

West Yorkshire Combined
Authority Violence Reduction Unit

Process and
Implementation Evaluation
of the Sports, Creative Arts
and Mentoring Provision

July 2023



CordisBright

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West Yorkshire Combined Authority Violence Reduction Unit. Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision. Evaluation Key Findings



About the provision: Introduced to address a need to provide additional support for young people at risk of school exclusion and serious youth violence (SYV) in West Yorkshire • Aimed to reduce or prevent SYV and involvement in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) by reducing persistent absenteeism and exclusion from school • Aimed to provide wrap-around term-time (mentoring) and holiday (sports and creative arts) support • Based on a pilot in Wakefield and rolled out in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds



Commissioning: Commissioned and implemented in tight timescales • Strengths of the commissioning process included (a) identifying schools and provider organisations rapidly to receive and provide support (b) commissioning existing experienced community-based providers who could hit the ground running (c) Identifying and receiving referrals for 58 young people to be supported by mentoring and 47 by the holiday provision

Key Strengths of the provision



Operationalising in challenging timescales: Funding was short-term and required delivery to start quickly • The provision was successfully implemented in these challenging timescales • This was partly because WYCA VRU commissioned provider organisations with high levels of experience and existing local footprints



Successful engagement with young people enabled through: Staff with lived experience • Built positive relationships with young people (particularly through mentoring) • Offered continued and regular support in term-time and holidays • A range of activities and methods to engage • Distinction between provision and school • Parent/carer drop-in sessions



Flexibility and responsiveness to young people's needs: Person centered-approach • Flexible to changing circumstances and challenges • "Hands-off" approach of WYCA VRU allowed flexibility to respond to local need



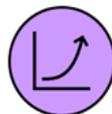
Identification of schools whose pupils would benefit from the provision: Stakeholders agreed this process was effective as evidenced by known challenges the students were experiencing with SYV and exclusions • This process worked particularly well where the WYCA VRU had direct communication with those responsible for identifying schools



Emerging evidence of positive outcomes: Reports of improvements in attendance, behaviour, and communication of some young people • Longer period of time needed to make and assess impact



Considerations for improvements to future commissioning (1) Review the commissioning and delivery model of the provision (2) Fund an extended set-up phase for implementation (3) Ensure the right people are involved in commissioning early on (4) Develop a consistent approach to identifying schools based on a robust needs assessment (4) Commission partners with pre-existing relationships or provide support for relationship development (5) Take into account school holiday periods



Considerations to support improvements of provision (1) Collaboratively develop an evidence-based Theory of Change with a consistent pathway of support (2) Develop guidance around a consistent identification and referral process (3) Develop a shared set of assessment tools across the provision (4) Convene a partnership group



Considerations and options for future impact evaluation (1) Conduct an evaluation feasibility study of the provision (2) Decide how robust the impact evaluation should be (3) Consider the methods to evaluate impact (4) Consider the length of delivery needed to assess impact

Executive Summary

About the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision

The Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision was introduced to address an identified need to provide additional support for young people at risk of school exclusion and Serious Youth Violence (SYV) in West Yorkshire.

The overall aim of the provision was to reduce or prevent SYV and involvement in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) for young people by reducing persistent absenteeism and exclusions from school.

The provision was commissioned and implemented in a tight timescale. Strengths of the process included:

- Identifying schools and provider organisations rapidly to receive and provide support.
- Commissioning existing experienced community-based providers which were able to hit the ground running with delivery.
- Identifying and receiving referrals for at least 58 young people to be supported by mentoring provision and 47 young people to be supported by the holiday provision (this is an underestimate as figures were not available for Kirklees). In addition, a further 2,562 young people have been supported through assemblies provided by St Giles practitioners, and St Giles delivered Serious Violence and County Lines sessions to 32 school professionals in Kirklees.

Potential improvement considerations for commissioning in the future included:

- Conducting a robust needs assessment to support school identification and understand how provision can be tailored to meet identified need.
- Collaboratively developing, designing and sharing a Theory of Change clearly rooted in evidence of what works in addressing the needs of the target cohort.
- Longer lead-in times and set-up periods for schools and providers.
- Considering school holiday periods when planning provision.

Implementation of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision

A key strength of the commissioning approach was that it facilitated rapid implementation which delivered support for young people from the Summer of 2022. This was needed due to the tight commissioning timeline and also a funding period which ended in March 2023.

Due to the tight commissioning timescales, the provision was designed as an umbrella of existing community-based providers with established local footprints. As such, there is variation by area and provider organisation in terms of: (a) the target cohort projects are working with, (b) referral pathways, (c) activities, (d) support received by young people with similar needs, (e) intended outcomes and impacts, and (f) approaches to measuring impact and collecting activity and dosage (monitoring) data.

Stakeholders and young people reported that key strengths of the provision included:

- A person-centered and tailored approach.
- Flexibility and adaptiveness to changing circumstances and needs.
- Effective partnership working between provider organisations with pre-existing relationships.
- Effective partnership working between provider organisations and schools as the provision has become more embedded.
- Effective engagement with young people.

Key challenges included:

- The way the provision is currently implemented leads to variation in support depending on where young people go to school in West Yorkshire.
- Embedding provision in existing education systems. Improvements in this area would help to reduce any duplication with other support aimed at similar cohorts of young people.
- Currently, some young people are taken out of classes that they would benefit from attending to receive support through the provision, which may be considered to be counterintuitive to its overarching aims.

Stakeholders reported some emerging evidence of positive impacts for some young people around attendance, behaviour, exclusions and communication. However, a robust impact evaluation would be needed to establish the scale of change that the provision is achieving.

Successes and considerations for improvement

Figure 1 summarises some of the key successes of the provision.

Figure 1: Diagram summarising successes of the provision

<p>1) Delivering in challenging timescales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful implementation to tight timescales. • Success in part due to commissioning experienced, existing providers with existing footprints in the local areas. • Provision has received 58 referrals into the mentoring provision and 47 into the holiday provision (not including Kirklees).
<p>2) Identification of schools whose pupils would benefit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders agreed that the process of identifying schools whose pupils would benefit from the provision was effective, as evidenced by known challenges the students were experiencing with SYV and exclusions. • This process worked particularly well in areas where the VRU had direct communication with those in the council responsible for identifying schools.
<p>3) Successful engagement with young people</p>	<p>Key enablers included: (1) recruiting staff with lived experience (2) building positive relationships (particularly through mentoring) (3) offering continued and regular support in term time and holiday time (4) offering a range of activities and methods to engage (5) distinguishing between the provision and school (6) parent/carer drop-in sessions.</p>
<p>4) Person-centred approach with young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people valued the person-centered approach of the provision. • Stakeholders identified responsiveness and flexibility as key strengths of the provision, highlighting the adaptations provider organisations had made as examples of them effectively responding to changing circumstances and challenges. • The “hands-off” approach adopted by the VRU allowed provider organisations and schools the flexibility to respond to local need appropriately.
<p>5) Emerging evidence of positive outcomes within short timescales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders reported some young people have made improvements to their attendance and behaviour in school and their communication skills. • A longer period of time is needed to a) achieve some of the intended outcomes and impacts and b) measure them.

Considerations to support commissioning

The following summarises considerations to support commissioning of the provision in the future.

1. **Review the commissioning and delivery model of the provision.** This review could focus on whether the model is supporting the delivery of the outcomes and impacts that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) originally intended from the provision. It could focus on supporting the provision to be more consistent in delivery and reduce variation.
2. **Funding an extended set-up phase for implementation or including this set-up phase in existing timescales.** This would allow partners to collaboratively develop a Theory of Change and an associated delivery model

based on evidence of “what works” in supporting the intended target cohort. It could also support provider organisations to develop positive and trusting relationships with young people before starting delivery.

3. **Ensure the right people are involved in the commissioning process as early as possible.** This would ensure the aims and rationale are clear to those involved in the decision-making and frontline delivery, enabling more effective implementation.
4. **Develop a consistent approach to identifying schools based on a robust needs assessment.** This would help ensure the provision is identifying the target cohort effectively and would enable the impact of the provision to be compared across different areas.
5. **Consider commissioning partners with pre-existing relationships or build in time to the delivery period to build these relationships.** Where provider organisations had pre-existing relationships, they were able to collaboratively make decisions and co-ordinate delivery to ensure all activities were complementary, everyone was working towards similar outcomes, and duplication was minimised.
6. **Take into account school holiday periods when commissioning.** Ensuring that school-based interventions are not commissioned in busy periods for schools, for example, the beginning and end of academic terms, will help support buy-in from schools and effective implementation.

Considerations to support improvement

The following summarises considerations to improve the provision.

1. **Collaboratively develop an evidence-based Theory of Change for the provision.** This should include (a) clear eligibility criteria and target cohort (b) consistent set of activities and support, within which there is opportunity for flexibility and a person-centered approach (c) clear set of intended impacts and outcomes (d) establishing clear exit criteria, including step down of support.
2. **Develop guidance around a consistent identification and referral process into the provision in partnership with schools.** This could include a data-led and collaborative approach to identification to ensure support is appropriately targeted to level and profile of need in each school, and ensure that demand for support does not outstrip capacity of provider organisations.
3. **Develop a shared set of assessment tools across the provision.** This would enable impact to be compared across provider organisations and areas and help WYCA VRU colleagues to continue to identify the most effective model for achieving positive outcomes for this cohort. Any assessment tools should be closely linked to the intended outcomes and impacts of a consistent Theory of Change for the provision.

4. **Convene a partnership group.** Convening a joint working group attended by representatives from all organisations working across each area could provide an opportunity for sharing good practice and problem-solving, support more effective communication between provider organisations and schools, and increase provider organisations' understanding of other support on offer in the school, area, and wider education system.

Consideration for future impact evaluation

The WYCA VRU may wish to consider the following in terms of future impact evaluation:

- 1 Conduct an evaluation feasibility study of the provision. 
- 2 Decide how robust the impact evaluation should be. 
- 3 Consider the methods to evaluate impact. 
- 4 Consider the length of delivery needed to assess impact. 

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This is the final report for the implementation and process evaluation of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) Sports, Creative Arts, and Mentoring Provision. The WYCA VRU asked Cordis Bright to conduct an independent evaluation of the provision, which is being implemented across Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds.

The process and implementation evaluation took place between October 2022 and April 2023. This report should be read in conjunction with the interim evaluation report and framework (available in Appendix 1).

1.2 About the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision

The Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision was commissioned based on previous research conducted by the WYCA VRU which showed a link between serious youth violence (SYV) and school exclusion. It focused on reducing SYV by offering a universal awareness-raising offer around youth violence for schools in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds with high levels of persistent absenteeism or exclusion. It aimed to offer targeted one-to-one mentoring for specific young people in these schools who were at risk of exclusion or who were already temporarily excluded. Sports and Creative Arts holiday provision was also offered to young people in Bradford and Leeds.

1.3 Evaluation questions and methods

1.3.1 Evaluation questions

Figure 2 presents the evaluation questions which were developed collaboratively with key WYCA VRU stakeholders during phase 1 of the evaluation. It also shows where in this report the evaluation questions are addressed.

Figure 2: Evaluation questions and sections in this report where they are addressed

Evaluation question	Section addressed
What was the rationale for the provision? Why is it needed? What gap does it seek to address?	2.3
What impact is the provision aiming to achieve? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What difference is the provision hoping to make for young people and families? • What difference is the provision hoping to make for the workforce? • What difference is the provision hoping to make for the system? 	2.5
How was the provision commissioned? What were the strengths of the process and where could improvements be made?	2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11
How well has the provision been implemented overall and in each locality? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is being delivered in each area and why? • How well are partners working together to deliver the initiative? • How does the provision fit in with the wider educational system in each school/area? • Is the provision being implemented with fidelity to its original intentions? • What is working well and what could be improved? • What is working well in each area and what are the opportunities for further improvement and adaptation? 	3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8
What have been the successes of the provision and how can these be developed in the future?	4
What are the options for future evaluation?	5

1.3.2 Methods

This report was produced by Cordis Bright taking a collaborative approach with WYCA VRU colleagues. All research approaches, methods and tools were designed by Cordis Bright and signed-off by WYCA VRU before use in the field. Figure 3 summarises the approach taken throughout the evaluation. More detail about the methodology used in Phase 2 is available in Appendix 2.

