West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership

Custody Diversion Programme – Final evaluation report

March 2025



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Executive summary

Introduction

The Custody Diversion Programme (CDP) is a key part of West Yorkshire's violence reduction strategy. This provides targeted one-to-one mentoring support delivered by caseworkers with lived experience to young people aged 10-25 at risk of, or involved in, serious youth violence and offending.

Commissioned by the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), the programme is delivered through a partnership between West Yorkshire Police, the West Yorkshire Liaison and Diversion Service (L&D), and St Giles Trust.

Since its launch in 2020, the CDP has worked across all five West Yorkshire Police custody suites (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield), offering young people an opportunity to engage with trusted caseworkers and access positive alternatives to offending.

About the evaluation

This report builds on Cordis Bright's previous work evaluating the CDP: a scoping phase explored evaluation options and developed a Theory of Change; a second phase worked with partners to set up a pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT) and produce a range of associated outputs. When it became clear that an RCT was not possible for the CDP, partners agreed on a mixed methods evaluation to explore impact, the CDP's role in the service landscape, and opportunities for development.

This report presents findings from this final stage, conducted between August 2024-February 2025, incorporating insights from earlier phases.

Supporting young people in West Yorkshire

The CDP provides flexible, one-to-one support tailored to the needs of young people in West Yorkshire who are at risk of, or involved in, serious youth violence and offending. At the heart of the programme is relationship-based mentoring, delivered by St Giles caseworkers with lived experience. This approach fosters trust, engagement, and long-term positive change. The CDP provides support in a way that is flexible and responsive to each young person's needs:

- **Support is delivered flexibly** Young people meet with caseworkers inperson, one-to-one in settings that work best for them, including schools, community spaces, or at home.
- There is no fixed time limit The programme provides long-term, ongoing support, ensuring young people remain engaged at their own pace.
- Sessions are tailored to individual needs Caseworkers adapt their approach based on each young person's risks, goals, and circumstances.

"We have normal conversations. We build a rapport where they feel they can be comfortable with you."

St Giles caseworker

Most young people receive long-term support, with an average of 60 sessions. Sessions focus on key areas of personal development, decision-making, and emotional regulation.

Characteristics of young people supported

Referral total

234 young people were referred between 2022 and 2025.

2022-23: 90 referred 2023-24: 112 referred 2024-25(Q1/Q2): 32 referred

Sex

96% of young people supported were male.

Age

The average age was 15, with the largest group by age in the middle of the 10-24 range: over half (56%) were aged 14-16.

Ethnicity

The largest group by ethnicity was those from a White background (64%). 36% were from racially minoritised backgrounds, compared to 23% of West Yorkshire's population.

Given young people of colour are overrepresented in the criminal justice system nationally and within West Yorkshire, the CDP appears to be working with a broadly representative sample.

Self-reported offending data and police data show complexity of need among young people referred, highlighting significant behavioural and emotional challenges, including difficulties with peer relationships and managing emotions, and involvement in serious and repeated offending for some, including carrying weapons and violent offences. This confirms that the CDP is reaching young people at risk of continued offending.

Impact on young people

This evaluation found that the CDP is making a meaningful difference in young people's lives. Through trusted relationships, personalised support, and practical interventions, young people have reported positive changes in their decision-making, wellbeing, and future aspirations. Key areas of impact include:

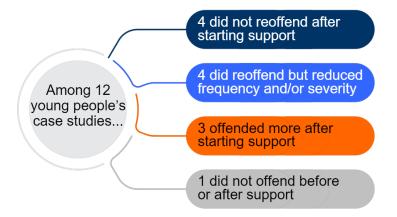
- **Improved decision-making** Young people reported making safer choices, avoiding criminal activity, and distancing themselves from negative peers.
- Increased engagement in education and employment Young people reported improved school attendance, with some progressing to employment.

- Enhanced emotional wellbeing and resilience Young people developed stronger coping mechanisms, anger management, and self-confidence.
- Strengthened family and social relationships Some case studies highlighted improved family communication and social interactions. One young person reported:

"When I first spoke to [caseworker] I was a hothead. I would say I've chilled myself out. I'm more steady. I'm taking the time to think."

Young person

Reduced reoffending and risk-taking behaviours – Case studies using
police data showed that in 8 out of 12 cases young people either did not
reoffend after starting support (4 young people) or the frequency of their
offending was reduced (4 young people) after starting support. This is
summarised below:



Programme strengths

The CDP's effectiveness is driven by its unique approach, particularly the use of caseworkers with lived experience. Their credibility, relatability, and ability to build trust make a significant impact on young people's willingness to engage:

- **Legitimacy and relatability** Caseworkers' lived experience makes them credible, engaging, and relatable, helping young people open up.
- **Building trust and rapport** The relationship-focused approach ensures young people feel supported, increasing engagement and positive change.
- Targeted support to reduce offending Sessions focus on real life scenarios, helping young people understand risks and make better decisions.
- **Providing practical coping mechanisms** Young people develop strategies for managing anger, emotions, and conflict, and improving their confidence.
- A sense of hope and purpose The CDP offers positive alternatives, helping young people set constructive goals and move away from offending.

"[Caseworkers] have been through the system. So, the challenges and the traumas, what the young people go through – we've been there. We can use our past experiences to help shape their futures."

St Giles caseworker

System impacts

The CDP has the potential to play a valuable role in West Yorkshire's approach to youth violence reduction, working alongside existing services to provide early intervention and tailored support:

- Caseworkers with lived experience are positively influencing perceptions within youth services, both among young people and other professionals, highlighting the value of credible, relatable mentors.
- Opportunities exist to strengthen engagement with wider services such as schools, social care, and police to enhance referral pathways and better integrate the CDP into the wider youth support system.
- The CDP has the potential to reduce demand on policing and education by diverting young people from reoffending and increasing engagement in education and employment.

Learning from implementation

The evaluation highlights key lessons from the implementation of the CDP that can inform future delivery and development:

- Clarifying the CDP's role in an evolving system The youth support landscape in West Yorkshire has continued to develop since the CDP was introduced, with new services emerging. Partners identified some uncertainty about where the CDP fits within this changing system, particularly in relation to early intervention and criminal exploitation services.
- Fluctuations in referral patterns While the CDP has been effective in engaging young people once referred, referral numbers have varied over time. Some partners expressed uncertainty about the programme's target cohort and eligibility criteria, which may have impacted consistency in referrals.
- Variation in partnership engagement The CDP has strong relationships with Liaison & Diversion (L&D). However, engagement with schools, social care, and wider services has been inconsistent, with some partners reporting limited awareness of the CDP and uncertainty about how to engage with it.
- Challenges in monitoring and data use The CDP made progress in strengthening data collection processes, but this remains inconsistent, with limited visibility of how data is used to inform delivery and decisions. Some partners expressed interest in more oversight of referral and outcome trends.
- Different perspectives on caseworker involvement in custody suites While some partners saw benefits to caseworkers engaging young people

directly within custody, others raised concerns about how this could affect young people's perception of the CDP's independence from police. There was no clear consensus on the most effective approach.

Recommendations

To enhance the programme's impact and sustainability, the CDP should focus on the following key areas:



Build on success by clearly defining the target cohort – Define the target cohort to clarify who the CDP is best placed to support, ensuring alignment with wider youth services and consistency in referral criteria and pathways.



Strengthen the programme model through documentation and manualisation – Develop a clear, documented programme model and an operational manual to improve consistency in delivery, scalability, and understanding of the CDP's core activities and outcomes.



Build on momentum and ensure safety and risk management by refining monitoring processes – Standardise data collection and tracking of referrals, engagement, and outcomes, ensuring the data is used strategically to demonstrate impact, inform decision-making, and strengthen future evaluations.



Strengthen future evaluation to capture impact – Build on improved monitoring systems to enable robust evaluation, aligning timelines with commissioning cycles so that findings directly inform future funding and service design decisions.



Strengthen partnership working to increase the programme's reach — Expand referral pathways by increasing engagement with schools, social care, and police, strengthen structured communication and collaboration with youth services, and explore the best approach to custody suite involvement to ensure young people receive the right support at the right time.

Conclusion

The evaluation provides emerging qualitative and quantitative evidence that the CDP is achieving its objectives and positively impacting young people involved in and at risk of serious youth violence. The programme's unique approach, centred on caseworkers with lived experience, is seen by young people, caseworkers and partners as a key strength.

To maximise its impact and sustainability, the CDP must review and refine its target cohort, strengthen referral pathways, improve monitoring, evaluation and learning processes, more clearly define and document its approach, and enhance partnership working. Implementing these recommendations will ensure the CDP continues to play a vital role in reducing youth violence and reoffending in West Yorkshire.

1 Introduction

1.1 About the Custody Diversion Programme

The Custody Diversion Programme (CDP) was developed through a partnership between West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Liaison and Diversion Service (L&D), and St Giles Trust. Delivery began in January 2020 in Leeds. Since 2021, the programme has been running in all five West Yorkshire Police custody suites: Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds (the largest custody suite), and Wakefield.

The programme is commissioned by the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP).

The CDP was developed in response to rising serious youth violence and gang activity in West Yorkshire, drawing inspiration from a similar intervention in the Metropolitan Police region.

The programme recognises the power of lived experience to engage young people, and mentor and divert them away from offending via early intervention.

"I believe when I was growing up, if we had a programme like this, I probably wouldn't have made a lot of the mistakes that I did."

