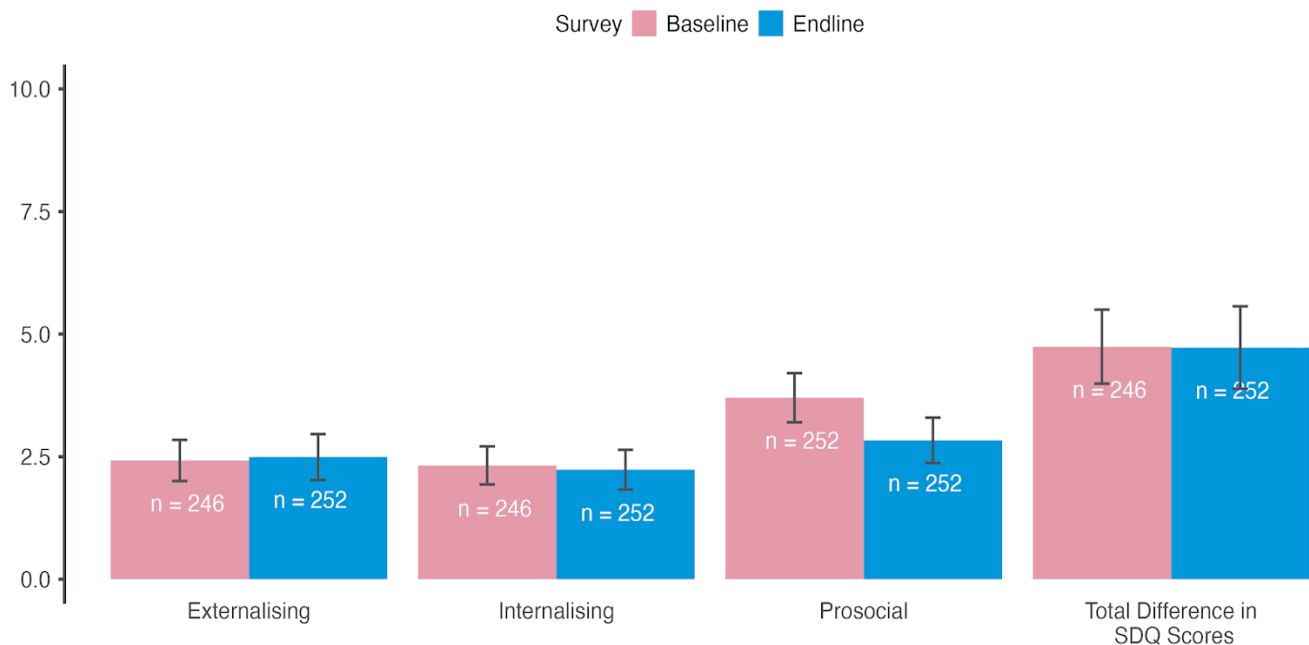
The SRDS was administered to 20% of young people at baseline and endline. These results are summarised in Table E.1 below. Note that the number of participants reporting any offending behaviours was highly skewed towards 0. Additionally, the higher frequency of offending reported in the endline may be driven by the outlying maximum score of 121 which was reported by only 1 person; the second highest score was 30.

Table E.1. Summary of SRDS scores at baseline and endline

Metric	Baseline *Number of offending behaviours reported*	Endline *Number of offending behaviours reported*	Baseline *Frequency of Offending*	Endline *Frequency of Offending*
Mean	0.9	1.1	2.6	6.1
Standard Deviation	1.4	1.8	7.2	17.2
Minimum	0	0	0	0
Maximum	6	11	55	121
Median	0	1	0	1
Number of Observations	69	55	69	55

Note: the possible maximum for the number of offending behaviours is 17 and for the frequency of offending is 187

*Table E.2. Summary of response rates and durations at baseline and endlin*e (*notes below table for ease of interpretation*)

	Baseline		Endline	
	n	%	n	%
Sent Survey	623	-	430	-
Attempted Survey	540	87%	252	59%
Completed Survey	529	98%	207	82%
Answered at least 80% of **all questions**	529	97%	206	82%
Shown SRDS	129	24%	55	22%
Average % of **SRDS questions** answered	-	100%	-	100%
Completed the survey in *less* than 7 minutes	29	5%	69	27%
Minutes taken				
Duration (Average)	25		45	
Duration (Top 25% excluded)	20		13	
Median duration overall	14		9	
Median duration with SRDS	15		9	
Median duration without SRDS	14		8	

Please Note for Table E2:
* For the second row (Attempted Survey) the % display the % sent versus % attempted the survey.
* Subsequent columns are all a % of the attempted responses
* Note that the maximum number of SRDS questions was 22 for under 18 and 15 for those aged 18 and over
* We chose 7 minutes as this is <u>less than half</u> of the estimated duration of 15 minutes and we approximate that these young people may have skipped through the survey without reading

Annex F. Demographic Breakdown of Registrations

Table F.1. Demographic Breakdown of Registrations (Total n = 623)

Demographic	Category	Count	Percentage
Age			
	16 to 17	230	37%
	18 to 19	242	39%
	20 and over	144	23%
	Missing Data	7	1%
Ethnicity			
	White	158	25%
	Asian / Asian British	84	13%
	Black/ Black British /Caribbean / African	286	46%
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	80	13%
	Other ethnic group	15	2%
Gender			
	Female	208	33%
	Male	413	66%
	Non binary	2	0%
Highest Level of Education Completed			
	GCSE or equivalent	304	49%
	A/ AS levels	66	11%
	Other qualifications	70	11%
	Missing Data	183	29%
Educational Status			
	In School	90	14%
	Left School	233	37%
	In an Apprentice programme	14	2%
	In Further Education / Higher Education	172	28%
	Other	31	5%
	Missing Data	83	13%