Figure 3: Evaluation methodology

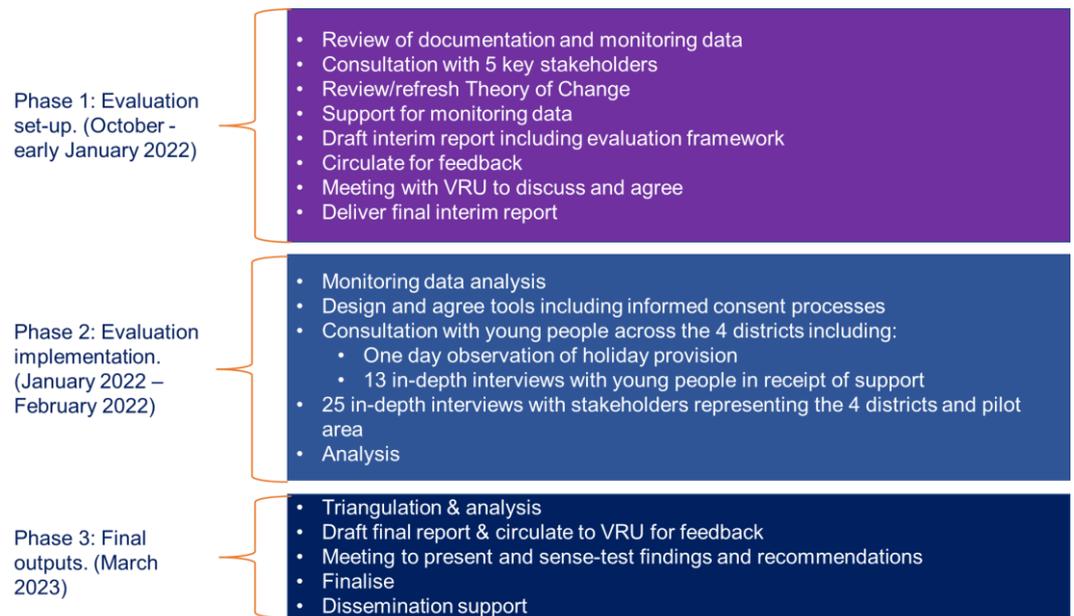


Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the stakeholders consulted with across both phases of the evaluation.

Figure 4: Number of stakeholder interviews for each district across Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the evaluation¹

Stakeholder group	Bradford	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Wakefield
Provider Organisations	8	4	4	12	0
Schools	0	1	1	1	2
Local Authorities	0	2	1	0	0
Young people	3	3	3	4	0
Total	11	10	9	17	0
Overall total	49				

1.4 Challenges and Limitations

When interpreting the findings in this report the reader should consider the following challenges and limitations.

- Incomplete and inconsistent monitoring data.** Although all provider organisations used the same monitoring data spreadsheet, there was variation in how information was recorded. Other challenges related to monitoring data included: (1) missing information and data, (2) monitoring data not being available at the time of request for St Giles mentoring provision in Kirklees (because delivery started later –Appendix 4 explains this in more detail), and (3) duplication of young people’s data provided by The Youth Association and Barca-Leeds.
- Under-representation of some stakeholder groups.** It was a challenge reaching teachers across all districts. It was also not possible to speak to young people receiving mentoring support from Brathay Trust in Bradford. This is because the evaluation was originally designed based on the understanding that the same young people were being supported by The Youth Association and partners and by Brathay Trust in Bradford. In practice,

¹ Some stakeholders are included twice if they worked across multiple districts and/or were interviewed as part of the scoping phase as well as phase 2 of the evaluation.

two different cohorts were being supported. The evaluation team attempted to mitigate consultation issues through:

- Speaking to additional frontline practitioners involved in delivering the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision.
 - Conducting observations of the provision to capture young people's experiences.
- **This evaluation does not measure impact.** This evaluation is a process and implementation evaluation, and therefore assessing the impact of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision is not within its remit. We have reported on some evidence of emerging impact which was captured through stakeholder and young people interviews. Considerations and options for a future impact evaluation are included in Chapter 5.

2 About the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision

2.1 Key messages

The Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision was introduced to address an identified need to provide additional support for young people at risk of school exclusion and Serious Youth Violence (SYV) in four districts across West Yorkshire.

The overall aim of the provision was to reduce or prevent SYV and involvement in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) for young people by reducing persistent absenteeism and exclusions from school.

The provision was commissioned and implemented in a tight timescale.

Strengths of the process included:

- Identifying schools and provider organisations rapidly to receive and provide support.
- Commissioning existing experienced community-based providers which were in a position to hit the ground running with delivery.
- Identifying and receiving referrals for at least 58 young people to be supported by mentoring provision and 47 young people to be supported by the holiday provision (this is an underestimate as figures were not available for Kirklees). In addition, a further 2,562 young people have been supported through assemblies provided by St Giles practitioners.

Potential improvement considerations for commissioning in the future include:

- Conducting a robust needs assessment to support school identification and understand how provision can be tailored to meet identified need.
- Collaboratively developing, designing and sharing a Theory of Change clearly rooted in evidence of what works in addressing the needs of the target cohort.
- Longer lead-in times and set-up periods for schools and providers.
- Taking into account school holiday periods when planning provision

2.2 Overview

This section outlines the rationale for the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision, the commissioning process, how schools and providers were identified, local variation in provision, the outputs of the provision, the challenges and successes of the provision, and suggestion for improvements to future commissioning. It is based on a review of documentation received from WYCA VRU and interviews with key stakeholders (see section 1.3.2 for more detail).

2.3 Rationale and need for the provision

Stakeholders reported that the rationale for the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision was rooted in the following:

- Evidence from a previous education inclusion and SYV pilot intervention commissioned by WYCA VRU in Wakefield which showed that a holistic offer of targeted and universal support for young people at risk of criminality helped reduce exclusions and improve attendance in school.
- Evidence from a WYCA VRU-commissioned research project into education inclusion more broadly, which identified that some exclusions are directly attributable to young people getting involved in SYV.
- Evidence from the [Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit](#) around the positive effects of interventions aimed at preventing school exclusion, of social skills training interventions, sports programmes, and mentoring on reducing youth violence.

Based on the above, the WYCA VRU identified a gap in service provision and a demand for preventative support for young people at risk of exclusion and SYV.

Stakeholders suggested this demand was reflected in:

- **Relatively high levels of exclusion, poor attendance, and an increase in incidents of SYV in West Yorkshire.** Stakeholders suggested that this was partly due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis as well as the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. They suggested that this context had meant that some young people have struggled to return to the structure of school and increasingly some young people needed a more bespoke curriculum. Stakeholders suggested that young people with low school attendance and at risk of exclusion put them at a higher risk of engaging in SYV. For example, stakeholders reported that:²
 - In the school involved in this project in Bradford, 45% of pupils are at risk of truancy or exclusion.

² Please note these statistics have not been independently verified by the evaluator, rather they are based on stakeholder reports.

- In Calderdale, there were 44,400 sessions of suspension in 2021/2022. This is double the level of the previous academic year.³
- In Kirklees, knife crime has been identified as a potential issue in the school community within which the provision is working.
- In Leeds, stakeholders reported there have been more incidents of crime and violence, of young people suspected of being involved in gangs or weapon-carrying, and of young people being exploited.

In addition, the VRU Strategic Needs Assessment 2022/2023 shows that absence rates almost doubled from 2020/21 Autumn and Spring Term to 2021/2022 Autumn and Spring terms and the percentage of persistent absentees has significantly increased over the same period, with every local authority area in West Yorkshire, aside from Bradford, at least doubling.⁴

- **Limited capacity of alternative provision to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion.** Stakeholders reported that many Pupil Referral Units in West Yorkshire are at full capacity, and that other provision that is available for young people excluded from mainstream school is not always high-quality or accessible for young people. For example, it might be far from their homes and incur large travel costs, or it might not accept young people with behavioural issues. They suggested that this is a particular challenge for Key Stage 3 pupils who are struggling in mainstream education but have less vocational education and training routes available to them than older pupils.
- **Limited capacity of alternative provision to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion.** Stakeholders reported that many Pupil Referral Units in West Yorkshire are at full capacity, and that other provision that is available for young people excluded from mainstream school is not always high-quality or accessible for young people. For example, it might be far from their homes and incur large travel costs, or it might not accept young people with behavioural issues. They suggested that this is a particular challenge for Key Stage 3 pupils who are struggling in mainstream education but have less vocational education and training routes available to them than older pupils.
- **Limited capacity and resources within schools.** Stakeholders reported that generally schools do not have capacity or resources to address the needs identified above.

³ One session equates to half a school day.

⁴ The average overall absence rate across the five districts of West Yorkshire increased from 4.2% in 2020/21 Autumn and Spring Term to 7.5% in 2021/22 Autumn and Spring Term. The average percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more sessions missed) across the five districts increased from 11.4% in 2020/21 Autumn and Spring Term to 22.5% in 2021/22 Autumn and Spring Term.

2.4 Commissioning

In response to the above identified need, the WYCA VRU during 2022 decided that it would commission mentoring provision with the aim of supporting young people at risk of school exclusion to stay engaged with education. This would also have the intended aim of reducing serious youth violence.

The WYCA VRU also saw an opportunity to use Home Office funding to commission the Sports and Creative Arts holiday provision which was intended to prevent a spike in SYV in school holiday periods.

The WYCA VRU identified an opportunity to link this with the mentoring provision to provide a targeted, wrap-around offer for young people that continued during the school holidays.

The funding for both elements of the provision was on a short-term basis and required delivery to start very quickly. The one-to-one mentoring support service was launched in schools in September 2022 and started work with young people in October 2022,⁵ while the Sports and Creative Arts holiday provision contract was awarded in July 2022 and launched in the summer of 2022. Funding ended on 31 March 2023 for both elements.

2.5 Provision aims and objectives

Documentation shared by the WYCA VRU and key stakeholders involved in the commissioning of the provision suggests that the overall aim of the mentoring provision was to reduce or prevent SYV and involvement in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) for young people by reducing persistent absenteeism and exclusions from school through the provision of a trusted adult role model that is separate to school. The majority of stakeholders from provider organisations also suggested that the main aim of the provision was to reduce SYV. They tended to conceptualise this more broadly than having a specific focus on addressing education inclusion that would then have the impact of reducing involvement in SYV. This resulted in more of a focus on outcomes related to SYV rather than education inclusion. This is discussed in more detail in section 2.5.1 below.

Potentially due to the rapid commissioning process the provision did not have an overarching Theory of Change. In the future, the provision would benefit from having a Theory of Change as this may support a greater shared understanding among stakeholders around the intended aims and objectives of the provision. It would also support a more consistent approach to delivery of provision across West Yorkshire (we discuss this more in Section 3) This could build on the Theory of Change for the provision which was developed during the scoping phase of this evaluation presented in Figure 5. Although the provision did not

⁵ The exception to this was in Kirklees, where mentoring support started in January 2023 due to external circumstances. See section Appendix 4 for more detail.

have an overarching Theory of Change, each provider worked to their own provision theories of change. These are presented in Appendix 3.

Figure 5 Draft provision Theory of Change

Inputs→	Activities→	Outputs→	Outcomes→	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Giles (Kirklees and Calderdale one-to-one mentoring): £158,357.32 • Brathay Trust and JAMES (Bradford one-to-one mentoring): £76,589.00 • Barca-Leeds (Leeds one-to-one mentoring): £79,943.00 • Youth Association and Partners (Bradford and Leeds Sports and Holiday Provision): £43,432.00 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one mentoring. • Work to inform the wider school and community. • Parental/family Support. • Multi-agency work with partners and statutory agencies. • Bradford and Leeds sports and creative arts holiday provision, including sports sessions, youth voice project forum, arts sessions, and issues-based workshops. • Group work (Leeds only) • Residential and vocational training (Calderdale and Kirklees only) 	<p>Number of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-to-one mentoring sessions delivered Group sessions delivered (Leeds only) Sports and Creative Arts sessions delivered (Bradford and Leeds only) Assemblies delivered (Kirklees and Calderdale only) Training sessions delivered to frontline professionals (Calderdale and Kirklees only) Family support sessions delivered (Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds only) Onward referrals to other services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement and attendance with school. • Young people build positive trusted relationships. • Young people have improved self-esteem, well-being and feel more confident. • Young people are more resilient and able to deal with challenges. • Young people have positive aspirations. 	<p>Long-term impacts vary for each individual provider (please see delivery model overview) but generally relate to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have increased resilience against serious youth violence and exploitation. • Young people are diverted away from the criminal justice system.

Although the provision did not have its own specific Theory of Change, stakeholders generally reported a similar understanding of intended outcomes and impacts.

2.5.1 Outcomes and impacts for young people and families

Stakeholders reported a range of different intended outcomes and impacts of the provision for young people. These included young people:

- Having the tools to make choices that reduce the risk of involvement in criminal activities, for example understanding when it is appropriate to say “no”, and how and when to make positive choices about behaviour.
- Being given access to positive diversionary activities to reduce the risk of involvement in serious youth violence and criminality.
- Having increased understanding and awareness of risks associated with gangs, county lines and knife crime.
- Having increased engagement with school and improved attendance.

Other intended outcomes and impacts reported by stakeholders included: improving relationships within families, improving young people’s confidence, and improved behaviour in school and the community.

2.5.2 Outcomes and impacts for the workforce

Most stakeholders who were interviewed were unsure of the provision’s intended outcomes for the workforce. Frontline practitioners from provider organisations generally reported having minimal contact with school staff and reported that creating change for the workforce was not within the remit of the provision.

However, some stakeholders from provider organisations suggested that the provision aimed to increase school staff’s understanding of the risks associated with SYV and exploitation, and how this might manifest in young people’s behaviour, and improving their skills in identifying young people who are at risk.

2.5.3 Outcomes and impacts for the wider system

Stakeholders reported the following as key intended outcomes and impacts of the provision for the wider system:

- Improved attendance rates
- Reduced exclusion rates
- Reduced youth violence

2.6 Identifying schools and providers

2.6.1 Identification of schools to receive the provision

Due to the rapid nature of the commissioning process, the WYCA VRU asked Directors of Children’s Services (DCS) in Bradford, Calderdale, Leeds, and Kirklees (and their nominated representatives) to identify schools with the highest rates of exclusions, persistent absenteeism and serious youth violence. The methods used to identify schools to receive support from the provision varied across each area.