St Giles caseworker

1.2 Aims of the CDP

The programme aims to address the high rates of serious youth violence in West Yorkshire by offering one-to-one targeted support from a St Giles Trust caseworker with lived experience of involvement in the criminal justice system. It aims to reach young people aged 10-25 at risk of, or involved with, serious youth violence and/or offending behaviour, providing interventions to divert them from serious youth violence and gang involvement, and reduce reoffending.

The CDP Theory of Change is available in Appendix A: Theory of Change.

1.3 About this report

This evaluation report follows and builds on Cordis Bright's previous work with the CDP, which had two key stages:

1. December 2022-July 2023: Scoping to support decision-making about robust impact evaluation options. This involved interviews and collaborative workshops to develop the CDP's Theory of Change (ToC); a review of existing research evidence around custody diversion programmes to inform the ToC; a review of outcomes measures to inform data impact monitoring processes; and discussions and workshops with key strategic and delivery partners around evaluation options and considerations for QEDs/RCTs.

2. **January-July 2024**: Based on this, the VRP commissioned a second evaluation phase. The original intention was for the evaluation to take a randomised controlled trial (RCT) approach. We worked collaboratively with colleagues to set this up, delivering a series of preparatory co-design workshops, producing a range of outputs including:



When it became clear that an RCT was not possible for the CDP at present, Cordis Bright and VRP partners agreed instead to deliver a mixed methods process and impact evaluation.

This report therefore presents findings from a mixed methods evaluation of the CDP conducted by Cordis Bright between August 2024-February 2025. It includes learning and reflections from the earlier evaluation phases.

More detail on this previous evaluation work is available in Appendix B: Research background.

The evidence review of custody diversion programmes which was produced as part of this previous evaluation work is also included as Appendix D to this report. This review supported the development of the CDP's Theory of Change and the assumptions underlying the rationale for the programme.

1.4 Evaluation aims

This final impact and process evaluation report provides:

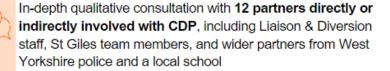
- Analysis of the impact of the CDP against its stated outcomes for young people and the wider system, as well as any unexpected outcomes
- Findings regarding the implementation and delivery of the CDP, its effectiveness, and how this could be improved
- Recommendations regarding future delivery of the programme including to inform ongoing monitoring and future evaluation approaches and future commissioning for the VRP in West Yorkshire.

This evaluation report investigates process and impact via the below methods.

1.5 Methodology

This evaluation drew on the below research methods, which were developed with West Yorkshire VRP and St Giles. Tools were collaboratively produced before use. The evaluation design, including self-reported outcomes tools and a refined Theory of Change, were developed with VRP and St Giles colleagues through a series of co-design workshops across January and February 2024.





Young people consultation



Qualitative discussions with six young people who were receiving support from the CDP via phone call, supported by their CDP caseworkers



Self report outcomes questionnaires asking young people about their outcomes at the start of support (11 responses) and three months later (four responses). Three tools were used: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Self-Reported Delinquency Scale, Social Support and Rejection Scale. Please see the data appendix for more detail.

Monitoring data



Programme monitoring data collected by St Giles

Case studies



Case study analysis of an anonymised group of 12 young people who received CDP support, based on qualitative caseworker insights and police data

As well as the above methods, we have drawn on insights gleaned through conversations with partners and learning from our previous work with the CDP for this report and its recommendations.

Where evidence from consultation is used in this evaluation report, the term 'partners' is used to refer to L&D staff and wider partners who participated in qualitative consultation. St Giles team members are referred to as caseworkers.

1.6 Limitations

The key limitation affecting this evaluation is the limited access to robust data. This included both: 1) recording and monitoring data on service use, such as frequency and intensity of support and detail on type of support provided; and 2) self-report outcomes measurement tools were not embedded or collected on a routine basis, which means the sample sizes are low.

We have included discussion and recommendations around these aspects, alongside our recommendations for further evaluation in chapter 6.

2 Reaching young people in West Yorkshire – About the CDP

The CDP plays an important role in supporting young people across West Yorkshire. By providing individualised, one-to-one support, the programme aims to divert young people away from the criminal justice system and towards positive pathways. This section explores how the CDP reaches young people, including demand for the programme, referral pathways, and engagement levels.

2.1 Programme delivery

The CDP aims to reach young people aged 10-25 at risk of, or involved with serious youth violence, gang affiliation and child criminal exploitation (CCE). It provides one-to-one targeted support with a St Giles Trust caseworker with lived experience of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Figure 1 summarises the referral pathway and journey through the CDP.

START → Identified/ Identified by referred by L&D in custody Voluntary Police, Social (main referral referral Care, Youth route) Justice Basic assessment by L&D to establish eligibility (including whether other services are involved, to avoid duplication) Not eligible or consent not given: Passed to St Giles and invited to take part in programme business as usual pathways out of L&D Further in-person assessment within 7-14 days by St Giles worker and L&D practitioner to discuss support and gain consent, and produce support plan SUPPORT: Young person receives 1-to-1 mentoring from St Giles with input at start from L&D for up to 12 weeks. L&D retain case management and safeguarding/risk responsibility

Figure 1 Journey through the programme

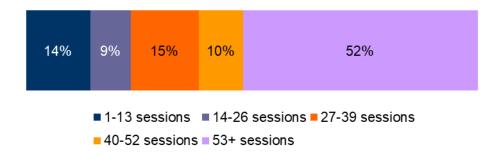
2.1.1 Structure of support

Caseworkers meet young people for in person one-to-one sessions, usually weekly or whatever frequency works for the young person – there are no set guidelines on how frequent support must be. These may take place in schools, in community settings or at the young person's home, depending on their preference. There is no time limit to support.



The average number of sessions attended was 60 (n=233 young people). 52% of young people had attended more than 52 sessions, i.e. if sessions take place approximately once a week, they were supported for more than a year. Data on the frequency and duration of support sessions was not available.

Figure 2: Number and percentage of sessions attended (n=233)



2.1.2 Session topics

Sessions are bespoke and focus on developing a relationship with the young person. Caseworkers use information from assessment forms and early conversations to understand the young person's experiences. They develop priority topics to cover, influenced by referral reason, e.g. if the reason is gangrelated, sessions may focus on decision making and positive/negative peers.

"We have normal conversations. We don't have a list of questions; it's not an exam. We build a rapport where they feel they can be comfortable with you."

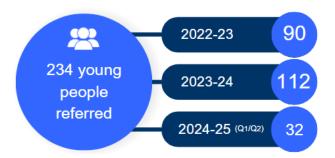
St Giles caseworker

Topics may include the following areas:

Personal	Positive	Managing	Offending, risk, consequences
wellbeing	relationships	behaviour	
 Confidence and resilience Personal boundaries Aspiration raising Fresh out (new start) 	 Healthy relationships Positive and negative peers 	 Toxic masculinity Conflict resolution Decision making Short term gain, long term pain 	 Impulsive and risky behaviour County lines Knife crime Victim impact from crime

2.2 Referrals and take-up

Monitoring data was available for two full years of 2022-23, 2023-24, and the first two quarters of 2024-25. 234 young people were referred to the Custody Diversion Programme between 2022 and 2025.



Monitoring data received for 63 young people between April and December 2024 shows most referrals came from Liaison & Diversion (shown in Figure 3). This suggests that the majority of young people supported by the CDP have been arrested and brought into custody, meaning they have already had direct contact with the criminal justice system. This indicates that the programme is reaching young people at the highest risk of continued offending, aligning with evidence that interventions are most effective when targeted at those most likely to reoffend¹.

Research also highlights that contact with the criminal justice system can itself increase the likelihood of reoffending¹, reinforcing the importance of diversionary interventions like the CDP in breaking this cycle and supporting young people to achieve better long-term outcomes.

Figure 3: CDP referral sources

Source of referral	No. of young people	% ²
Liaison & Diversion	41	65%
Police	4	6%
School	2	3%
Social Care	16	25%
Total	63	100%

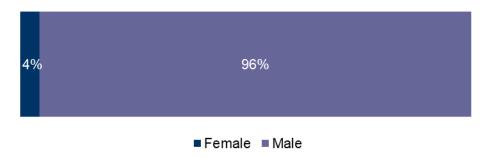
¹ Petrosino, A., Turpin-Petrosino, C., & Guckenburg, S. (2010). Formal System Processing of Juveniles: Effects on Delinquency. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 6(1), 1–88. Available <u>here</u>.

² Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

2.2.1 Demographic information

The following demographic information is based on data from April 2022 to February 2025. 96% of young people supported by the CDP were male.

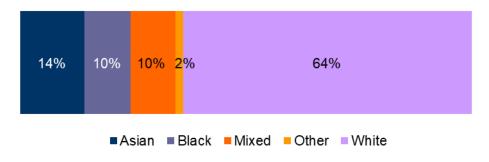
Figure 4: Gender of young people supported by the CDP (n=234)



The largest group by ethnicity was those from a White background (64%), and in total 36% of the young people supported by the CDP were from Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic minority backgrounds. Across West Yorkshire as a whole, 23% of the population identify as belonging to an ethnic minority background (based on 2021 census data³), suggesting that the CDP is successfully engaging with a diverse range of young people.

However, it is also important to note that young people from racially minoritised backgrounds are overrepresented in the criminal justice system both nationally and within West Yorkshire. While data on people taken into custody is not available, in 2023/24, 42% of stop and search activity in the region involved people from Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic minority backgrounds.³ This suggests that the CDP is working with a broadly representative sample of young people based on their reported ethnicities.





³ West Yorkshire Police Equality Information Report 2023/24 – available here. Accessed 5/3/2025.

The largest group by age was in the middle of the 10-25 age range, with over half (56%) aged 14-16. The average age (n=232) was 15.

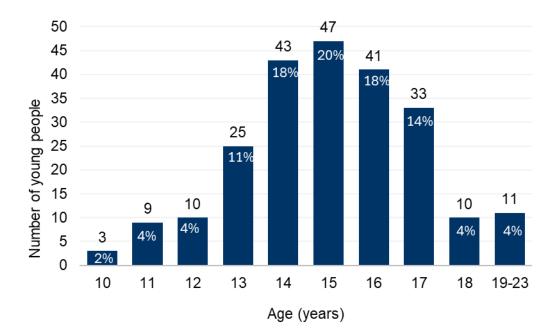


Figure 6: Age of young people referred to the CDP (n=232)

2.2.2 Referral reasons and offence type

Data on referral reason was available for referrals made from August 2024 to January 2025. Among the 22 young people for whom data on referral reason was available, the most common reasons were risk of or evidence of gang involvement, or risk of exploitation.

Referral reason	No. of young people	%
At risk of gang involvement	8	36%
Evidence of gang involvement	4	18%
At risk of exploitation	4	18%
Arrested (violent offence)	3	14%
At risk of poor outcomes	2	9%
Arrested (nonviolent offence)	1	5%
Total	22	100%

Analysis of the 10 baseline (T1) Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) surveys (a self-reported measure of offending behaviour) completed at the start of support shows young people reported a range of offending behaviours over a three-month period. This is summarised in Figure 7.

For example, the most commonly reported behaviour was carrying a knife or other weapon. One young person reported not offending at all in the last three months. None of the 10 young people who answered said they had done any of the following in the last three months: Steal money or something else from a shop, school or home; Go into or break into a house, building, van or car to try and steal something; Use force, threats, or a weapon to steal something; Set fire to something on purpose; Hurt or injure any animals or birds on purpose.

Figure 7 Summary of offences in the last three months among the 10 young people who completed the Time 1 SRDS

During the last three months, did you	No. of young people who answered 'yes'	'What type?': four said 'Large knife or flick knife', one said 'Small
Carry a knife or other weapon with you for protection or in case it was needed in a fight?	6	knife or penknife', one 'Pole, stick or bat'
Hit, kick or punch someone on purpose (fight with them)?	5	'How badly did you hurt the other person?': three said
Travel on a bus or train without paying enough money or using someone else's pass?	4	'Bruises or Black eye', two said 'Scratches or Cuts'
Sell an illegal drug to someone?	4 – all said more than 10 times	'What type?': one said weed, others did not answer
Skip or skive school?	4	
Ride in a stolen car or van or on a stolen motorbike?	3	None said they personally stole the
Damage or destroy property that did not belong to you on purpose? (e.g., windows, cars or streetlights)?	3	vehicle
[Act] noisy or cheeky in a public place so that people complained, or you got into trouble? (not including things you did at school)	2	
Write or spray paint on property that did not belong to you (e.g., a phone box, car, building, or bus shelter)?	1	
Hit or pick on someone because of their race or skin colour?	1	

2.2.3 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

To further explore the complexity of need among young people referred to the CDP, we examined data from the SDQ collected as part of T1 questionnaires for young people when they first came into contact with the programme. The SDQ is a behavioural screening tool which assesses emotional, conduct, hyperactivity, and peer-related difficulties.

At T1, SDQ data was available for 10 young people. The average total difficulties score was 27.27, which is well above the tool's threshold for 'abnormal' levels of difficulty (a score of ≥17 is classified as 'abnormal' – this is terminology used by the screening tool). This SDQ data shows that:

- Most young people had high levels of need across multiple domains. Conduct and emotional difficulties were particularly high: 50% of young people (five out of ten) had 'abnormal' scores for conduct problems, indicating high levels of behavioural challenges.
- Prosocial behaviour scores were notably low. 90% of young people (nine out of ten) scored in the 'abnormal' range for prosocial behaviour, suggesting difficulties in positive social interactions and relationships.

This data reinforces that the CDP is engaging young people with complex and entrenched challenges, including emotional distress, behavioural difficulties, and limited positive peer relationships. When combined with the SRDS data showing high levels of self-reported offending behaviours, this further emphasises the level of need young people being referred to the CDP are presenting with.

2.3 Agreement on local demand for the CDP

There was consensus among the partners we interviewed that the CDP is well aligned with wider strategic priorities and approaches across West Yorkshire. Partners emphasised the CDP's importance and local demand for a service like this. They highlighted:

• High demand for diversion services supporting young people in West Yorkshire. Partners reported high prevalence of crime across West Yorkshire, especially knife crime, with hotspots in Huddersfield, Leeds, and Bradford. Many young people are at risk of or engaging in offending and in need of diversion. There was a perceived increase in this need recently, which is backed up by Youth Justice statistics; for example, total arrests in Yorkshire and the Humber for possession of weapons increased by 5% between 2023 and 2024.4

⁴ Youth Justice Statistics: 2023 to 2024 (2025). https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2023-to-2024.

"Within our local area, there's a lot of underprivileged households and gang associations. And there's a lot of risks around for the kids."

Wider partner

• **High demand for early intervention.** Some partners reported a lack of similar programmes offering targeted, bespoke early intervention to young people. The CDP fills this gap in support, aiming to intervene early enough to avoid escalation into further, more severe offending.

"We have seen a large increase in young people supplying drugs and [engaging in] other sort of illicit sort of criminal activities ... Ultimately, when things go unchecked, kids become more and more vulnerable."

Wider partner

However, this reported high demand is not matched by monitoring data for referrals, which shows a slowing in referrals over the past eighteen months. This is discussed in section 2.2 below.

3 Making a difference for young people – Impact of the CDP

The CDP has helped young people make meaningful changes in their lives, supporting them to develop positive relationships, re-engage with education and work, and make safer choices.

This section discusses the key aspects of the CDP that have contributed to these changes, and highlights the outcomes reported by young people and partners.



Relevant outcomes from the Theory of Change are specified in blue boxes with this icon at the top of each section.

3.1 Overview

All partners we consulted stated that the CDP was making a difference for young people and improving their outcomes.

"In terms of the difference it makes to young people, we have seen amazing results. I can point to lots of cases where, had there not been people with lived experience guiding them, the young person would have been a lot worse."

L&D team member

Several characteristics of the CDP's design and delivery model were identified as having a positive impact on young people (see section 3.3). For example, caseworkers have lived experience of serious youth violence which enables greater rapport and engagement. The CDP also provides specific, practical support around reducing offending and making positive changes in their lives.

This contributed to improvements in young people's lives which were reported by partners and by young people themselves. Key areas of improvement included better decision making, improved ability to manage anger and emotions, and greater engagement with education and work.

3.2 Outcomes for young people

3.2.1 Summary of 12 case studies

The evaluation produced illustrative case studies on 12 individual young people supported by the CDP, who were chosen by the CDP project lead as a representative sample, based on demographic markers and level of support required.

The case studies were produced based on the following data:

- Data collected by St Giles on age, gender, ethnicity, disability, living arrangements, and dates of referral to and exit from the CDP
- Narrative details provided by the St Giles caseworker on the young person's background, any previous offences, CDP support provided, and commentary on the young person's experience of and response to support
- Police data on number and details of arrests and offences from January 2022 to January 2025.

Analysis of case study data suggests that the majority of young people (8 out of twelve) showed positive outcomes regarding offending after engaging with the CDP. Four young people did not reoffend at all after starting support, while another four continued offending but at a reduced level or severity. This indicates that for two-thirds of young people in this sample, the CDP had a positive impact on their offending behaviour.

While three young people offended more after starting support, and one maintained the same pattern of non-offending, these findings highlight the complex nature of behaviour change and the importance of continued, long-term support for those with the highest levels of need.

Among 12
young people's case studies...

3 offended more after starting support

1 did not offend before or after support

Figure 8: Summary of case study data on (re)offending

All 12 case studies are summarised in the graphic below.

Custody Diversion Programme - Case Studies

Offence/ Arrest offence before referral			Offence/ Arro after re		Length of support (months)	Session journey - Narratives from case workers	
A	? 1	Robbery	? 0 N	None	15	A (17) made significant progress, staying crime-free since his referral to CDP. He focused on his education, successfully completing college while balancing a part-time job. He has now started university and is studying law.	
В	? 4 \bigcirc 1	Public order offence, violence with injury	? 0	lone	7, Ongoing	B (15) distanced himself from negative peers, particularly the friend involved in the previous assault, and is now focusing on school, studies, and football aspirations. His ongoing progress shows increased awareness and a commitment to staying away from negative influences.	
c	? 5	Homicide, possession of drugs, trafficking drugs, misc crimes against society, vehicle offence	? 0	None	10, Ongoing	C (17) has remained offence-free since his referral, which is positive. Efforts are still ongoing to secure him employment.	
D	? 2	Public order offence, violence with injury	? 0 ,© 0	None	15, Ongoing	D (16) was arrested with a close peer. He no longer sees his dad by choice. Previously active in football, he hopes to rejoin a club after an injury. Since referral, he has committed no further offences, improved his outlook on life, finished school with good grades, and is now excelling in college.	
E	? 3 © 2	Arson, burglary, criminal damage	O 0 p	Criminal lamage, lossession of lrugs	17, Ongoing	E (14) has SEN and has 1-1 support in school. He struggles with frustration, poor sleep, and behavioural issues, including exclusions and two missing person reports. Though he dislikes school, his attendance has improved since the CDP.	
F	? 4	Burglary	? 1	Burglary	10, Ongoing	F (16) made significant progress in decision-making, quitting smoking, and developing a stronger sense of responsibility. He is now focused on education and career, preparing to start college and secure a part-time job. His mum observed a noticeable positive change in his attitude since CDP support.	
К	Key: Did not offend after referral Offended less after referral Offended more after referral Offended more after referral Offended more after referral Offended more after referral CordisBright						