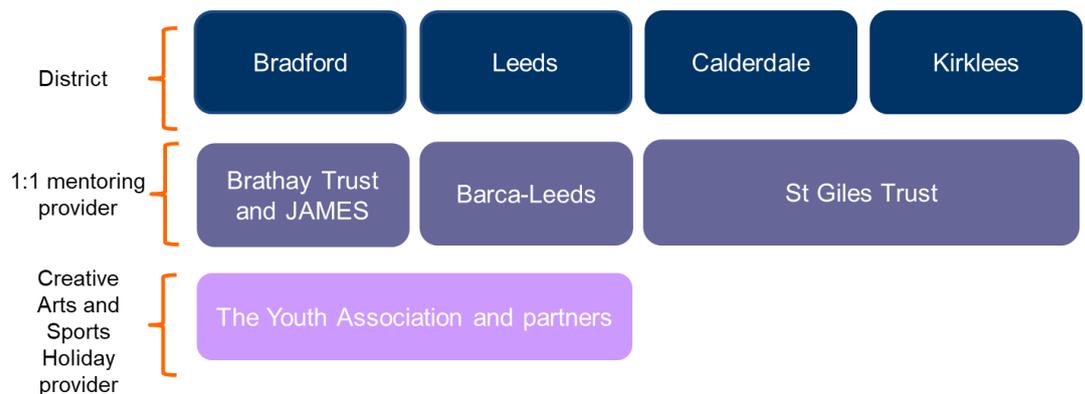
2.6.2 Identification of support providers

Once schools were selected, the WYCA VRU worked with headteachers to identify the profile of need within each school which was used to guide the commissioning of appropriate provider organisations. Stakeholders reported that provider organisations were chosen based on their ability to:

- Provide youth work that could produce the intended outcomes of improved attendance and school behaviour.
- Provide both universal and targeted approaches.
- Ensure inclusivity for those with additional needs.
- Ensure families are engaged with and young people are effectively safeguarded.

The full list of provider organisations and their associated areas which were commissioned is summarised in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Area of provision and provider organisation⁶



⁶ The Youth Association delivered the Creative Arts and Sports Holiday provision in partnership with St Giles Trust, Guiseley Community Foundation (GCF) and Life Experience (LE – only in Leeds). Brathay Trust also

2.7 Local variation in provision

The commissioning process resulted in variation in provision across districts.⁷ For instance, each provider had its own Theory of Change that it worked to under the umbrella of the provision. Eligible pupils in Bradford and Leeds received support from holiday provision which was not available in other districts (this was due to the tight commissioning timescales – see section 2.9). Stakeholders reported a benefit of this approach was that support could be tailored to meet local need. However, this presents a challenge to consistency of provision across West Yorkshire with young people receiving potentially different support based on which school they attend. It also presents challenges to evaluating the overall impact of provision in the future (this is discussed further in Chapter 5).

2.8 Outputs

The WYCA VRU and partners were successful in commissioning and implementing the provision within challenging timescales, starting delivery with young people very shortly after contracts were awarded. This meant that at least 58 young people have been referred into the mentoring provision and 47 into the holiday provision to date. This does not include numbers referred into Kirklees mentoring provision, so the actual figures are likely to be higher.

Assemblies have also been delivered to 2,562 young people in total by St Giles practitioners across Calderdale and Kirklees.

2.9 Commissioning challenges

Stakeholders reported the following challenges with having to commission and implement the provision in a short timescale:

- **Provision design.** The timescale of commissioning provision meant that there was not a lot of time to collaboratively develop and design a delivery model for the provision rooted in an evidence-based Theory of Change. However, by commissioning a range of community-based provider organisations already operating locally the provision was able to quickly draw on a suite of resources and tools from existing programmes. This meant that support could be implemented as soon as possible within challenging timescales.

A challenge with this approach is that the provision model provided a referral pathway into existing youth work for specific schools, rather than being a cohesive package of support in itself which was tailored to deliver support to the needs specifically identified by the WYCA VRU. For example, one

works with Joint Activities and Motor Education Service (JAMES) to provide young people who receive mentoring with access to vocational training at a motor garage.

⁷ These areas are local authority areas but are referred to as districts in this report as this is the language used in provision and WYCA VRU documentation.

stakeholder noted when discussing the holiday provision in Bradford and Leeds that while there is evidence that sports and creative arts can improve relationships and communication, which might lead to improved behaviour and reduced school exclusion, there is limited evidence base that these activities are effective primary tools to improve school inclusion or reduce SYV in and of itself. They stated:

'If you have water coming out of your ceiling, it's like putting a call out for someone with a copper pipe, rather than someone to determine what the issue is, and stop the leak. It's like going to an end point rather than let the expert figure out what is needed.'

- **Commissioning holiday provision.** Due to the challenging timescales, it was not possible for the WYCA VRU to commission holiday provision in Kirklees or Calderdale.
- **Developing a wrap-around offer of holiday provision and mentoring in Leeds.** The Youth Association and partners received funding to deliver holiday provision in the summer holidays, whereas Barca-Leeds did not receive funding until September and did not start delivery until October half-term. This meant the first cohort who received support from The Youth Association and partners did not receive the wrap around mentoring offer in parallel as originally intended. Stakeholders involved with delivery for both Barca-Leeds and the Youth Association and partners also reported that this resulted in difficulties in understanding how they would come together to operate a holistic package of support.
- **Establishing positive relationships with young people.** Stakeholders across provider organisations noted that they would normally undertake 'pre-work' within schools to get to know the young people and build relationships before the support officially begins. However, this was not possible in the available timescales. They suggested not having the 'pre-work' phase was likely to inhibit the level of impact the provision achieved or could mean support has to be extended further to ensure progress is maintained (which could have implications for costs).

2.10 Commissioning strengths

Key strengths of the commissioning process included:

- Implementing the provision and starting delivery with young people in challenging timescales. One stakeholder reported:

'We got funding within a week of it starting. It was quite intense in terms of delivering... staff were already in place to work with other projects. We didn't know what it would look like- if we had more time we could have planned more.'

Stakeholders suggested this was largely due to the WYCA VRU commissioning highly experienced, community-based provider organisations. This meant they were able to start delivery quickly by drawing on their existing skill sets, resources, and knowledge of the local community. Implementing holiday provision in Bradford was particularly impressive considering the original provider was not able to fulfil the contract and so The Youth Association and partners agreed to deliver it at very short notice.

- **Process of school identification.** There was consensus among stakeholders across all areas that the process of identifying schools whose pupils would benefit from the provision had been effective given the tight commissioning timeframes, as evidenced by known challenges the students were experiencing with exclusions, violence, drugs and gangs. Stakeholders suggested that the process for identifying schools worked particularly well in areas where the WYCA VRU had direct communication with those in the council responsible for identifying schools, as opposed to areas where the request was passed through the council to the relevant delegate. This direct communication meant it was more likely the aims and rationale were clear to those involved in the decision-making, enabling them to identify appropriate schools more easily.

2.11 Improving future commissioning

In light of the strengths and challenges highlighted by stakeholders above, when commissioning similar provision in future (and if timescales are less challenging) WYCA VRU colleagues may wish to consider:

- **Conducting a robust needs assessment.** This could include developing a more robust picture and profile of pupil need in relation to school inclusion and serious violence, as well as mapping similar provision which may already exist. This needs assessment could be used to support a more consistent and robust approach to identifying appropriate schools to receive support from the provision.
- **Collaboratively developing an overarching provision Theory of Change.** This should clearly set out intended impacts, outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs as well as assumptions. This would support provider organisations to work towards a consistent set of outcomes and impacts as well as an approach. It could also address some of the variation in provision which is on offer locally.
- **Longer lead-in times and set-up periods.** This could help mitigate some of the challenges stakeholders identified associated with the timescales, such as developing a wrap-around holiday provision and mentoring offer, collaboratively designing a delivery model, and establishing positive relationships with young people.
- **Taking into account school holiday periods.** Stakeholders across all areas reported that the tight timelines made it difficult to build relationships between

provider organisations and schools, which was exacerbated by the fact that funding started at busy times for schools (start and end of the school year) when they had limited capacity to engage with provider organisations. This led to delays conducting risk assessments, DBS checks and getting into schools in Bradford and Calderdale in particular.

3 Implementation of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision

3.1 Key messages

A key strength of the commissioning approach was that it facilitated rapid implementation which delivered support for young people from the Summer of 2022. This was needed due to the tight commissioning timeline and also a funding period which ended in March 2023.

Due to the tight commissioning timescales, the provision was designed as an umbrella of existing community-based providers with established local footprints. As such, there is variation by area and provider organisation in terms of: (a) the target cohort provider organisations are working with, (b) referral pathways, (c) activities, (d) support received by young people with similar needs, (e) intended outcomes and impacts, and (f) approaches to measuring impact and collecting activity and dosage (monitoring) data.

Stakeholders and young people reported that key strengths of the provision included:

- A person-centered and tailored approach.
- Flexibility and adaptiveness to changing circumstances and needs.
- Effective partnership working between provider organisations with pre-existing relationships.
- Effective partnership working between provider organisations and schools as the provision has become more embedded.
- Effective engagement with young people.

Key challenges included:

- The way the provision is currently implemented leads to variation in support depending on where young people go to school in West Yorkshire.
- Embedding provision in existing education systems. Improvements in this area would help to reduce any duplication with other support aimed at similar cohorts of young people.

- Currently, some young people are taken out of classes that they would benefit from attending to receive support through the provision, which may be considered to be counterintuitive to its overarching aims.

Stakeholders reported some emerging evidence of positive impacts for some young people around attendance, behaviour, exclusions and communication. However, a robust impact evaluation would be needed to establish the scale of change that the provision is achieving.

3.2 Overview

This section outlines the local delivery models that were used by provider organisations, the variation in provision in each district, and discusses the successes and challenges related to partnership working, linking in with wider education systems, and engagement with young people. It also outlines some of the emerging evidence of outcomes being achieved by the provision, along with key successes and considerations for improvement. It is based on a review of documentation received from West Yorkshire, analysis of monitoring data, and interviews with key stakeholders and young people (see section 1.3.2 for more detail).

3.3 Local delivery models

Figure 7 summarises the similarities and differences across the delivery models for the Sports, Creative Arts, and Mentoring provision in each of the four districts.⁸ It gives details for each provider/area around:

- Target cohort
- Referral pathway
- Activities
- Medium-term intended outcomes
- Long-term intended impacts
- Exit criteria
- Assessment and Performance Indicators
- Methods to collect evidence of impact and feedback on service delivery

⁸ As part of the scoping stage of this evaluation, we also developed a high-level Theory of Change which describes the common inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the provision which can be seen in Figure 5

Changes to delivery models

Adaptations were made to the delivery models in each local area in response to external challenges (such as tight timelines and funding timescales) and to the changing needs (and an improved understanding of the needs) of local schools and young people. Stakeholders reported that most of these changes were a positive reflection of how provider organisations were flexible and adapted to the needs of the young people they were working with. These changes are outlined in more detail in Appendix 4.

The variation between the delivery models is discussed further in section 3.4.

Figure 7: Overview of delivery models in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
Target cohort	Mentoring is targeted at young people in years 7-11 at risk of SYC and exclusion. Assemblies are provided by St Giles practitioners targeted at all pupils in years 7-11.	Mentoring is targeted at young people of secondary school age (particularly years 8-10) identified as being at risk of exclusion or already temporarily excluded.	Mentoring is targeted at young people in years 7-11 at risk of exclusion or already temporarily excluded, and those at risk of SYV. Drop- in sessions opened up support to all young people in schools.	Holiday provision is targeted at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people in years 8-10 who are vulnerable to violence and reoffending (Leeds). • Young girls who are not in education or have low attainment (Bradford).
Referral pathway ¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools refer directly. • Schools will complete referral form, confidentiality agreement, agreement for the young person to work with St Giles Trust, and professional initial assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools refer directly (no link to holiday provision). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All young people who access the Youth Association Holiday provision are referred into the group work with Barca-Leeds-Leeds. • All young people who take part in the group work are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools refer directly with some self-referrals.

⁹ Joint Activities and Motor Education Service.

¹⁰ Referral pathways and eligibility criteria were mainly decided by the identified schools.