Custody Diversion Programme - Case Studies

	Offence/ Arrest offence before referral	Offence/ Arrest offence after referral	ength of support (months)	Session journey - Narratives from case workers	
G	Public order offence, possession of weapon, misc crimes against society	? 2 Rape, misc crimes against society	10, Ongoing	G (15) made significant progress. He focused on his education, successfully completing college while balancing a part-time job.	
Н	Violence with/without injury, public order offence, criminal damage, sexual offence, non-notifiable offence	? 3 Criminal damage	18	H (14) struggles with concentration, anger, and impulsivity, which was made worse by losses in his life. After multiple failed school placements and high-risk behaviour, mentoring and gym sessions helped him build confidence, manage his anger, and return to mainstream education with healthier friendships.	
	? 2 Violence with injury, rape	Rape, burglary, violence with injury, violence without injury, public order offence, vehicle offence, criminal damage, stalking & harassment	16	I (16) recognised the consequences of his past actions, distanced himself from negative influences, and is now focused on school, studies, and football, showing strong progress and self-awareness.	
J	₹ 0 None	? 4 Misc crimes against society, rape	21, Ongoing	J (14) has developed a better understanding of the consequences of his actions. He lashes out less and is finding ways to manage his temper. J is consistently attending college, focusing on his studies, and working towards his football aspirations. He has made progress and is doing well overall.	
K	Violence with and without injury, misc crimes, public order offences, stalking and harassment	Violence with and without injury, public order offences, stalking and harassment, possession of drugs, criminal damage, misc crimes, robbery	18	K (15) has a difficult relationship with his mum who has alcohol issues. CDP worked with him on why he was arrested and improving his school attendance. CDP supported him to stop smoking cannabis regularly and selling drugs. He got a job and stopped going missing.	
None None None None None None None None					
Key: Did not offend after referral Offended less after referral Offended more after referral					

referral

Arrests

CordisBright ()

3.2.2 More engagement in education, work and training



Outcomes: Increased engagement/attendance at education, employment and/or training; Improved trust, awareness and engagement with services

Evidence shows that school attendance/engagement is linked to better outcomes around youth violence.⁵ This is an area of priority for the CDP; partners, especially those involved in delivery, highlighted increased engagement in education as a key outcome area they had seen for young people:

"The CDP has seen a big focus on education. We have got individuals back into education – a real positive."

L&D team member

Partners reported they had seen a difference for young people in the areas of:

• More engagement in school and work. Partners described seeing an increase in school engagement because of the CDP. For example:

"At the start he wasn't going [to school] much. He was at home a lot and was vulnerable to exploitation. Attending has made him more socially comfortable. He stopped carrying knives too."

St Giles caseworker

This also came through in some discussions with young people, with some young people describing better attendance or better experiences at school. Some also described better experiences at work and engaging more with employment.

"I didn't really go to school as such. When I did it was always negative. When I go to work now it's always positive. [The sessions] 100% helped with that."

Young person

Caseworkers noted that sessions can also be a practical way to encourage attendance, as they sometimes set up visits in school, which ensures young people need to attend school to be able to engage with the caseworker.

 Improved trust, awareness and engagement with services. St Giles caseworkers highlighted that they work on improving engagement with

⁵ For example, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime (2019). *Back to School? Breaking the link between school exclusions and knife crime*. Available here: Rosenbaum (2020). Educational and criminal justice outcomes 12 years after school suspension. *Youth & Society*, 52(4), pp. 515-547; Valdebenito, S., Eisner, M., Farrington, D.P., Ttofi, M.M. and Sutherland, A. (2019) What can we do to reduce disciplinary school exclusion? A systematic review and metaanalysis. *Journal of experimental criminology*, 15, pp. 253-287

services young people tend to distrust (particularly police), and increasing young people's awareness of the wider roles such services play.

"A lot of the time I'm trying to tell the young people like you're looking at the police as an enemy and the police is only your enemy if you're committing a crime. Well, if you're not committing crimes, then they're here to protect you and your family."

St Giles caseworker

Young people we spoke to did not mention this as a direct impact, but they discussed their improved decision-making, which for some involved returning to school and finding employment. This may indirectly indicate more trust and engagement in services. This is in line with evidence that suggests young people's mistrust of services and fear of reprisal may be a barrier to accessing or accepting support.⁶

This outcome area is illustrated in two case studies:



Young Person E struggled with behavioural issues that led to school exclusions. He had several arrests and offences before support. Since referral, he has not been arrested. His caseworker noted that although he still dislikes school, his attendance has improved since the CDP support.



Young Person F was arrested several times before CDP support. His caseworker noted that he developed stronger responsibility and decision making since support and is now more focused on education and his career. He was preparing to start college and secure a part time job. His mother observed a noticeable positive change in his attitude since CDP support.

The case studies are presented in full in the Evaluation Data Appendix.



Monitoring data on service use was not available, but future programmes may wish to consider making use of this data as a way to assess impact. For example:

- Education data would allow the CDP to examine impact on the education system through exclusions and low attendance. This data could include school attendance data for the period before, during and after support.
- Longer-term follow-up police offending data would make it possible to examine
 whether the support is reducing the need for further police interventions. This
 could include contacts/arrests for the period before, during and after support.

⁶ Ilan-Clarke, Y., Fowler, A. and Gill, L. (2013) *Setting up a youth violence prevention project in a London hospital emergency department.* Journal of Public Mental Health. Available <u>here</u>.

3.2.3 Reducing frequency and severity of offending



Outcomes: Reduced frequency and/or severity of offending. Fewer young people are involved in offending behaviour, i.e. violent criminal offences, gangs, weapon carrying, county lines

The CDP aims to reduce frequency and/or severity of offending. Partners reported seeing reduced frequency and severity of offending as a result of the CDP. St Giles caseworkers reported seeing impact after a few sessions of engagement. Some said that once the programme has had its impact, young people 'turn the corner' and reduce or stop offending altogether. Others pointed out that it takes time to see change, but that they saw evidence of improvements in many young people they worked with.

"Once they've turned the corner, they don't go back."

St Giles caseworker

"Sometimes he did mess up. There's no guarantee of a 180 – it takes time to change habits. He eventually did change a lot of his bad patterns. He got in trouble less: not in custody, not in prison, not involved in knife crime."

St Giles caseworker

"He was referred for possession of a knife. So we did lots of work around knife crime and safety in the community. He doesn't carry a knife anymore."

St Giles caseworker

Young people tended not to speak directly about reduced offending but reported changes in aspects of their lives that may have led to a change in offending behaviour. One young person was referred after having been charged with carrying a knife; he said the sessions helped him learn about knife crime and decision-making and led to him stopping carrying a knife.

"We talk about decision making, why to stop carrying knives, knife crime. They helped me a lot, helped my decision making. I definitely have grown."

Young person

Case study data suggests a positive pattern in young people's offending behaviour after starting CDP support. Of the 12 young people reviewed, two thirds (8 out of twelve) either stopped offending completely, or reduced the frequency and severity of their offending.



Self-report data on offending was collected via the SRDS. Among the four young people who had data available at both time 1 and time 2, all four reported that they had not offended in the three months since starting CDP support. Whilst it is

difficult to draw conclusions from a sample of this size, this does suggest the programme may be having a positive impact on reducing reoffending. Collecting and analysing self-report data from all young people who are supported by the CDP would allow for further demonstration of this.

3.2.4 Positive caseworker relationships



Outcome: Positive relationship with a caseworker with lived experience

Partners highlighted the importance of strong male role models for young men and boys, especially those at risk of violence and offending. They felt this was a valuable aspect of the CDP, especially as most young people supported are male (see 2.2). This is in line with the evidence base which suggests that mentoring programmes are more effective with male mentees and when mentors are male.⁷

Caseworkers and young people reported that the CDP provides a positive caseworker relationship for young people who engage, and that **caseworkers** become positive role models.

Young people see the caseworker as someone who has been in their position and has been able to create a better life for themselves. They provide guidance on good decision-making and moving away from offending. Caseworkers are seen as someone young people can rely on for advice and to help make positive choices in their lives.

They are **trusted adults** who understand their experiences and have young people's best interests at heart.

"The ages in which the young people are at, if they don't have a role model, doing things on a day-to-day basis, and give them something to work towards, they can get derailed very quickly. There is a lot of emphasis in making good decisions in their lives"

L&D team member

"The sessions have been really good. I have learned a lot, and having someone to talk to has helped."

Young person



This is backed up by self-report survey data: among the four young people who completed the Social Support and Rejection Scale (SSRS), all four scored highly in the positive scales of 'Feels Valued,' 'Trust,' and 'Mentoring,' while scoring low in 'Negativity.' This suggests that the young people had a positive relationship

⁷ Youth Endowment Fund (2025) *Mentoring | Youth Endowment Fund.* https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/mentoring-2/.

with their caseworkers. It would be useful to analyse this for future monitoring and evaluation once a larger dataset is available.

3.2.5 Improved safety



Outcomes: Short term: More time in a safe environment; Recognised risks and consequences around their own circumstances, including criminality. Medium/ long term: Improved safety; reduced instances of going missing

Caseworkers highlighted that much of their work focuses on helping young people **understand the risks** of being involved in offending. This contributes to young people's improved safety in a number of ways:

 Better decision-making leads to improved safety. Linked to the previous section on reducing offending, young people described engaging in less risky behaviour thanks to the sessions. Caseworkers work with young people to understand the risks associated with carrying a weapon and the impact it could have on them and their family. Young people described an improved understanding of risk and making better decisions.

"The sessions on knife crime and decision making [were the most helpful in making changes]. They just helped me a lot, to be honest."

Young person

• The sessions provide emotional safety. One young person directly spoke to the fact that the sessions provided a safe space to engage.

"[The sessions were] very helpful. I felt safe/ comfortable talking to caseworker."

Young person

More understanding, awareness and ability to look out for themselves.
 Caseworkers help young people have a better understanding of how easy it is to be arrested, improve self-awareness, confidence, and to be wary of being groomed into gang affiliations and crime.

"They have to use their own common sense: give them a template of different examples of how situations can end if you don't stop and think. Being self-aware and of your surroundings and your company."

St Giles caseworker

This outcome area is illustrated in the following case study:



Young Person B was arrested once and had committed one offence before starting support. Post-referral, he did not reoffend. His caseworker noted that he has distanced himself from negative peers, particularly the friend involved in the previous offence, and is focusing on school, and football aspirations.

The case studies are presented in full in the Evaluation Data Appendix.

3.2.6 Improving personal wellbeing



Outcomes: Increased agency and aspirations for the future; Introduced to coping mechanisms and ways to make positive choices; A co-produced, person-centred action plan for the future that centres the young person's voice; Improved mental health and wellbeing; Improved confidence and self-esteem.

Caseworkers, wider partners and young people reported that the CDP contributed to improved personal wellbeing for young people. Consultation suggested it resulted in:

 Better self-regulation and anger management. Young people reported being better able to manage emotions and deal with difficult or conflict situations.

"When I first spoke to [caseworker] I was a hothead. I would say I've chilled myself out. I'm more steady thinking about things. I'm taking the time to think about stuff."

Young person

"I can handle situations better now because of it. It has helped with anger management"

Young person

• **Improved confidence and self-esteem.** All partners we spoke to highlighted young people's marked improvements in confidence and mental health as a result of the sessions.

"He was very socially anxious, didn't want to leave the house, and the person from St. Giles was going out and working with him, helping him. It's helped to build up his confidence"

Schools partner

Discussions with young people reinforced this, with young people describing that the sessions helped their mental wellbeing and resilience and helped them regain their confidence.

"I gained confidence back. I'm comfortable speaking to people now. I can actually go outside."

Young person

• **Improved overall wellbeing.** Caseworkers, wider partners and young people highlighted improved overall wellbeing thanks to the CDP. There was a sense

from young people that the sessions help them get closer to where they want to be in life.

"The sessions have been really good. I have learned a lot, and having someone to talk to has helped"

Young person

"[The CDP] is helping me to get to where I am – helped me to grow."

Young person

 More agency and aspiration for the future. The support empowers young people to decide for what their future will look like and how to get there.

"It gives them something to work toward. Not just [learning about] grooming signs, but this is the importance of getting a job. Real emphasis on making good decisions, not just looking for bad stuff."

L&D team member

For example, three young people reflected on experiencing increasing aspirations for the future, in attending school, improving grades and finding employment. Some focused on future employment, and others on improving relationships with family, or becoming independent.

"With his attendance improving, he's giving himself the best chance to get good grades and go to college."

St Giles caseworker

"I'm finding the sessions good – I'm now working again."

Young person

This outcome area is illustrated in a case study:



Young Person H was involved in multiple offences and one arrest before support. After multiple failed school placements and high-risk behaviour, the support helped him build confidence, manage his anger, and return to mainstream education with healthier friendships. Since referral, he was involved in a smaller number of offences with lower severity.

The case studies are presented in full in the Evaluation Data Appendix.

3.2.7 Improved family relationships



Outcome: Improved family relationships

Although caseworkers do not work directly with families, they engage with parents/carers to keep them up to date on support and have informal

conversations. Consultation suggested that caseworkers do help improve family and social relationships for young people, as part of their work to help build positive relationships for young people outside the programme.

"We change a lot of relationships in households. A lot of the time, the children don't speak to the parents at all [and it's] straight to their bedrooms. And it's like now they'll sit down with the families. The aim is to get them all together"

St Giles caseworker

Some partners commented on this. For example, L&D team members highlighted the role the CDP plays in young people improving communication with the family.

"Some of the positives [have been] the engagement with families, that's been really impressive. It's not just about the young people in isolation, but the family as a whole."

L&D team member

This did not appear to be a priority outcome area for most young people we spoke to. However, although this was not necessarily a direct focus of support, we heard some examples of less tension in family relationships, thanks to young people's improved self-awareness and anger management.

Young people also noted some limited instances of better relationships in their social circles as a result of the CDP. This appeared to be due to greater ability to the support to manage their emotions.

"[The best thing about the sessions was learning] to calm myself down in certain situations. More of a treating people with respect. That's different from before."

Young person

3.3 Key aspects of the CDP that made a difference

The evaluation identified the following key aspects through which the CDP made a difference to young people's outcomes:

Lived experience brings legitimacy and relatability. Caseworkers' lived
experience makes them relatable and engaging for young people. They have
strong empathy for what young people are going through, and speak to young
people at their level, which helps make conversations relatable and
accessible. Partners also felt this was an energising and positive aspect which
sets the CDP apart.

Young people did not reference caseworkers' lived experience directly, but they did say that they viewed caseworkers as people who could understand them. There is some limited research evidence that mentors with lived

experience are in a better position to develop a trusted relationship with young people.8

"[Caseworkers] have been through the system. So, the challenges and the traumas, what the young people go through – we've been there. We can use our past experiences to help shape their futures."

St Giles caseworker

"I'd recommend [the CDP]. [Caseworker is] just someone who can understand you."

Young person

Building trust, rapport and engagement. Support focuses on developing a
relationship with the young person, with sessions structured around their
needs. This contributes to the young person engaging, having a positive
experience of support, and seeing a difference in their lives.

"We don't have a list of questions – it's not an exam. We let them feel they have someone they can talk to as a mentor. We build a rapport where they feel they can be comfortable with you. Otherwise, they'll feel like you're against them."

St Giles caseworker

"How we spoke, how [caseworker] put things across was a lot better than a social worker. How he treated me. The way he was. How he explained things. He treated me like an adult."

Young person

 Specific, bespoke support to reduce offending. The CDP allows for specific targeted work focusing on offending which other services may not offer. For example, other services might cover mental health, self-esteem or education, but not deliver bespoke interventions specific to offending behaviour such as knife crime or gangs, which the CDP does.

Caseworkers draw on their experience and knowledge of areas such as gangs, grooming, drug use, as well as the local area, and bring **useful**, **real-life examples**. This makes support highly relevant and helps young people understand and work through the consequences of offending and risky decision-making. This is in line with research evidence which shows a

⁸ Agaton, T. and Tapper, D. (2014) *The New York City Young Men's Initiative (YMI): Working to Improve Outcomes for Black and Latino Young Men.* Available <u>here</u>.

targeted approach matched to the needs of young people was more effective at promoting positive developmental change.⁹

"The language used, and the knowledge they have around areas in West Yorkshire, safety plans for the young person – are things that lived experience individuals can think of, that we often miss, because they have had similar experiences before."

L&D team member

"Literally the knife crime and decision making [have been most helpful]. They just helped me a lot, to be honest."

Young person

Practical coping mechanisms with real life applicability. Sessions provide
coping mechanisms to help with anger management, difficult emotions, and
managing conflict situations. This in turn improves decision making and
confidence. Examples of coping mechanisms included: focusing on thinking
through decisions, counting to ten, breath work, learning to relax, and
externalising emotion by walking.

"We spoke a lot about counting to ten, thinking about things, not making irrational decisions. Taking time to breathe, relax, go outside, kick the wall, rather than get irate and hit somebody."

St Giles caseworker

"I'm definitely more confident, find it easier to deal with emotions. I've learnt coping strategies."

Young person

- Well-timed interventions. Partners agreed that the CDP is well-timed, both in
 the sense that it reaches out to young people directly after custody at a good
 moment to try to engage; and that it offers an opportunity for early intervention
 before they become entrenched in the criminal justice system.
- A sense of hope and purpose. The sessions divert young people from offending by giving them a positive/ constructive goal to work towards.

"[When asked about the future], I feel more positive in myself."

Young person

⁹ Christensen, K., Hagler, M., Stams, G.J.J.M., Raposa, E.B. and Rhodes, J. (2020) Non-Specific versus Targeted Approaches to Youth Mentoring: A Follow-up Meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Volume 49, pp 959-972. Available here.

"One young person was gang affiliated. When I started working with him, he still had that mindset. I had to help him understand it's not good. Gave him more fuel, motivation to work with him. But he needed the guidance. Eventually I started helping him get jobs, back into education."

St Giles caseworker



Due to the limited monitoring data available on activity and dosage at the time of reporting, we were not able to comment on the extent to which type and intensity of support may have contributed to outcomes.

4 Making a difference to the system – Impact of the CDP

This section discusses the CDP's impact on staff and the wider system in West Yorkshire, based on qualitative consultation.

4.1 Partnership working

Partners reported that the CDP fits effectively into the wider West Yorkshire agenda of reducing youth violence. The CDP is viewed as working towards the key goal of reducing youth violence and offending, which had strong shared agreement among partners. In this way, it is aligned with the goals of the wider system and fits well within system strategy.

Overall, the evaluation found limited evidence of improvement to the wider system *because of* the CDP. Positive change appears to be limited to interactions between St Giles caseworkers and individuals within services such as police. Consultations found mixed views of partnership working.