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Giles also identify young people directly through whole-school assemblies. 		<p>offered 1:1 mentoring but not all will accept/receive this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consent gained from young people to start work with Barca-Leeds-Leeds. Schools are the main referrals source (occasionally assisted by Police and Early Help team) with some self-referrals. 	
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:1 mentoring in school for two to four times a week. Mentoring sessions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheets around creative thinking skills Talking through topics most related to young people's lives, such as behaviour Setting 5 year plans with young people Potential for additional 1:1 support outside of school depending on the needs of the young people. Group work- the young people will build creative art skills such as designing posters alongside sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:1 mentoring in school once a week. Group work in schools. Peer mentoring for school staff around young people's mental health. Multi-agency partnership working with other professionals supporting the young person and their family. Vocational training with JAMES once a week for 4 weeks per cohort. Residential trip planned at the End of March to the Lake District. Outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group work in school (once a week for a minimum of one hour). 1:1 mentoring in school or at home/community setting (minimum one hour once per week). Work with schools to address the root causes of behaviour. Multi-agency partnership working with other professionals supporting the young person and their family. Parent/carer/family therapeutic intervention. Drop in mentoring sessions open to all young people on the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports and Creative Arts Sessions throughout the holiday period (three days a week) including a meal, a sports activity and an issue-based workshop and/or arts session each day. Sports sessions run by the Guiseley Community Foundation and include multi-sports activities, self-defence classes and football, a Sports Leaders Award and the Health Education Programme (choices of sports to be planned &

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
	<p>such as basketball and badminton.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency partnership working with other professionals supporting the young person and their family (including awareness raising sessions around signs of SYV and supporting young people at risk). Parent/carer/family support. Two assemblies for all five year groups on awareness of weapons carrying (Calderdale only) and county lines (Calderdale and Kirklees). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After School youth club open to those beyond the target cohort. Outreach and home visits. Parent drop in. Day trips during school holidays. Referrals to counselling and other services for young people and parents. 	<p>decided with young people).¹¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Arts sessions include arts workshops and a music programme exploring drill music and song writing (contents to be decided pending young people consultation/involvement) (Lived Experience and the Youth Association.).¹² Issues-based workshops include topics such as healthy relationships, toxic masculinity, drill music, serious violence, county lines and other issues (provided by St Giles Trust). Personal and social support is also provided throughout

¹¹ In Bradford there was more of a focus on creative arts than sport due to the demographics and interests of the cohort.

¹² Topics include toxic relationships, grooming, drill music, mental health, county lines, knife crime, relationships, positive masculinity, exploitation, racism and stereotyping. Choices of content are designed with young people.

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
				all sessions by all provider organisations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one mentoring supported offered in school weekly then fortnightly. • Weekly sessions take place during term time (all partners). • Alongside this provision The Youth Association intend to run a Youth voice project for young people involved where they influence project decision making and help design elements of the provision, and are supported to explore local opportunities to design/paint a mural or similar artwork, either in a visible outdoor area or inside the local community centre (The Youth Association).
Medium-term intended outcomes	<u>Outcomes that are common across all mentoring provider organisations</u> Young people:	<u>Outcomes that are common across all mentoring provider organisations</u> Young people:	<u>Outcomes that are common across all mentoring provider organisations</u> Young people:	Young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have improved physical and mental wellbeing over the summer period. • Have increased engagement with education.

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have increased awareness of gangs, county lines and knife crime. Have increased engagement and attendance with school. Build positive trusted relationships. Have improved self-esteem, well-being and feel more confident. Are more resilient and able to deal with challenges. Have positive aspirations. <p><u>Other outcomes</u></p> <p>Young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit and pass GCSEs. Have reduced school exclusions. Have reduced involvement in gang related harm. Have improved feelings of safety. Have safer peer networks. Have improved engagement with protective factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have increased awareness of gangs, county lines and knife crime. Have increased engagement and attendance with school. Build positive trusted relationships. Have improved self-esteem, well-being and feel more confident. Are more resilient and able to deal with challenges. Have positive aspirations. <p><u>Other outcomes</u></p> <p>Young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have increased confidence to communicate. Have increased openness to try new things. Have increased participation in healthy and positive activities. <p>Professionals:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have increased awareness of gangs, county lines and knife crime. Have increased engagement and attendance with school. Build positive trusted relationships. Have improved self-esteem, well-being and feel more confident. Are more resilient and able to deal with challenges. Have positive aspirations. <p><u>Other outcomes</u></p> <p>Young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have improved attainment at school. Are better able to empathise with others. Can better understand and regulate their emotions Develop their knowledge and skills. Feel they can achieve positive change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are empowered to make decisions. Have an increased understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities associated with serious youth violence and exploitation.

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
	Professionals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have improved communication with parents. • Are better able to identify the wider needs of young people displaying challenging behaviours. • Have more skills to support young people displaying challenging behaviours in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are more able to identify issues around mental health in their pupils. • Better understand the next step for supporting pupils with mental health needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce risk taking behaviours. • Make positive choices. • Feel part of a community and stay in school and education. Professionals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have improved working relationships and information-sharing pathways with other professionals. • Are better able to identify the wider needs of young people displaying challenging behaviours. 	
Long-term intended impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people will have increased resilience to becoming involved in gangs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people will be diverted away from the criminal justice system. • Young people will be supported to make better choices to improve their life opportunities. • Families will access wider services. • The unnecessary criminalisation of children will be prevented, reducing the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and families are empowered to achieve their potential and live happy, health lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have improved self-confidence and self-worth. • Young people have improved resilience against serious youth violence and exploitation.

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES ⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
		involvement of statutory agencies and further harm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a positive impact on peers and local communities increasing trust and cohesive engagement. • Decrease in/non-engagement with the criminal justice system. 		
Exit criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clear • Onward referrals/signposting where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance travelled reviewed at 5 months to assess whether it is safe for the young person to exit. • Onward referrals/signposting where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review at 12 weeks and exit plan created if appropriate. • Continued support through after school club. • Onward referrals/signposting where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people in Leeds are referred into the Barca-Leeds-Leeds mentoring programme for term-time support. Exit criteria from here not clear. • Onward referrals/signposting where appropriate.
Assessment and Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement with school. • Increased attendance at school. • Improved behaviour at school. • Monthly progress reports capture the above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement with school. • Increased attendance at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement with school. • Increased attendance at school. • Increased number of positive trusted relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators assigned to each outcome. • Attendance levels at the provision.

Affiliated district(s)	Calderdale and Kirklees (Mentoring)	Bradford (Mentoring)	Leeds (Mentoring)	Bradford and Leeds (Holiday Provision)
Provider	St Giles Trust	Brathay Trust and JAMES⁹	Barca-Leeds	Youth Association and partners
Methods to collect evidence of impact and feedback on service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial, mid-way and end of support assessments. Attendance data from schools. Support plan for young people. Reports from teachers/support staff of increased attendance, engagement and behaviour at school following the session. Young people's assessment of the sessions through evaluation forms. Post-training questionnaires completed by school staff and professionals. Monthly performance reports. Monitoring data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start and end evaluations. Case studies. Attendance and engagement data. Information on the links into and out from education – including referrals for additional support such as substance misuse or CAMHS. Monitoring data. Self-reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from referrers and families. School attendance records. Teachers' observations. Young people's goals. Feedback from young people. Outcomes stars. Case studies based on Barca-Leeds-Leeds staff observations. Service questionnaires completed by young people. Service manager reports. Referral forms. Monitoring data. CPOMs records.¹³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant testimony. Feedback from other services/community stakeholders, including schools and families. Monitoring data. Case studies. Self-reporting.

¹³ CPOMs is safeguarding software used by schools.

3.4 Local variation in provision

3.4.1 Who is the provision supporting?

Figure 7 shows that the target cohort that mentoring providers were aiming to support varied by area in terms of age-range. It also shows that holiday provision was aimed solely at girls in Bradford, whereas in Leeds it was aimed at boys and girls.

Stakeholders from schools and provider organisations reported that the target cohort was young people in secondary school at risk of involvement with SYV. Risk of exclusion was used as an eligibility criterion to identify this cohort, because evidence suggested there is a link between exclusion and later involvement in SYV.¹⁴

However, there was a mixed understanding within areas around the level of risk the provision was aimed at addressing. Stakeholders from provider organisations across all areas reported working with both young people who were already involved in SYV and crime, as well as those who were not yet involved. This is reflected in the monitoring data, which shows that overall, the provision worked with at least 13 young people who were already involved in the Criminal Justice System (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 provides a breakdown of the demographic and needs profile of the young people who the provision worked with (please note that sample numbers differ for each demographic due to some information not being available for all young people). Please note that this data is incomplete as data for Kirklees was not available.

Figure 8: Profile breakdown of the cohort, across all areas across mentoring and holiday provision¹⁵

Profile	Number / (%)
Gender (n=105)	46 (44%) are female 58 (56%) are male
Age (n=82)	10 (12%) are aged 12 28 (34%) are aged 13 34 (41%) are aged 14 10 (12%) are aged 15

¹⁴ <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence-a-review-of-risk-and-protective-factors>, [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - It was hard to escape - report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) Home Office – Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018 (publishing.service.gov.uk), and [Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: addendum \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

¹⁵ Please note this includes data received from both holiday provision provider organisations and mentoring provider organisations, and so data for some young people may be duplicated. Some information was missing for some young people and therefore sample sizes for each metric are different.

Profile	Number / (%)
Ethnicity (n=96)	26 (27%) are Asian 15 (19%) are White 9 (16%) are Black 28 (9%) are Mixed 18 (29%) are Other
Disability (n=94)	6 (6%) have a disability 88 (94%) do not have a disability
Involvement in CJS (n=46)	33 (28%) are known to CJS 13 (72%) are not known to CJS
Profile of need (n=97 for NEET, n=45 for trauma, and n=56 for needs)	6 (6%) are NEET 22 (49%) have a known history of trauma 17 (30%) have mental, physical or neurodevelopmental health needs

In Bradford and Leeds, the target cohort was broadened further:

- In Leeds, Barca-Leeds opened up support from mentors to all young people through drop-in sessions.
- In Bradford, the Youth Association and partners worked with young women from the Roma community who were at risk of dis-engagement from school. Stakeholders from provider organisations reported that this was because the school did not understand that it was the intention for both the holiday provision and the mentoring intervention to work with the same young people. As a result, two different cohorts were referred to each provider organisation, and the young people receiving mentoring provision did not also receive the support in the holiday periods.

Stakeholders generally reported that they were working with young people who would benefit from the support, but suggested that expanding the provision to younger children in years 5 and 6 of primary school could help ensure that early intervention is put in place for those who might become involved with crime later on.

To support more consistent delivery of provision the WYCA VRU may wish to consider reviewing which target cohorts would most benefit from this provision, i.e.: this could be by:

- Age range
- Risk profile, i.e., is the provision intended to be early intervention or for young people already involved in offending / who have been excluded.

- Risk-protective characteristics, i.e., what is the risk-protective factor profile of young people who would likely most benefit from the provision, e.g. young people with low school attendance, without a positive role model, with low self-control, at risk of involvement in offending etc.

Linked to the above, evidence suggests that a clearly defined target group and focusing on a clearly defined issue for the group is important in ensuring the effectiveness of preventative youth violence initiatives though focusing engagement efforts and resources.¹⁶

3.4.2 Referral pathways

Figure 7 shows variation in referral pathways by both provider and area. This is linked to the commissioning approach in relation to commissioning multiple community-based provider organisations which are using their existing approaches. In addition, stakeholders reported that there was variation in identification and referral pathways locally. For example:

- **Schools developed their own identification and referral processes based on their perception of who was in need of support.** This has resulted in high levels of variation in how young people were identified and referred into the provision across and within schools.
- **Providers identifying young people suitable for support.** In addition to referrals from school staff, stakeholders from St Giles reported that they identified some young people in Kirklees and Calderdale who were in need of support based on their interaction with them during the whole year group assemblies they delivered.
- **Young people self-referring into support.** In Leeds and Bradford, some young people were referred into the provision by teachers but some young people described self-referring after hearing about the provision through friends and thinking it sounded fun or interesting.

Most stakeholders reported that it was beneficial that schools could develop their own identification processes because it allowed the support to be tailored and utilised expertise within the school. Stakeholders across all areas also reported that the referral pathways were effective in creating a good flow of referrals through the provision. Stakeholders from provider organisations also reported no issues in receiving referrals or reaching targets numbers.

Interviews with the young people indicated that referral processes generally worked well for them; young people in all areas were happy with how they were referred and reported that the information they received about what the support

¹⁶ Hobson, J., Lynch, K., Payne, B., and Ellis, L. (2018) 'Are Police-Led Social Crime Prevention Initiatives Effective? A process and Outcome Evaluation of a UK Youth Intervention' *International Criminal Justice Review*; WHO (2015) *Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence*; Youth Justice Board (2017) *Prevention in Youth Justice*.

involved and why they had been referred was clear and matched the support they ended up receiving.

In the context of the tight timeframes for commissioning and implementation of the provision, this suggests that the identification and referral process was effective in creating flow through the provision and was easy to understand for young people being supported.

However, variations in how the cohort are being identified (including examples of young people self-referring into the provision) could result in inappropriate referrals and young people receiving support which is not based on evidence of “what works” in addressing their needs. Evidence suggests that a focus on proven risk and protective factors in the domains of the individual, family, school and community can help prioritise prevention efforts to those most at risk of offending or antisocial behaviour.¹⁷

As part of improving identification and referral processes, provider organisations and schools may wish to adopt a data-led approach to identifying young people (see call-out box example below).

A data-led approach to identifying young people

Stakeholders reported that in the pilot project in Hemsworth, pastoral and senior leads have a weekly meeting to identify students who are on their ‘vulnerable’ register whom they have concerns over regarding attendance. The young person is then referred to an intervention teacher who can refer them into various levels of support (green, amber, or red) according to their individual need. They also have monthly meetings to look at trends over year groups to inform universal provision, for example, assemblies. Stakeholders from Outwood Academy in Hemsworth report this approach has been effective in enabling a personalised package to be offered, and for the appropriate young people to be targeted.

Variations in referral processes and broad eligibility criteria can also risk demand for the provision outweighing the capacity of provider organisations as more young people are referred into the provision through different routes.

¹⁷ World Health Organisation (2015) *Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence* and Youth Justice Board (2017) *Prevention in Youth Justice*.