- Partners who worked directly with the CDP reported positive partnership working between Liaison & Diversion and St Giles, contributing to the smooth running of the CDP.
- However, the small number of partners consulted from wider services had a limited awareness of the CDP and did not highlight partnership working as a strength. Consultation found:
 - The small number of school partners consulted reported partnership working was limited. They noted that schools may view CDP as an available service to refer into, but felt more promotion was needed.
 - The small number of police consulted found limited evidence on partnership working. There was a sense that some individuals work in partnership with the CDP thanks to their relationship with St Giles caseworkers, but it was not clear to what extent this was happening consistently in the wider police system.
- St Giles caseworkers and L&D partners indicated social care could have been more proactive in engaging with the CDP. Once referrals had been made by social care into the CDP there was no continued engagement between the services.

"While [social care] are involved, I feel like everybody working together and communicating would be a lot better."

St Giles caseworker

This may highlight an opportunity for the CDP to increase its impact and be better able to support young people by engaging more with other partners. This could include checking in on support the young person is receiving elsewhere; updating others on the CDP support; making sure any issues flagged to them e.g. around difficulties at home, housing, problems with school, etc., are being communicated to relevant partners so they can be addressed; and communicating with partners towards the end of a young person's CDP support to ensure safe exit.

4.2 Reduced burden on services

The CDP aims to reduce burden on other services by supporting young people to engage more with education/school, and by reducing reoffending and therefore reducing burden on policing. These outcomes are challenging to measure during the timescales of the evaluation and with the data we have available

However, partners reported that young people supported by the CDP may be inclined to view police less negatively than previously.

4.3 Lived experience

As discussed in section 3.3 above, partners saw the lived experience of the caseworkers as a highlight of the CDP that sets it apart from other programmes. This aspect of the programme may have **contributed in some way to lived experience being viewed positively** across services in the area. A small number of partners felt the CDP has improved this.

One partner noted that historically, police would not have accepted people with criminal backgrounds in their offices, but that this has changed over time and police are now more able to recognise the value lived experience brings to engaging people in services. A St Giles caseworker also suggested that schools saw more value in lived experience thanks to the increased number of lived experience individuals now working in schools

"Prior to our model being around, they wouldn't have had anybody with the experience working in schools, but now [services recognise] it's best to have people who have actually lived kind of similar experiences."

St Giles caseworker

L&D partners reported that they have been actively promoting lived experience through police briefings and in wider partnership meetings for several years, and that this is embedded in their way of working as part of their service.

"L&D has been working with partners in police for 12 years. We have changed hearts and minds around people with lived experience."

L&D team member

The CDP may have contributed to this by **enhancing work that is already occurring** in the area with regards to how lived experience is viewed and valued.

5 Learning from implementation

This section explores the key lessons from the implementation of the CDP, identifying areas where the programme is already working effectively, and where further refinements could enhance its reach, sustainability and impact.

5.1 Embedding the CDP within the wider system

The CDP has successfully established itself with West Yorkshire's youth justice and support landscape, providing a valuable diversionary pathway for young people at risk of violence and exploitation. It has been particularly well embedded within L& D teams, with caseworkers able to engage young people effectively following their time in custody.

However, partners reported that the landscape of youth support in West Yorkshire has evolved since the CDP was first established. New services, particularly those addressing criminal exploitation and early intervention (such as the Ministry of Justice-funded Turnaround programme), have emerged, leading to some uncertainty about how the CDP fits within the wider system. Some partners expressed uncertainty about where the CDP sits in relation to other services, and how its role compared to existing statutory or VCSE provision.

"[The CDP] was set up four or five years ago. We're still working within same parameters and funding – the CDP needs to catch up. Young people are now going to statutory services; CDP needs more flexibility to change who they work with. [...] We need to work with young people in serious crimes who are more vulnerable – they are not being picked up by the right people."

L&D team member

While the CDP continues to be recognised as a valued and important intervention, ensuring its distinct role within this changing landscape will be key to maintaining its visibility and accessibility.

5.2 Strengthening reach and referrals

The CDP has demonstrated its ability to engage and support young people once they are referred, with the young people we interviewed reporting positive relationships with caseworkers and positive changes in their lives. However, referral numbers have fluctuated, particularly as new services have emerged.

Monitoring data shows that the majority of referrals continue to come from L&D teams, while referrals from police, social care, and schools remain lower. Partners have differing views on the CDP's target cohort – whether it should focus on early intervention or those already involved in the justice system. Greater clarity would help referrers identify the most suitable young people for support.

The CDP should also ensure the content of the support is appropriate to the cohort being worked with, and draws on available evidence of 'what works' in terms of early intervention and violence reduction when doing this. If the CDP is aiming to reach young people who are identified as being at risk of involvement in offending to divert them early, the support model will differ from those who need heavier intervention due to already being more deeply involved with offending.

5.3 Strengthening partnership working

The CDP benefits from positive relationships between St Giles caseworkers and L&D, which play a key role in ensuring young people receive joined-up support at critical points in their journey. Caseworkers' ability to engage young people flexibly and build trust has been recognised as a strength of the CDP.

However, engagement with other external services, including police, schools, social care, and community-based youth support services, has been more varied. While some professionals recognise the value of the CDP and actively refer to it, others had limited awareness or were unclear on how to engage with it.

Schools have expressed interest in working more closely with the CDP but were unsure about the eligibility criteria and referral process. Similarly, some police partners reported that referrals could be more consistent, particularly where officers were less familiar with the programme.

While St Giles caseworkers attend some multi-agency meetings, the extent of structured communication between referrers and CDP staff once a young person is engaged is inconsistent, meaning that partners do not always have visibility of the support being provided.

There is mixed evidence on the CDP's ability to build strong, trusted relationships with young people and key frontline teams, and there is clear enthusiasm from multiple agencies to strengthen collaboration further. With continued engagement and improved visibility, the CDP has the potential to become a more embedded and recognised part of West Yorkshire's wider youth support system.

5.4 Data collection and monitoring

The CDP team has made progress in improving data collection processes, particularly through the introduction of self-reported outcomes tools as part of this evaluation. For any evaluation, it is vital that monitoring and outcomes data is collected in a way that is consistent, collatable and easily analysable. We found that currently, data for the CDP is being collected inconsistently. It is not clear how effectively it is being used to monitor programme delivery and impact or how it is being used to inform decision-making about the programme.

Some partners expressed interest in more oversight of CDP data, including referral trends and progress, but external reporting is currently limited. Additionally, while caseworkers collect qualitative insights on young people's experiences, this data is not consistently recorded or analysed for learning and improvement purposes. Challenges included:

- **Consistent inputting of data**. This requires closer supervision and guidance around case management and recording.
- Limited ability to make use of data that is collected. Although it may be possible to access other data systems such as education and police, at present there is no available resource withing L&D or elsewhere to support data analysis.
- Communication and sharing of data collection. Some L&D staff felt it would have been useful to have greater oversight of monitoring data collected, including information such as number of young people supported, numbers who needed additional support, and basic educational outcomes data such at attendance data.

Despite these challenges, the CDP's commitment to strengthening its data collection and evaluation processes is clear. With ongoing improvements, the programme will be in a better position to demonstrate its impact, share learning with partners, and inform future service development.

5.5 Role of caseworkers in custody suites

There are differing perspectives on whether CDP caseworkers should be directly involved in custody suites. The model's original aim was to involve caseworkers with lived experience in police custody. As this has not been possible, L&D now engage young people in or directly after custody and refer to the CDP. Partners such as police and L&D agree that introducing young people to caseworkers in custody would be beneficial.

"There's been three examples where St Giles have gone into custody, and all three have had a positive outcome with direct diversion. This is 100% our recommendation, to have [caseworkers] involved in custody. The best time to [engage young people], is in custody."

L&D team member

However, St Giles caseworkers disagreed; they did not want to be seen as part of the police system, and felt this would not help young people open up and receive the support they need.

"Young people at first thought that it was part of the police. So, we had to let them know that no, we're not a part of the police. We've got nothing to do with the police. We're our own service."

St Giles caseworker

It is clear that at present, there is no consensus on the most effective approach to involving caseworkers in custody suites, but further exploration of different engagement models (for example, piloting an approach involving CDP caseworkers working directly within custody suites) may be of value.

6 Recommendations

This evaluation presents emerging evidence that the CDP is delivering meaningful, positive change for young people in West Yorkshire. Based on the consultation we have undertaken it has the capacity to build strong relationships with those it supports, help young people to make safer choices, engage in education and employment, and improve their confidence and wellbeing.

The following section presents a series of evidence-based recommendations which are designed to help the CDP to build on its strengths, improve clarity around its role, and ensure it has the right structures in place to maximise and demonstrate its impact.

6.1 Build on success by clearly defining the target cohort

The CDP is successfully reaching young people at risk of or involved in serious youth violence. However, referrals have declined, and partners have differing views on whether the programme should focus on early intervention or supporting those with more established involvement in violence and offending.

To ensure the CDP reaches the right young people at the right time, we recommend:

- Mapping the current service landscape in West Yorkshire to understand where the CDP fits, what gaps exist, and how the CDP complements other services.
- Defining a clear target group based on this mapping, ensuring the CDP is aligned with system-wide priorities and avoiding duplication with similar services.
- Tailoring intervention content to match the needs of the defined group, drawing on best practice evidence on 'what works' for young people at risk of youth violence¹⁰.
- Enhancing referral pathways to ensure young people are identified at the right stage – whether at the point of custody, through social care, or via schools.
 This should include:
 - Strengthening partnerships with key referrers to ensure they have a clear understanding of when and how to refer young people.
 - Developing clear referral criteria and guidance to ensure consistency in who is referred and when.