3.4.3 Activities

Figure 7 shows that the activities young people received as part of the provision varied locally and by provider. Stakeholders reported that the topics covered in the 1:1 mentoring sessions and Sports and Creative Arts holiday provision varied depending on the needs of the young people supported. However, each of the provider organisations had a suite of resources and tools they could draw upon from other programmes their organisation offers or based on colleagues' skills and experience.

Common support received by young people across all the mentoring provision included:

- 1:1 mentoring at least once a week.
- Group work.
- Access to positive diversionary activities (either through the provision directly or through signposting to alternative support).
- Outreach and home visits where needed.

Key variations in the support and activities offered by mentoring providers included:

- JAMES offered vocational training once a week for 4 weeks for young people receiving mentoring in Bradford.
- Young people receiving mentoring in Bradford were offered a residential trip to the Lake District.
- In Leeds, Barca-Leeds made referrals to counselling and other services for young people and parents.
- In Calderdale and Kirklees, St Giles delivered assemblies for all year groups on weapons carrying (Calderdale) and county lines (Calderdale and Kirklees).¹⁸

Those who received Sports and Creative Arts provision from The Youth Association and partners in Bradford and Leeds received a range of activities, including sports sessions, arts sessions, issues-based workshops, and one-to-one and group mentoring sessions during term time (in addition to that received by mentoring providers).

¹⁸ This decision was made by the provider organisations and the school because it was felt that the school staff and pupils needed time to process the incident before the provision began, and that an intervention aimed at reducing SYV might be too sensitive to deliver in the immediate aftermath.

What worked well about the activities offered by the provision?

The majority of stakeholders reported that three aspects of the support/activities on offer worked particularly well in engaging young people and supported them to work towards positive outcomes:

- **Mentoring** was highlighted as an effective mechanism to build **positive relationships with young people**, which was identified as important in enabling effective engagement with young people and achieving positive outcomes for young people.
- **A person-centered and tailored approach** was identified by young people and stakeholders as a key strength of the provision. For example, young people reported that they valued support that focused on their individual needs and the opportunity to engage in one-to-one sessions as well as group sessions to allow for follow up of topics where needed on an individual basis.
- Stakeholders and young people suggested that having a **holistic package of support** which included multiple activities and different methods through which to engage meant there was something to suit every young person's interest and meant provider organisations were successful in engaging young people. For example, one young person reported:

“I prefer in a group but sometimes if I'm in a mood I'd like 1:1s. I like to have the option of both. I have the option of both with St Giles.”

This multitude of activities on offer was exemplified in the evaluation team's observations of the range of activities on offer during a day of holiday club provision in Leeds, outlined in Figure 9.

Figure 9: A day at the Youth Association and partners' holiday club provision (Leeds)

Holiday club provision – Example day in Leeds



Activity 1 – Sports:

- The young people played a variety of football related activities with staff members.



Activity 2 – Podcasts:

- The young people recorded podcasts together on a range of topics they helped choose covering relationships, music and mental health.
- Question prompt cards included questions such as:
 - *What does a good relationship look like to you?*
 - *What makes a bad partner?*
 - *How does music make you feel?*
- The young people helped run the podcasts, for example pressing record and counting down to live, as well as taking turns asking and answering questions.
- Open discussion occurred around other topics the young people brought up, such as anger management and online safety.

Lunch



Activity 3 – Poster / banner making:

- The young people created posters on topics they were interested in, such as racism and relationships
- Staff aimed to let the young people lead the session, assisting where needed.
- Open discussion occurred around these topics and any others the young people wanted to bring up.

Reflections

Stakeholders reported that the variation in activities offered was key enabler for effective engagement with young people and allowed the support to be tailored to young people's needs and interests. This is also in line with evidence which suggests that bespoke interventions are key to effective delivery of prevention

programmes.¹⁹ A focus on building trusting relationships between key workers and young people has also been shown to reduce chances of re-offending and help to achieve positive outcomes for young people at risk of involvement in SYV and crime.²⁰

However, this variation risks creating a “postcode lottery” for young people, whereby some young people do not receive certain elements of support they might benefit from simply because they go to a different school or live in a different area. This is something that the WYCA VRU may wish to consider as the provision develops.

3.4.4 Intended outcomes and impacts

As discussed in section 2.5, stakeholders within and across areas had different perceptions of the intended outcomes and impacts that the provision was working towards. Figure 7 outlines the range of intended outcomes and impacts that were reported during interviews in phase 1 and 2 of the evaluation, and those that were included in project documentation and the Theories of Change of provider organisations.

Of these, there were some commonalities across provider organisations regarding the intended medium-term outcomes and impacts of the provision.

All reported that increasing young people’s understanding and awareness of the risk and vulnerabilities associated with SYV and exploitation (particularly gangs, county lines, and knife crime) was an intended impact of the provision.

In addition, across the mentoring providers, there were common intended medium-term outcomes for young people including:

- Having increased engagement and attendance at school.
- Building positive trusted relationships.
- Having improved self-esteem, well-being and feeling more confident.
- Being more resilient and able to deal with challenges.

All mentoring providers also included improving school professionals’ skills in identifying young people’s needs and vulnerabilities in relation to SYV as an intended medium-term outcome of the provision (although in practice stakeholders suggested this was not a focus of the provision – section 2.5.2 explores this in more detail).

¹⁹ Youth Justice Board (2017) *Prevention in Youth Justice* and Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board (2017) *Summary of responses to the MOJ and YJV survey on Youth Justice: Prevention of offending*.

²⁰ S Creaney (2014) ‘The position of relationship-based practice in youth justice’ *Safer Communities*.

There was greater divergence in terms of the intended long-term outcomes and impacts being worked towards by each of the provider organisations. For example, documentation from Brathay Trust and JAMES mentoring provision in Bradford suggested that an intended long-term outcome for the provision is to ensure families access wider services and that there will be more trust within local communities; these outcomes were not mentioned for other provider organisations.

The above shows that stakeholders across and within different provider organisations reported working towards different aims and objectives. This could result in support not being as effective as it could be, as evidence suggests that more targeted interventions focusing on specific outcomes for specific groups can create the largest impact and effect sizes.²¹ Evidence also suggests that well-specified goals with structured content is a key principle of good practice in interventions to prevent youth violence and crime.²²

There was also little evidence to show that the provision is aiming to achieve its intended outcomes and impacts for professionals. Increasing school staff's understanding of the vulnerabilities associated with SYV and improving their skills in identifying young people at risk of SYV could help improve outcomes for young people and sustain impact.

3.4.5 Exit from the provision

Figure 7 shows that each provider was using a different approach for young people achieving safe exit from the provision. Stakeholders reported that across all provider organisations, exit from the provision involved signposting on to other services. This can involve community projects, counselling, family support and also other projects run by the provider organisations such as Healthy Holidays by the Youth Association. One mentor reported:

“Whilst at school we are continuously mentoring until they finish this programme. It needs an end point so signposting is what I’m doing from now. If I can spot you need anything, I will exit you off with a document that will signpost to young counsellors.”

Generally, there was agreement that young people would not be ready to exit the provision when the project was due to end and would benefit from further support from the provider organisations. Some stakeholders from provider organisations reported they would like to continue working with the young people through other services they offer once the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring offer has ended, while others reported that they would like to see the funding for the provision extended so they could continue working with the same cohort within the existing

²¹ Youth Justice Board (2017) *Prevention in Youth Justice* and Humayan, S. (2017) et al. ‘Randomised controlled trial of Functional Family Therapy for offending and antisocial behaviour in UK Youth’ *J. Child Psychol Psychiatry*, 58(9).

²² Early Intervention Foundation (2015) *What works to prevent gang involvement, youth violence and crime*.

model. In Leeds, Barca-Leeds addresses this by introducing an after-school club offer to which some young people were referred to after completing the mentoring support.

Young people who were interviewed echoed this demand for a longer period of support. For example, one reported:

“I want more activities with [them]. I want [them] to stay with us.”

The WYCA VRU may wish to consider how long support should last for young people as part of this provision. This should be linked to what impacts are being achieved and how much support is required to achieve outcomes for young people. There is a risk that open-ended provision can lead to dependency on services for young people and families.

The use of different exit criteria across provider organisations and areas (and the differences in options for ongoing support) could also risk a “postcode lottery” whereby some young people are offered a longer period of support based on location rather than need.

3.4.6 Assessment, performance and feedback measures/indicators

Figure 7 shows that and stakeholders reported that different assessment tools are being used across the different provider organisations. For example:

- In Kirklees and Calderdale mentors from St Giles use monthly progress reports.
- In Bradford, mentors from Brathay Trust and practitioners from the Youth Association and partners use case study notes and self-reporting tools.
- In Leeds, mentors from Barca-Leeds use outcomes stars and practitioners from the Youth Association and partners use self-reporting tools.

All provider organisations reported using school data to assess the impact of the provision on young people. This included assessing changes in attendance, exclusions, and detentions.

Each provider organisation also used a range of different methods to collect evidence of impact and feedback on service delivery. For all the mentoring providers, this included attendance data from schools and questionnaires completed by young people. The Youth Association and partners also sought feedback from young people.

There was consensus among stakeholders that it is important to ask for feedback from young people to assess the impact of the provision on them, as some changes might not be captured in quantitative data.

It is likely that for any future impact evaluation, a more consistent approach to measuring outcomes will be needed that is linked to a Theory of Change for the

provision in order for impact to be measured and compared. This is considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

3.5 Partnership working

3.5.1 Partnership working between commissioners and provider organisations

Stakeholders reported that the WYCA VRU took a “hands-off” approach to managing the provision to ensure that provider organisations and schools could work in collaboration to deliver support that was appropriate to address the key areas of needs for identified cohorts at risk of exclusion and SYV. Stakeholders in provider organisations recognised the value of this approach in allowing provision to be tailored to local need.

The WYCA VRU also convened quarterly meetings in each area (attended by representatives from provider organisations, schools and the WYCA VRU) which some stakeholders highlighted as useful in providing an opportunity to discuss progress, share learning, highlight successes and challenges, and facilitate open communication.

Almost all stakeholders suggested that more advanced notice of whether funding would be extended could help in planning for further support of current cohorts. This could also help mitigate any potential negative impact on relationships with young people that might be experienced if support is suddenly ended or if it is not possible for frontline practitioners from provider organisations to be upfront with young people about future plans. This is particularly important as evidence shows that a trusting relationship between a young person and support worker can reduce the chances of re-offending and help to achieve positive personal outcomes.²³

3.5.2 Partnership working between provider organisations

In Kirklees and Calderdale, St Giles Trust were the sole provider organisation, but in Leeds and Bradford multiple partners worked together to deliver the provision (see Figure 10 and Figure 11).

²³ S Creaney (2014) ‘The position of relationship-based practice in youth justice’ *Safer Communities*.

Figure 10: Partnership working in Leeds

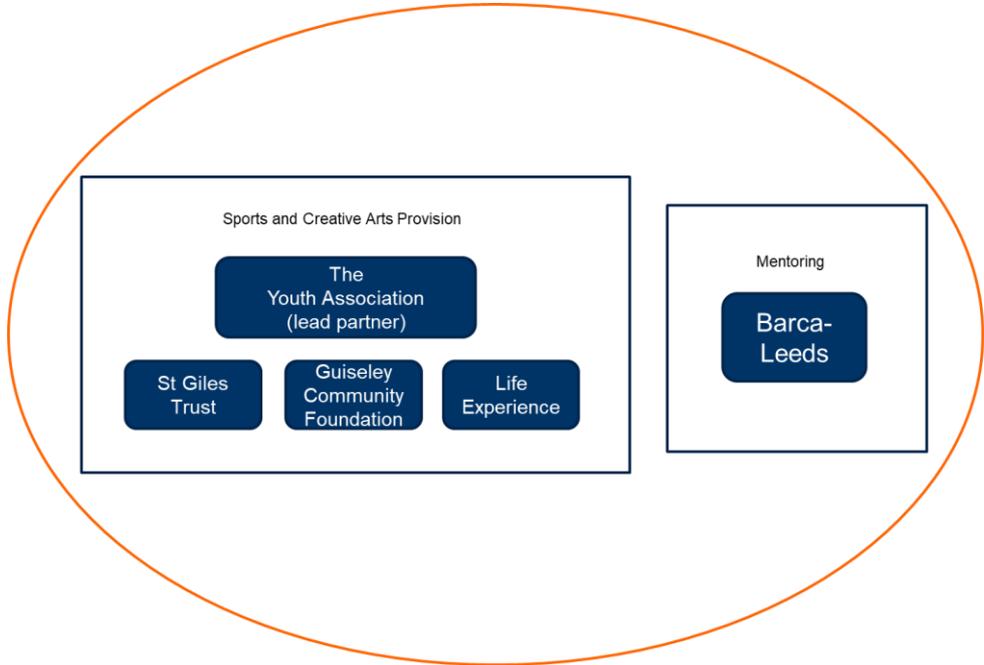
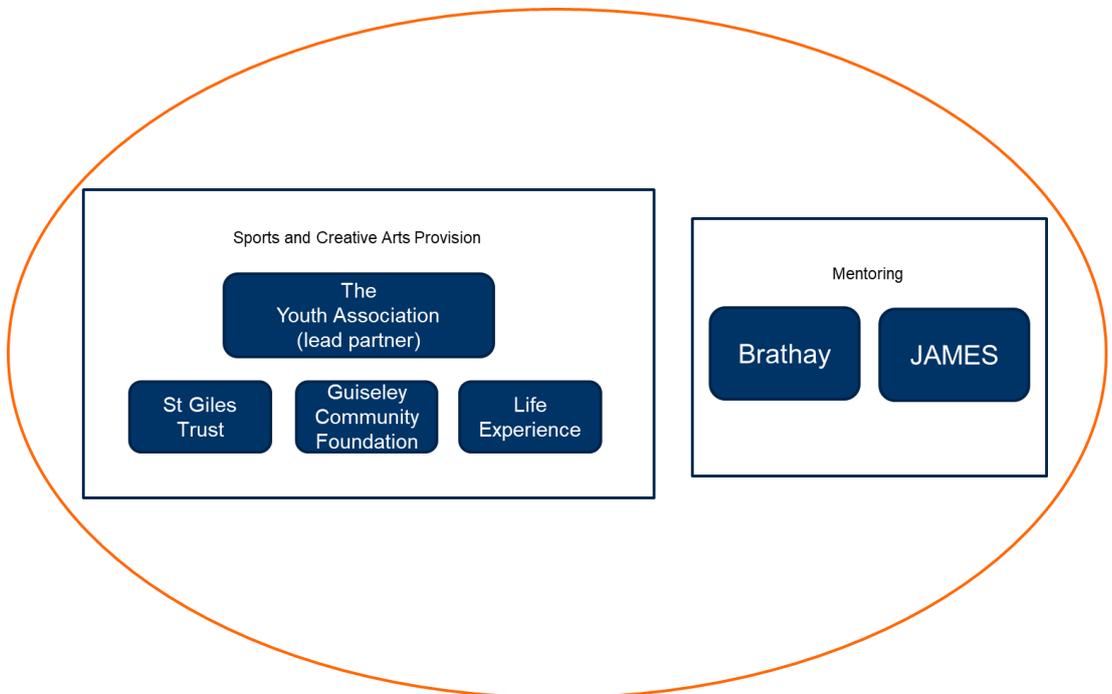


Figure 11: Partnership working in Bradford



In these areas where multiple partner organisations worked together stakeholders reported that effective partnership working was supported by pre-existing relationships between provider organisations. For example, partners such as Barca-Leeds and TYA, and Brathay Trust and JAMES, who had worked together previously, had effective communication, clear decision-making, and co-ordination. Stakeholders reported that this enabled them to co-ordinate content and delivery to ensure there was no duplication between activities and to ensure activities were complementary and worked towards similar outcomes. Where partners did not have pre-existing relationships, there were more reports of silo working and a less consistent delivery approach.

Stakeholders from Bradford and Leeds also reported that the mentoring provider organisations and holiday provision provider organisations did not work together beyond the referral pathway between the two elements of the provision in Leeds. They also reported that mentoring was being offered by both The Youth Association and partners, and Barca-Leeds, which could lead to duplication of support. Stakeholders from these areas suggested that a greater sense of direction from the WYCA VRU around the role of the mentoring provider and the holiday provision provider could have helped support them to come together to provide a holistic package.

The evidence above suggests that if WYCA VRU colleagues wish to commission similar provision in future where multiple provider organisations are required to work together, ensuring they have pre-existing relationships will support effective implementation. If this is not the case, then building in capacity to the provision to support relationship-building would be an important consideration.

It also suggests that more linking up between provider organisations (with support from the WYCA VRU) could help ensure cohesion across the provision, mitigate the risk of duplication of support, and ensure all professionals are reinforcing the key messages and learning for young people.

3.5.3 Partnership working between provider organisations and schools

Across all areas stakeholders agreed that, as the provision became more embedded, relationships between provider organisations and schools improved which enabled more effective implementation. For example, stakeholders reported schools being accommodating in ensuring mentors and others involved in delivery to feel comfortable in school.

However, throughout the delivery period there continued to be some isolated issues in Bradford. Challenges included:

- The venue for the holiday provision had to be changed from the school to the community centre due to the school not wanting to open during the holidays.
- The headteacher misunderstood the intended link between the holiday provision and mentoring offer and referred two separate cohorts (see section 3.4.1 for more information).

- The residential trip planned by Brathay Trust and JAMES was delayed because of issues around communication with the school.

Delivery leads from provider organisations suggested that it could have been helpful for the WYCA VRU to organise a meeting for all provider organisations and schools across all four areas to come together, to support partnership working between partners and ensure some cohesion across the provision. This may have been particularly helpful considering the limited time available for schools and provider organisations to establish partnership working at the early stages of implementation (see section 2.4 for more detail).

3.6 Linking with wider education systems

As part of the commissioning process, the WYCA VRU consulted with schools around requirements for provider organisations to ensure that the provision did not duplicate support that was already on offer. Provider organisations were partly chosen due to their skillset matching the needs of the particular area which would therefore allow for a reinforcement of existing support.

However, frontline practitioners from provider organisations across all areas reported being unsure of what other provision was on offer in the area and school. For example, in the school in Kirklees another mentoring offer was available to students, but it was not clear how or whether the two interventions linked in together.

Stakeholders also reported that mentoring and group sessions did not always fit in with school timetables, resulting in some young people missing lessons, particularly those they did not enjoy or were worst behaved in. This is potentially counterintuitive to the project's aims around education inclusion.

Linking in with other provision: Outwood Academy in Hemsworth

Stakeholders involved in the pilot project in Outwood Academy in Hemsworth reported that the mentoring offer there formed one part of a suite of interventions pitched at different tiers for young people presenting with different levels of risk around school exclusion.

For example, offers included: (1) therapy dog sessions, (2) intervention teachers, and (3) mentoring from Leeds United football coaches. These were designed to provide varying levels of intensity of support to pupils at the school. The provision sat alongside these existing offers.

A similar approach for the four other areas whereby the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision forms part of a wider suite of support targeted based on level of risk, could result in a more comprehensive package of support for young people and reduce the potential risk of mixed messaging or duplication.

In the future, linking the provision in with other support offered to young people in schools will help reduce the risk of duplication of support, ensure that young people have access to a holistic offer of support that addresses a variety of needs, and that all professionals working with the young people are reinforcing key messages.

3.7 Engagement with young people

The majority of stakeholders reported that provider organisations successfully engaged with young people across all areas and across all elements of the provision. Examples of evidence that young people were successfully engaged with included young people telling mentors that they enjoyed attending, and young people with poor attendance coming into school more often to ensure they could take part in the activities run by provider organisations. High levels of engagement were also observed by the evaluation team during their visit to the holiday provision in Leeds.

Young people we spoke to as part of the evaluation also reported that the provision had been successful in engaging them and identified a range of motivations for taking part, including:

- The opportunity to spend time with friends.
- It sounded interesting and fun.
- They were interested in learning new things.
- It was a new opportunity which they had not experienced before.
- They wanted support with behaviour.

Observations of holiday provision and analysis of stakeholder and young people interviews identified the following enablers to effective sustained engagement:

- **Flexibility and responsiveness to young people's needs.**
- **Interactive, innovative and creative activities** such as podcasts, designing hoodies and creating banners/posters to go up in schools. Stakeholders noted that using such methods created safe and engaging spaces for young people to share issues within their lives in an environment that is not too serious.
- **Distinguishing youth support from school.** Stakeholders reported that this was important to encourage engagement, particularly for this cohort who may have had negative experiences with school in the past. This was supported by young people, who reported liking having someone to talk to who was separate from the school. One young person reported:

“Well, we see them more as friends than teachers. They listen to me, I could turn to them for help. They are nice, you don't have to call

them Mr or Mrs, they're not teachers and they speak to you like you're equal."

- **Building trusting and positive relationships between provision staff and young people.** This was supported by the fact some practitioners had lived experience of exclusion and SYV (and could therefore provide them with real life experiences and solutions that they have used themselves), and that mentors treated young people with respect and listened to them. All young people interviewed reported having positive and trusting relationships with their mentors and other staff. This included finding them friendly and kind, and reporting that they listened well.

One young person reported:

"She listens to me. I could turn to her for help because I know she would help because she's so kind."

One mentor reported:

"The strongest aspect of our work is that a lot of people at [the provider organisation] have real life experience. [Through]Hearing our testimony and stories, young people gain understanding. It's clear we're not a teacher- we're here to benefit [young people] and build a better trusting relationship."

One challenge reported by stakeholders across all areas was gaining parental consent for young people to take part. Some suggested this could be due to the 'VRU' label on the provision which might be off-putting for some parents/carers. Some provider organisations addressed this by offering outreach or parent drop-in sessions to discuss concerns and explain the preventative nature of the provision. Stakeholders reported this has been successful in increasing the numbers of parents/carers consenting for young people to take part, and in increasing the attendance of young people at the provision (particularly the holiday provision).

Engagement with young people was identified by young people and stakeholders as a key success of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision. This is likely because the provider organisations were highly experienced and skilled provider organisations with a track record in successful engagement and youth work with young people.

3.8 Emerging evidence of outcomes

This is not an impact evaluation. However, through consultation we did ask stakeholders' views in relation to emerging evidence of outcomes. Stakeholders we spoke to suggested that the provision, particularly the mentoring element, is showing early indications of impacts for young people. This was generally attributed to the development of positive relationships with trusted adult role-

models, as outlined in section 3.7 above. Stakeholders reported emerging evidence in relation to the following outcomes:

- **Improved attendance.** School staff and provider organisations across all areas reported increased attendance among young people being supported by the provision.
- **Reduced exclusions and improved behaviours and attitudes in school.** Stakeholders from schools and provider organisations reported a reduction in the number of exclusions amongst those involved in the provision across all areas. They suggested that these improvements were due to:
 - a. Improved emotional control and regulation.
 - b. Improved attitudes to staff and teachers.
 - c. Improved ownership and responsibility regarding behaviour as a result of the support.
 - d. Improved understanding of the consequences of their actions.
- **Improved communications with peers, school staff and mentors.** Stakeholders from schools and provider organisations reported that young people's communication skills had improved as a result of the support they received through the provision. The wrap-around mentoring and holiday provision offer in Leeds was noted as particularly important in creating this change through a focus on communication skills by both sets of provider organisations.

However, stakeholders across all areas argued that a longer period is needed to see improved outcomes and impacts for young people. They suggested this is partly because of the challenges in implementing the provision in tight timescales, which resulted in a reduced focus on outcomes in the earlier stages of implementation, and because it takes longer than 6 months (the current length of funding for the provision) to have impact.

They suggested this latter point was particularly true for young people who had been referred into the provision as a preventative measure, suggesting that a long-term follow up of five-ten years would be needed to accurately assess whether the provision had been effective in reducing the risk of their involvement in SYV or criminality.

4 Successes and considerations for improvement

4.1 Overview

In light of the evaluation findings that are presented in this report, this chapter summarises the key successes of the implementation of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision, and suggests some considerations for improvements to the current provision, as well as some considerations for WYCA VRU when funding and commissioning similar provision in the future. We recognise that not everyone is likely to agree with all the considerations. However, they are made in the spirit of supporting continuous improvement.

4.2 Key successes

Figure 12 outlines the key successes of the implementation of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision to date as identified by the evaluation findings:

Figure 12: Key success of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring Provision

<p>1) Delivering in challenging timescales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful implementation to tight timescales. • Success in part due to commissioning experienced, existing providers with existing footprints in the local areas. • Provision has received 58 referrals into the mentoring provision and 47 into the holiday provision (not including Kirklees).
<p>2) Identification of schools whose pupils would benefit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders agreed that the process of identifying schools whose pupils would benefit from the provision was effective, as evidenced by known challenges the students were experiencing with SYV and exclusions. • This process worked particularly well in areas where the VRU had direct communication with those in the council responsible for identifying schools
<p>3) Successful engagement with young people</p>	<p>Key enablers included: (1) recruiting staff with lived experience (2) building positive relationships (particularly through mentoring) (3) offering continued and regular support in term time and holiday time (4) offering a range of activities and methods to engage (5) distinguishing between the provision and school (6) parent/carer drop-in sessions.</p>
<p>4) Person-centred approach with young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people valued the person-centered approach of the provision. • Stakeholders identified responsiveness and flexibility as key strengths of the provision, highlighting the adaptations provider organisations had made as examples of them effectively responding to changing circumstances and challenges. • The “hands-off” approach adopted by the VRU allowed provider organisations and schools the flexibility to respond to local need appropriately.
<p>5) Emerging evidence of positive outcomes within short timescales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders reported some young people have made improvements to their attendance and behaviour in school and their communication skills. • A longer period of time is needed to a) achieve some of the intended outcomes and impacts and b) measure them.

4.3 Considerations for improvements

Figure 13 outlines some considerations for improvement that the WYCA VRU may wish to consider for:

- **Future commissioning** of similar provision.
- **The current model of provision**, to further build on the successes and address some of the challenges identified with the commission, implementation and delivery of the provision.