¹⁰ For example, the Youth Endowment Fund's toolkit, available here.

 Exploring proactive referral approaches, such as identifying young people through police intelligence, school safeguarding teams, or community outreach.

Why this matters: A clearly defined target cohort will make it easier for referral partners to engage, strengthen the CDP's position within the wider landscape of support, and ensure that support is tailored to the young people it is working with.

6.2 Strengthen programme model through documentation and manualisation

The CDP is valued by young people and partners, but a clearer, documented model would help others understand how to work with the programme more effectively. This is an opportunity to formalise what is working well, support delivery with fidelity to the model, and consistency in programme delivery. This in turn should support impact. At present:

- Wider partners may not be clear on what the CDP delivers and how it differs from other available services.
- The frequency and intensity of support for a young person can vary substantially from case to case.
- The open-ended nature of support while seen as a strength by some also carries associated risks, including, for example: young people becoming overly reliant on mentors, and limiting the number of young people that the programme is able to support.

To formalise and strengthen the CDP model, we recommend:

- Developing a clear, documented programme model, setting out its purpose, key activities, and intended outcomes and impact, building on the existing Theory of Change (see Appendix A: Theory of Change).
- Creating an operational manual, or at least protocolising elements of the
 programme, to guide caseworkers, ensuring a consistent approach to:
 assessment and ensuring young people are eligible, engagement, mentoring
 and goal-setting, documenting and recording activities, dosage, outcomes and
 impact, and safe exit.
- Clarifying the intensity and structure of support, ensuring the right balance between offering flexibility and providing structured intervention.
- Review the exit process to enable decision making around when to end support and clarity around safe exit. This should include consideration of how best to communicate and coordinate with referral partners to ensure sufficient ongoing support is in place to support a young person after exit from the CDP.

 Strengthening external messaging so referral partners and commissioners clearly understand what the CDP offers, and how it differs from other services in the region.

Why this matters: A well-documented model will make the CDP easier to commission, replicate, and integrate with other services, supporting its long-term sustainability.

6.3 Build on momentum by refining monitoring and evaluation processes

The CDP has already made strides in data collection and learning from its work, supported by this evaluation. However, monitoring remains inconsistent, making it difficult to ensure clarity and oversight of risk and demonstrate impact.

Strengthening monitoring and evaluation will help ensure safety and showcase impact more effectively, and provide the evidence needed to shape future funding and delivery. The following actions will support this:

- Building on this and previous evaluations, and informed by good practice, develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the programme to guide data collection, analysis and reporting.
- Standardise data collection processes, ensuring clear and consistent
 monitoring of referrals, engagement levels, and young people's progress. This
 includes monitoring what type of support young people are receiving (activity)
 and how much support they are receiving (dosage). The programme
 monitoring dataset developed as part of this evaluation should be further
 developed to do this, and be refined as caseworkers and commissioners
 become more accustomed to its use.
- Use data strategically to set and track meaningful targets, such as referral numbers and key outcomes. This will allow commissioners to better understand the activity and impact of the CDP and how this may be changing over time, for example in response to changes in external support provision.
- Strengthen data-sharing with key partners. Relevant monitoring data should be shared with L&D, police, social care and other referral partners, ensuring they have visibility of the support young people are receiving. This includes informing referrers when a young person is due to exit the programme, allowing them to coordinate ongoing support and manage risks effectively. Understanding the nature and scale of the support a young people is receiving will also provide referral partners with reassurance regarding the safety of the young person they have referred into the CDP.
- Ensure young people's voices are embedded in monitoring and evaluation, refining data collection tools to capture their experiences and feedback. This will help to ensure that the programme continues to be shaped by those it supports, with learning directly informing service development.

Why this matters: A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will help the CDP to demonstrate its impact, improve service deliver, enhance coordination with partners, and secure funding.

6.4 Strengthen future evaluation to capture impact

To continue to support and demonstrate its effectiveness, the CDP should take a realistic, phased approach to impact evaluation, building on its existing strengths. This evaluation can be conducted either internally or externally, depending on available resources and expertise, and should consider the following process:

- Begin with refining monitoring data and consistent use of validated selfreported outcomes measures, to ensure a solid foundation of data for future evaluation and benchmarking. External sources of data which may support this should also be considered, such as data relating to educational attendance and attainment, and police data.
- Future evaluations should use qualitative consultation alongside this data to support triangulation. Young people's voices should be heard both through self-report survey methods as well as through qualitative approaches.
- Evaluation timescales should be aligned with commissioning cycles, to ensure that evaluation evidence directly informs future funding and service design decisions.
- Consider sharing evaluation findings externally. The CDP is delivering
 promising work with a cohort for whom existing evidence of 'what works' is
 limited. Other areas tackling similar challenges could benefit from the CDP's
 learnings.

Why this matters: A structured, phased approach to evaluation will ensure the CDP's impact is measured effectively and can be used to inform future decision-making.

6.5 Strengthen partnership working to increase the programme's reach

The CDP is making a difference to some young people's lives, but its reach and engagement with the wider system could be more consistent and effective. The evaluation found that:

- Awareness of the CDP among key partners is uneven: some partners (such as L&D) are referring into the programme regularly, while others (e.g. police, social care and schools) are less engaged.
- Referrals have been decreasing, suggesting that some agencies do not fully
 understand how to engage with the programme or where it fits within the wider
 landscape of youth justice and violence prevention in the region.

 Partnership working is inconsistent – while some organisations have developed strong links with the CDP, others are unclear on the role of caseworkers and how the programme complements other services.

To address these issues and strengthen the CDP's ability to reach the right young people, we recommend the following:

- 1. Improve referral pathways by increasing awareness and clarity of the CDP's role.
- Develop targeted engagement with key partners (e.g. schools, social care and police) to ensure they fully understand who the CDP supports and how to refer young people. This process should take place following the defining of the programme's target cohort discussed in section 6.1.
- Produce clear referral guidance and communication materials, tailored to different partners, outlining eligibility criteria, referral processes and the support activities that the CDP offers.
- Set up regular check-ins with key referrers to understand any barriers to referral and ensure the CDP remains visible and accessible.
- 2. Formalise caseworker presence and role in custody suites.
- Work with custody officers and L&D teams to establish clear expectations on when and how young people should be introduced to the CDP.
- Consider piloting a proactive approach to engaging young people, such as caseworker outreach in community settings. This may include piloting caseworkers working directly within custody suites, although this approach should be explored further with CDP caseworkers and other partners before trialling. This should take place following the defining of the programme's target cohort discussed in section 6.1.
- 3. Improve coordination with other local services to strengthen the CDP's role in the wider system.
- Following the mapping of the wider support landscape discussed in section 6.1, the CDP should work with commissioners to clarify the CDP's unique contribution and avoid duplication with similar programmes.
- This should then be communicated to referral partners to ensure they have a strong understanding of how the programme aligns with other youth support services.

Why this matters: Strengthening referral pathways and partnerships will help the CDP to reach more young people, embed itself within the wider system, and maximise its long-term impact.

6.6 Conclusion

The evaluation has found emerging evidence that the CDP is making a real difference to the lives of the young people it supports in West Yorkshire. The above recommendations focus on building on what is already working well, strengthening the programme's identity, monitoring processes, and partnership working, and positioning it for long-term sustainability and impact. With a clear direction and improved data collection and monitoring processes, the CDP can continue to play a vital role in reducing serious youth violence and improving outcomes for young people in the region.

7 Appendix A: Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) was co-developed during in March 2023 by West Yorkshire Custody Diversion Programme partners and Cordis Bright and refreshed in workshops in January 2024. It presents answers to questions of:

- The assumptions around why the programme is needed
- Who the programme is intended for
- How the programme is intended to work, and
- What the programme aims to achieve in the short-, medium- and long-term.

Why: science-based assumption	Why: science-based assumption	Who: participants	How: intervention	What: short- term outcome (0-4 months post- starting support)	What: medium- term outcome (0-8 months post- starting support)	What: long-term outcome (0-12 months post-starting support)
The custody diversion programme was created to offer person-centred, bespoke mentoring by caseworkers with lived experience to divert young people away from involvement in serious youth violence and offending behaviour. The caseworkers with lived experience work with young people at risk of, or who have, involvement in gangs, serious violence	An incident of contact with police can be a key "reachable moment" for young people at risk of serious violence or entrenchment in harmful behaviours. Positively engaging with young people at this point or soon after can offer the opportunity to divert them away from offending before they become entrenched (or further entrenched).	Young people aged 10-25 who: - Have been arrested for violence or associated offences with risk factors for violence such as gang involvement (including those released under investigation and those receiving a no further action from police)	Caseworkers with lived experience engage with young people after they have attended custody, or after referral to the programme (for voluntary referrals or referrals from other services): - Young person is in need of (and more open to) support and guidance from a person with lived experience than a professional who is seen as part of the system	Young people have: Positive relationship with a caseworker with lived experience Recognised risks and consequences around their own circumstances, including criminality	Young people experience: Reduction in frequency and/or severity of offending Reduction in instances of going missing Improved safety Improved family relationships	Young people Fewer young people commit/are involved in: a) violent criminal offences b) gang involvement c) weapon carrying d) county lines e) other offending behaviour