Figure 13: Considerations for improvement to the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision

Considerations for improvement	Detail	Section in report
Considerations to support commissioning		
1: Review the commissioning and delivery model for the provision.	This review could focus on whether the model is supporting the delivery of the outcomes and impacts that the WYCA VRU originally intended from the provision. It could focus on supporting the provision to be more consistent in delivery and reduce variation.	2.4, 2.6, 3.4
2: Funding an extended set-up phase for implementation or including this set-up phase in existing timescales.	Although the provision was successfully implemented, the challenging timescales meant there was limited scope for provider organisations to collaboratively develop a delivery model with schools that was rooted in an agreed Theory of Change and based on “what works” for supporting the target cohort. An extended set-up phase would help address this and would also facilitate provider organisations to develop relationships with young people before starting delivery, which stakeholders suggested is important to establish trust.	2.4, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11
3: Ensure the right people are involved in the commissioning process as early as possible.	Stakeholders suggested that the process for identifying schools worked particularly well in areas where the WYCA VRU had direct communication with those in the council responsible for identifying schools. This direct communication meant it was more likely that the aims and rationale were clear to those involved in the decision-making, enabling them to identify appropriate schools more easily. There was also some	2.6, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 3.5.3

Considerations for improvement	Detail	Section in report
	<p>misunderstanding among schools around the aims and objectives of the provision, particularly in Bradford. Involving those who would be responsible for liaising with provider organisations during delivery earlier on in the commissioning process might have helped create shared understanding of the rationale and intentions of the provision.</p>	
<p>4: Develop a consistent approach to identifying schools based on a robust needs assessment.</p>	<p>This would help ensure that the provision is identifying the target cohort appropriately and is working with schools with similar levels of local need. This would also help enable outcomes and impacts to be compared across different areas and models of provision.</p>	<p>2.6, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11</p>
<p>5: Consider commissioning partners with pre-existing relationships or build in time to the delivery period to build these relationships.</p>	<p>Where provider organisations had pre-existing relationships (such as Barca-Leeds and The Youth Association, and Brathay Trust and JAMES) organisations were able to collaboratively make decisions and co-ordinate delivery to ensure all activities were complementary, everyone was working towards similar outcomes, and duplication was minimised. This was more challenging where partners did not have pre-existing relationships. Ensuring that all partners who are working together either have good pre-existing relationships, or that time and resource is built into the delivery period to develop these relationships, is therefore likely to help support effective partnership working in similar interventions in the future.</p>	<p>3.5.2, 4.2</p>

Considerations for improvement	Detail	Section in report
6: Take into account school holiday periods when commissioning.	Funding for the provision started at a busy time for schools when they had limited capacity to engage with partners. This made it difficult to build relationships between provider organisations and schools. Ensuring that school-based interventions are not commissioned at the start or end of academic terms/years will help support buy-in from schools and effective implementation.	2.4, 2.9, 2.11, 3.5.3
Considerations to support further improvement of the provision		
1: Collaboratively develop an evidence-based Theory of Change for the provision.	<p>This should include: (a) clear eligibility criteria and target cohort; (b) consistent set of activities and support, within which there is opportunity for flexibility and a person-centered approach; (c) clear set of intended impacts and outcomes, and (d) establishing clear exit criteria, including step down of support.</p> <p>Developing this Theory of Change and communicating it clearly to all stakeholders could ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is based on “what works” in achieving intended outcomes and impacts for young people as well as professionals and the wider system. • Young people who are most likely to benefit from the provision are targeted (evidence suggests that a clearly defined target group and focusing on a clearly 	2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

Considerations for improvement	Detail	Section in report
	<p>defined issue for the group is important in ensuring the effectiveness of preventative youth violence initiatives through focusing engagement efforts and resources).²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk of a “postcode lottery” for young people is reduced. • Young people who need further support have access to it, but others can safely exit from support services, avoiding creating a reliance on such support in the future. • Effective partnership working between schools and provider organisations is established and provider organisations can link in with wider education systems more effectively. <p>The impact of the provision can be more readily assessed. More oversight from the WYCA VRU could also help support fidelity to this model.</p>	

²⁴ Hobson, J., Lynch, K., Payne, B., and Ellis, L. (2018) 'Are Police-Led Social Crime Prevention Initiatives Effective? A process and Outcome Evaluation of a UK Youth Intervention' *International Criminal Justice Review*; WHO (2015) *Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence*; Youth Justice Board (2017) *Prevention in Youth Justice*.

Considerations for improvement	Detail	Section in report
<p>2: Develop guidance around consistent identification and referral processes into the provision in partnership with schools.</p>	<p>This could include a data-led and collaborative approach to identification to ensure that support is appropriately targeted to level of need. This would help ensure that the right young people are being identified who would benefit from support that is rooted in evidence of “what works” in addressing their needs (evidence suggests that a focus on proven risk and protective factors in the domains of the individual, family, school and community can help prioritise prevention efforts to those most at risk of offending or antisocial behaviour.)²⁵ Tighter referral criteria can also help mitigate the risk of demand for the provision outweighing the capacity of provider organisations which may come with more open-referral criteria.</p> <p>It could also support provider organisations to link in with other support on offer in the schools, areas, and wider education systems, by helping identify which young people are suitable for which intervention.</p>	<p>3.3, 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.6</p>
<p>3: Develop a shared set of assessment tools across the provision.</p>	<p>Increasing the consistency of approach to assessment would enable impact to be compared across provider organisations and help WYCA VRU colleagues identify the most effective model for achieving positive outcomes for this cohort. Any assessment</p>	<p>1.4, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4.4, 3.4.6</p>

²⁵ World Health Organisation (2015) *Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence* and Youth Justice Board (2017) *Prevention in Youth Justice*.

Considerations for improvement	Detail	Section in report
	tools should be closely linked to the intended outcomes and impacts of a consistent Theory of Change for the provision.	
4: Convene a partnership group.	Some stakeholders suggested that convening a joint working group attended by representatives from all organisations working across each area could provide an opportunity for sharing best practice and problem-solving. This might also support more effective communication between provider organisations and schools, more effective partnership working between provider organisations working in the same schools and increase provider organisations' understanding of other support on offer in the school, area, and wider education system.	2.9, 3.5, 3.6

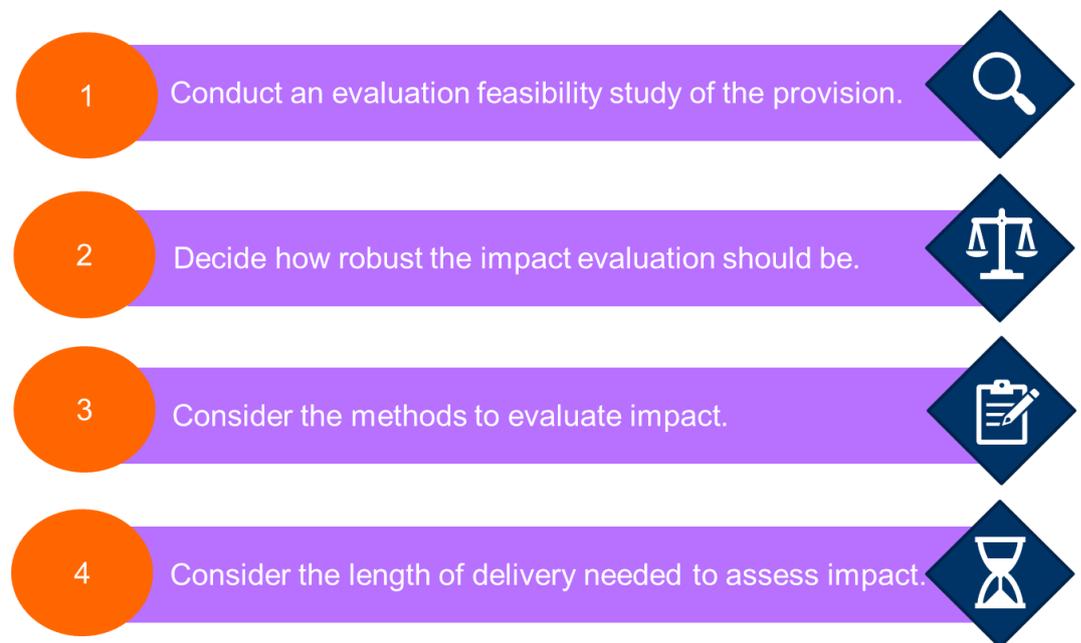
5 Considerations for future impact evaluation

5.1 Overview

The WYCA VRU are interested in thinking about possible options for a future impact evaluation of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision.

In light of the key findings of this process evaluation, we would recommend four considerations before commissioning an impact evaluation of the provision:

Figure 14: Considerations before an impact evaluation of the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision



The four steps are explored in more detail in the sub-sections below.

5.2 Step 1: Conduct an evaluation feasibility study of the provision.

The purpose of this study would be to refine the provision further to ensure that it is ready for an impact evaluation. As part of this, it could involve developing:

- A consistent Theory of Change for the overall provision (please see section 4.3 for more information).
- A consistent approach to monitoring outcomes and data collection.
- Clear eligibility and exit criteria.
- A consistent set of activities across each area.

- Information governance arrangements between provider organisations, Police, and schools.

5.3 Step 2: Decide how robust the impact evaluation should be.

The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) is a five-point scale ranging from 1-5 based on the robustness of evaluation research methods. WYCA VRU colleagues may wish to consider at which level on the Maryland SMS they would like an impact evaluation to be pitched at. Ideally, level 4 or above will help WYCA VRU colleagues be more confident about the causal impact the provision is having on young people’s outcomes over and above what may be the case without it.

Figure 15 provides a summary of Maryland Scientific Methods Scale levels.

Having said this, some stakeholders expressed concerns around ethical challenges associated with Randomised Controlled Trails and Quasi-Experimental designs. Specifically, there were concerns over whether it would be ethical to exclude a control group from receiving the provision who could potentially benefit from it. Alternatively, WYCA VRU colleagues may wish to commission a theory-driven impact evaluation combining quantitative and qualitative data.

Figure 15 A summary of Maryland Scientific Methods Scale levels

Level	Maryland Scientific Methods Scale description	Application within this report
1	Correlation between the Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision and an outcome measure at one point in time.	Sports, Creative Arts and Mentoring provision intervention group with no comparison group.
2	Measures of an outcome before and after the provision, with no comparable control conditions.	Provision intervention group compared to unmatched comparison group.
3	Measures of an outcome before and after the provision in experimental and control conditions.	Provision intervention group compared to matched comparison group.
4	Measures of an outcome before and after in multiple experimental and control units, controlling for the variables that influence offending.	Quasi-Experimental Designs. Provision intervention group with pre- and post-intervention data, and matched comparison group.

Level	Maryland Scientific Methods Scale description	Application within this report
5	Random assignment of programme and control conditions to units.	Randomised controlled trial.

5.4 Step 3: Consider the methods to evaluate impact

Stakeholders suggested that any future impact evaluation should take a mixed-methods approach. They suggested the following sources of data to measure impact during interviews:

- **Qualitative feedback.** Stakeholders agreed on the value of qualitative data to demonstrate impact and behaviour change. They emphasised the importance of gathering this from young people, parents/carers and teachers as well as from mentors and staff from provider organisations. They suggested that the collection of qualitative data was particularly important to capture data that might be difficult to assess through quantitative measures such as changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviours. They suggested qualitative feedback could be gathered through interviews or focus groups.
- **Pre-and post-intervention school data.** Stakeholders suggested that quantitative data on attendance, exclusions, and detentions from before and after young people accessed the provision would be useful to assess its impact on school inclusion and behaviour.

WYCA VRU colleagues may also wish to consider collecting existing monitoring data that is collected by the provider organisations. As part of this, it may be helpful to:

- Review the WYCA VRU's current monitoring form to assess whether it captures the information needed.
- Conduct training for staff around how to use and complete the form to ensure that information is collected in a consistent way.
- Consider how manageable the monitoring request is and to what extent the form speaks to existing data being collected by provider organisations.

5.5 Step 4: Consider the length of delivery needed to assess impact.

Stakeholders suggested that a period of longer than one year is needed before an impact evaluation of the provision can be conducted. This is to give the provision enough time to become embedded, and for changes to be observed. We would suggest a two to three-year period of delivery before impact is evaluated.

Stakeholders also suggested that a follow up of five-ten years would be needed to accurately assess whether the provision had been effective in reducing the risk of young people's involvement in SYV or criminality in the long-term.

6 Appendix 1

6.1 Interim report and evaluation framework



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fw_Mentoring and t

7 Appendix 2

7.1 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used throughout Phase 2 of the evaluation (the evaluation implementation phase, from January 2023 to April 2023) to inform this report. All methods and research tools were agreed between Cordis Bright and WYCA VRU colleagues in advance.

Please note, the findings in this report also draw upon methodology used in Phase 1 of the evaluation, such as scoping interviews with six key stakeholders and a sense-testing meeting with WYCA VRU leads. More details of the Phase 1 methodology can be found in the interim report, available in Appendix 1.

7.1.1 Interviews with young people (n=13)

We conducted one-to-one interviews with:

- Three young people receiving support from The Youth Association and partners in Bradford.
- Four young people receiving support from The Youth Association and partners in Leeds.
- Three young people receiving mentoring support from St Giles Trust in Calderdale.
- Three young people receiving mentoring support from St Giles Trust in Kirklees.