Why: science-based assumption	Why: science-based assumption	Who: participants	How: intervention	What: short- term outcome (0-4 months post- starting support)	What: medium- term outcome (0-8 months post- starting support)	What: long-term outcome (0-12 months post-starting support)
and exploitation, to divert them away from offending and provide positive opportunities for their future. Caseworkers with lived experience can act as an authentic role model to demonstrate a potential pathway and provide hope for the young person's future. They can also more effectively engage young people, as they are not seen as part of the 'system'. This approach was needed as a response to the following issues: a) Young people who are arrested for violent offences and leave custody without support will often go on to commit further offences. b) Without intervention, offences or police involvement will often	Local stakeholders report that caseworkers with lived experience are in a better position to develop trusting relationships with young people than those without lived experience, as their shared experiences mean young people can relate to them more easily and are more likely to trust and open up to them. The trusted relationship with the caseworker means: a) young people are more likely to be able to be open and honest in identifying their own needs and aspirations. This ensures support is relevant and more likely to meet the needs of the young person without feeling that the support is trying to 'fit them into a box'. b) young people are more likely to work	- Have been identified by the Liaison & Diversion service as eligible (without necessarily having markers of gang involvement or serious violence on the system but present as being at risk of these) - Have been identified as eligible and referred by a service (Social Service, Police, Youth Justice Service) - Have voluntarily referredand who accept support from the custody diversion programme.	- Young person and caseworker jointly agree a personal action plan of aspirations and goals for the mentoring - Young person begins to develop a trusted relationship with an adult. Provision of 1:1 mentoring: - Young person has access to a safe space for support - Young person receives advice and guidance on the implications of arrest, crime and the consequences of their actions - Caseworker explores signs of grooming and exploitation and how to guard against it - Young person is given tools for removing themselves from dangerous situations (e.g. when weapons are involved) - Caseworker discusses healthy relationships and how to make more positive choices in their friendships	More time in a safe environment A co-produced, person-centred action plan for future that centres the young person's voice Increased agency over their future Increased engagement with education, employment and/or training Introduced to coping mechanisms and ways to make positive choices Improved trust, awareness and engagement with services to meet needs (for young people and families)	Improved mental health and wellbeing Improved confidence Improved selfesteem Improved future aspirations Improved housing circumstances	Increased attendance at education/training /employment System Reduced burden on services in the system (police, social care, education, etc.) Greater efficiency and coordination between services thanks to improved partnership working

Why: science-based assumption	Why: science-based assumption	Who: participants	How: intervention	What: short- term outcome (0-4 months post- starting support)	What: medium- term outcome (0-8 months post- starting support)	What: long-term outcome (0-12 months post-starting support)
increase in severity and young people can become entrenched in dangerous or harmful behaviour. c) Systemic factors including unstable family situations, lack of engagement with education, and deprivation will often exacerbate the situation further. d) Young people may be unwilling to engage with support services, due to seeing them as part of a system that has not served them effectively so far. However, they may view working with a caseworker with lived experience differently.	effectively on a one- to-one basis with this trusted adult they can relate to and achieve the aims they have identified. c) the caseworker can facilitate engagement with other support services, giving young people a better chance of engaging with these where without this trusted relationship, this might not be possible. The caseworker can act both as a trusted messenger and role model. Whole family support enables caseworkers to identify any whole family support needs and signpost family members to other services, increasing their engagement and ability to receive support they need. This includes early identification of siblings		- Caseworker explores connection between young person's perception of their circumstances and reality - Caseworker facilitates young person's engagement with school and other services - Caseworker coordinates support between services: fosters relationships, makes connections, shares information Provision of support to parents/siblings: - Caseworkers provide advice and guidance to parents and raise awareness of risks relating to exploitation - Caseworkers provide emotional support to parents to support them to foster positive family relationships - Caseworkers identify siblings in need of support and signpost them to other services. IT recording processes are in place to capture			

Why: science-based assumption	Why: science-based assumption	Who: participants	How: intervention	What: short- term outcome (0-4 months post- starting support)	What: medium- term outcome (0-8 months post- starting support)	What: long-term outcome (0-12 months post-starting support)
	who are at risk of but not yet entrenched in criminal justice system involvement. The programme can then divert them and offer support at the earliest opportunity.		information on programme delivery			

8 Appendix B: Research background

8.1 Phase 1: Scoping options for impact evaluation

Cordis Bright was commissioned in October 2022 to deliver an evaluation of the CDP. A scoping report was delivered in December 2022. The evaluation was reshaped based on this report and discussions with CDP partners, to focus on exploring options for further robust evaluation.

Figure 9 summarises the methods used for this phase of the evaluation, which were developed collaboratively and agreed with programme partners.

Figure 9 Methods for scoping CDP evaluation December 2022-July 2023



The four workshops (highlighted in blue) were key in informing this process. They were conducted virtually between February and May 2023 and attended by partners from the West Yorkshire VRU, St Giles Trust, and West Yorkshire L&D.

The workshops focused on exploring appetite and potential for future evaluation and providing information and starting points for discussion. They considered what is needed for robust impact evaluation and discussing with partners what this would look like in the context of the Custody Diversion programme. Figure 10 gives an overview of the topics discussed.

What does robust evaluation involve? An evidence-Outcomes led theory data at Systems in Activity of change baseline, place to **Ethics** and logic A counterdata, end of Information report processes model, plus including support and factual governance these back and monitoring setup clear group follow up clearance articulation dosage for evaluators of the treatment model of and control delivery

Figure 10 Overview of key aspects focused on during workshop discussions

8.2 Phase 2: Pilot RCT evaluation

A feasibility and pilot study was discussed, prioritised and agreed through discussions between Cordis Bright and CDP partners in a series of three codesign workshops during January and February 2024.

This was to include a pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT) and implementation and process evaluation (IPE) of the CDP.

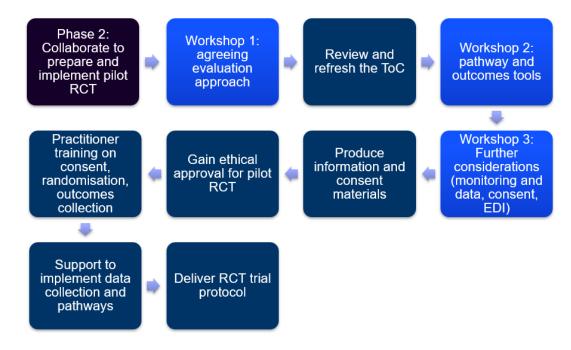
This aimed to test the potential for progressing to a full-scale RCT and identify any changes needed to improve CDP implementation. This included considering the CDP's potential for achieving its intended outcomes, trialling measures for testing those outcomes, and assessing how to recruit and retain a study sample.

In addition to the co-design workshops, we delivered the following activities and outputs. These are summarised in Figure 11.

- Developed ethics protocol for the Royal Holloway University of London Research Ethics Committee; finalised and received ethics clearance
- Produced feasibility study and pilot protocol
- Established and finalised DPIAs and ISAs, data collection tools, information and consent protocols and approach to randomisation
- Produced handbook and guidance for practitioners; prepared and delivered training sessions for Custody Diversion Team on evaluation
- Produced monitoring data resources including coordinating with key data stakeholders

 Supported roll-out of RCT including meeting with L&D and St Giles staff fortnightly

Figure 11 Methods for preparing and supporting implementation of pilot RCT January-March 2024



8.2.1 Rationale for a feasibility and pilot RCT

A pilot RCT was agreed by partners as an appropriate type of evaluation to meet their priorities for the CDP because:

- Experimental RCT evaluation designs are considered one of the most robust approaches for demonstrating the impact of a programme or intervention.
- By randomly assigning participants to control or intervention groups before the
 intervention, RCTs can effectively evaluate interventions because both known
 and unknown factors are controlled or accounted for, i.e. randomisation helps
 to account for contextual and individual differences in participants.
- In contrast with a quasi-experimental evaluation design (QED), an RCT control group is more straightforward to identify, as young people who are referred to the programme are randomised into treatment and control groups.
- By providing evidence about the impact of the CDP, an RCT can contribute to further successful funding bids.

The trial aimed to recruit around 40-60 children and young people in total, i.e. 20-30 in the treatment group and control group respectively. This was based on modelling of receiving around 6-8 referrals per month.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Royal Holloway University of London Research Ethics Committee. This involved the submission of a detailed

application, which was developed based on discussions during three co-design workshops with CDP colleagues in Jan-Feb 2024.

8.3 Pilot RCT background

The CDP pilot RCT ran for two months from May-July 2024. There were no referrals to the trial. We understand this was because:

- There was insufficient appetite to make access to the CDP contingent on participating in the RCT evaluation. This meant young people were still able to access CDP support without agreeing to the trial. No young people were therefore recruited.
- Reduced availability of Liaison & Diversion staff resulted in less ongoing awareness of the CDP itself, and therefore the trial.
- Reduced numbers of young people were coming through custody who were eligible for the CDP, i.e. 8-10 per month rather than 10-12.

We therefore agreed with partners not to pursue the pilot RCT further and to scope options for the most effective use of the remaining evaluation resource.

This approach for the reframed evaluation presented in the main body of this report was agreed in discussions with VRP partners, based on our understanding of priorities and requirements for the remaining evaluation.

8.4 Phase 3: Reflections and impact evaluation

Following the decision not to pursue an RCT evaluation further, the following priorities for evaluation were agreed with the VRP:

- To understand the impact of the CDP against its stated outcomes as defined by the Theory of Change.
- To capture evidence to support decision making regarding future funding decisions for the programme.
- To understand how the CDP is being implemented and how this could be improved.
- To demonstrate evidence of impact for children and young people.

An evaluation approach focusing on the above areas was collaboratively developed and agreed. That evaluation is the focus of this report.

9 Appendix C: Evaluation data appendix

Please refer to the separate evaluation data appendix. This is also provided as an embedded document below:



10 Appendix D: Evidence review

Please refer to the separate evaluation evidence review. This is also provided as an embedded document below:





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