7.1.2 Observations of holiday provision sessions in Leeds

We conducted observations of three sessions delivered to young people by The Youth Association and partners in Leeds. These young people were also being supported by Barca-Leeds during term-time as part of the mentoring element of the offer. These sessions included:

- Sports session (football)
- Creative Arts session 1 (podcast)
- Creative Arts session 2 (banners and posters)

7.1.3 Interviews with key stakeholders (n=25)

We conducted one-to-one Teams interviews with 25 stakeholders nominated by the WYCA VRU Senior Program Delivery Manager. This included stakeholders from:

- Barca-Leeds
- Calderdale Metropolitan District Council
- Kirklees Council
- Leeds City Academy, Leeds
- Life experience
- North Huddersfield Trust School, Kirklees
- St Giles Trust
- Brathay Trust
- The Youth Association
- West Yorkshire VRU

Figure 16 provides a breakdown of the stakeholders consulted with in each district in Phase 2 of the evaluation. We also consulted with one stakeholder from the WYCA VRU.

Figure 16: Number of interviews with stakeholders consulted from each district in Phase 2 of the evaluation²⁶

Stakeholder	Bradford	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Wakefield
Provider Organisations	6	3	3	10	n/a
Schools	0	0	1	1	2
Councils	0	1	1	0	0
Young people	3	3	3	4	0
Total	9	7	8	15	2
Overall total	41				

²⁶ Please note that some stakeholders are included twice if they worked across multiple districts.

7.1.4 Analysis of monitoring data

We analysed monitoring data from:

- Mentoring provision:
 - Barca-Leeds – Leeds City Academy, Leeds. This included information for 34 young people supported by Barca-Leeds through mentoring.
 - Brathay Trust – Co-Op Grange Academy, Bradford. This included information for 10 young people supported by Brathay Trust through mentoring.
 - St Giles Trust – Trinity Academy, Calderdale. This included information for 14 young people supported by St Giles Trust through mentoring, and information on the numbers of young people reached through whole-year assemblies.
 - St Giles Trust - North Huddersfield Trust, Kirklees. Information was not available for young people supported by mentoring as the mentoring had started more recently than in the other areas, but did include information on the number of young people reached through whole-year assemblies and the number of staff sessions that had been delivered.

- Sports and Creative Arts Holiday Provision:
 - The Youth Association - Leeds City Academy. This included information for 22 young people supported by the Youth Association and partners.
 - The Youth Association - Co-Op Grange Academy, Bradford. This included information for 25 young people supported by the Youth Association and partners.

8 Appendix 3

8.1 Theories of Change for provider organisations ²⁷

²⁷ Please note a Theory of Change was not available for the Youth Association and partners although stakeholders reported the model of delivery was largely based on the principles of Theory of Change for the StreetSafe project (detached youth work).

Figure 17: Bradford mentoring - Brathay Trust

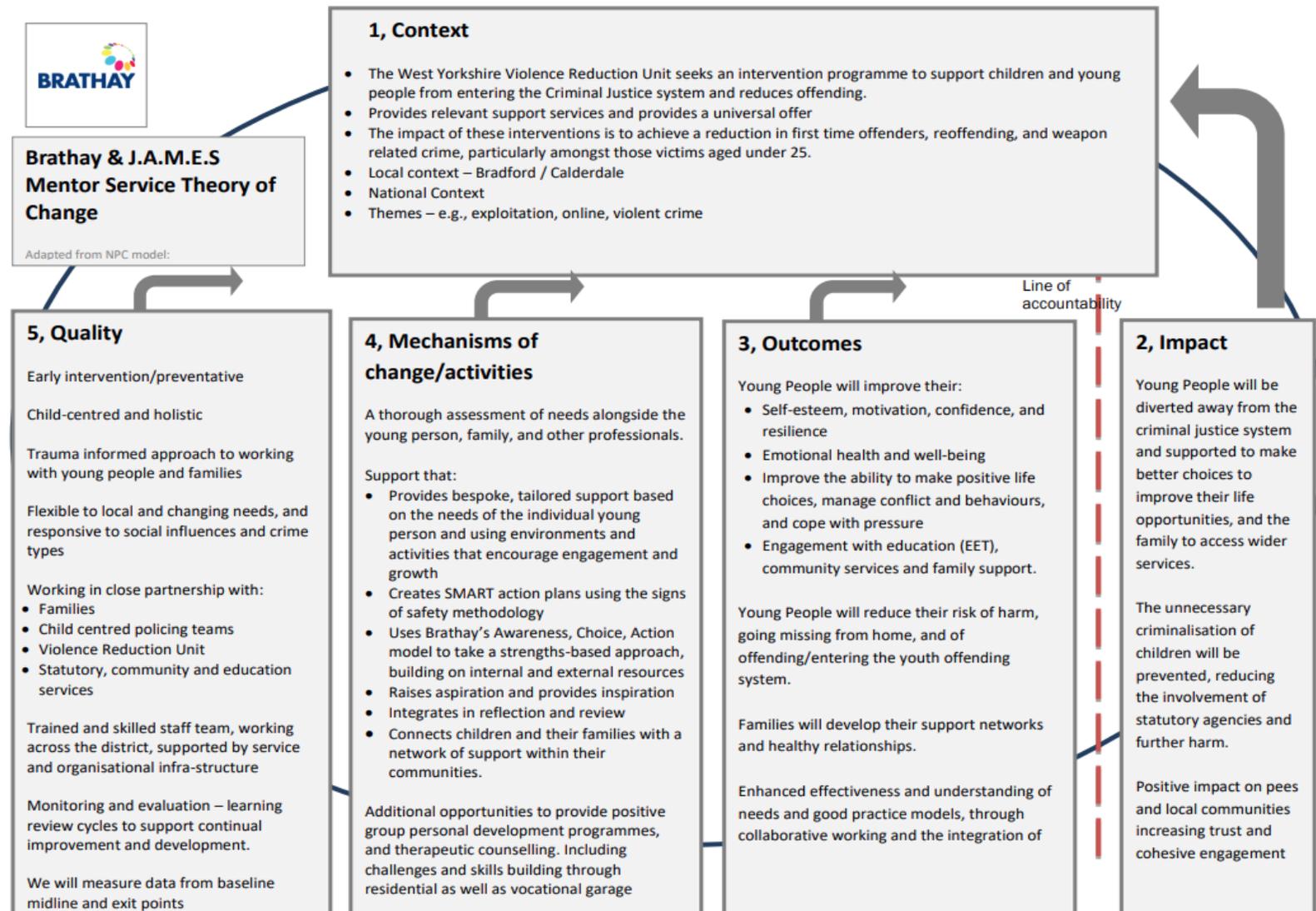
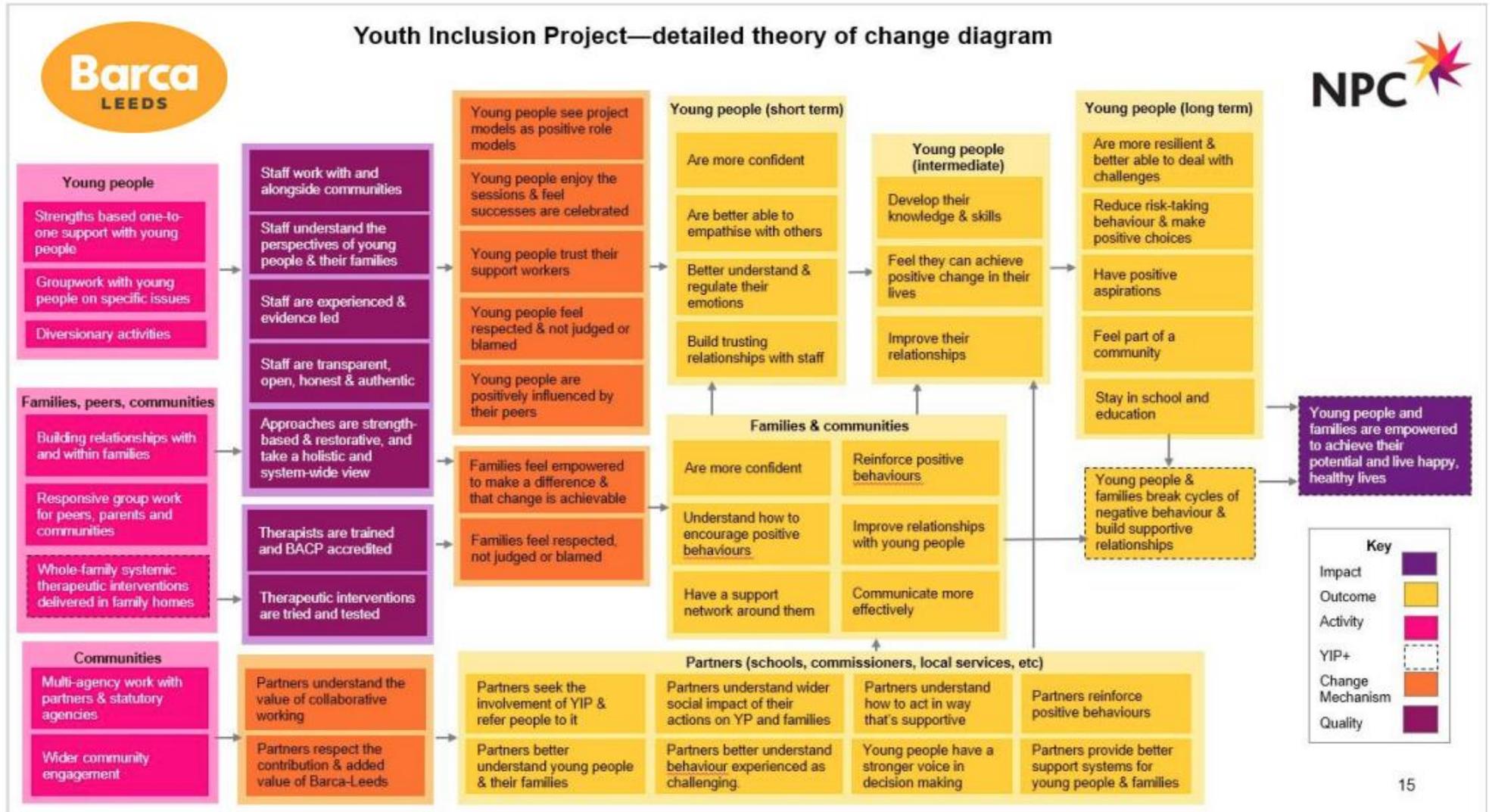


Figure 18: Calderdale and Kirklees mentoring – St Giles Trust

Theory of change focusing on the impact of SOS+

IMPACT AIMS				
One: Children and young people, parents and professionals have increased knowledge and understanding of all aspects of gang involvement, exploitation and violence		Two: Parents and professionals are more able to identify the signs of children and young people's involvement (or risk of involvement) in gangs, exploitation and violence		
Three: Parents and professionals are more confident to discuss the issues with children and young people in order to address or prevent risk and better equipped to provide or seek support				
Four: Children and young people are equipped to think critically, assess risk and make better life choices. The resulting mind set shift and confidence makes them more resilient to the risks of becoming involved in gangs, exploitation and violence.				
ACTIVITY	MECHANISMS	OUTCOMES		
<p>NOTE: All activities and interventions are delivered by people with lived experience of gang involvement</p> <p>Provision of training sessions/ interventions for children and young people on the risks associated with all aspects of gang involvement, exploitation and violence Approaches: whole year assemblies; targeted sessions; enhanced presence before and after sessions; extended programme; digital resource packs</p> <p>Provision of training sessions/ interventions for parents and for professionals on how to identify the signs of children and young people's involvement (or risk of involvement) in gangs, exploitation and violence</p> <p>Provision of mentors embedded in schools and the community, providing early intervention and intensive support to children and young people</p> <p>Provision of expert advice by mentors to other professionals through contribution to multi-agency meetings; intelligence sharing; digital resource packs etc.</p>	<p>SOS+ staff understand the issues through having lived experience of gang involvement. This makes them culturally competent, empathic and able to challenge</p> <p>Participants engage with facilitators and the material because training/intervention content is bespoke, relevant to the local area, current, relatable and credible. Interventions are interesting and engaging but do not glamourise</p> <p>Facilitators and mentors build trust and create a safe space in which to explore challenging and potentially traumatic issues and topics</p> <p>Facilitators and mentors have the skills, knowledge, experience and ability to manage people's responses in a confident, safe and emotionally containing way</p> <p>SOS+ staff are enabled to maintain the quality of service by engaging with/receiving: effective line management and supervision; regular training; professional development; reflective practice; and self-care support</p>	Children and Young People	Parents	Professionals
		Hard skills: Education, knowledge and understanding		
		Improved understanding of all aspects of gang involvement, exploitation and violence		
		<p>Including: push and pull factors; consequences and realities; the glamourising role of social media, music; popular youth culture, stereotypes, negative role models etc.; how and where to get help</p> <p>Improved/increased: engagement, attendance and attainment at school; entry into education, training and employment</p>	<p>Including: the signs and indicators; how young people are exploited; understanding young people as victims as well as perpetrators; myths and stereotypes; how to more effectively engage with and support their child</p>	<p>Including: the signs and indicators; understanding young people as victims as well as perpetrators; the risks involved (e.g. confiscating drugs can cause drug debt); how to more effectively engage with and support young people</p> <p>Understand the value of and advocate the involvement of people with lived experience in interventions</p>
Soft skills: Attitudes, thinking and behaviour				
Increased resilience to becoming involved in gangs				
<p>Improved thinking skills - more able to: challenge and question, assess risk and; employ critical thinking skills</p> <p>Improved social skills – more able to: withstand peer pressure; resolve conflicts; ask for help; form positive relationships with peers, parents and authority</p> <p>Improved mental wellbeing - better sense of: responsibility; maturity; self-worth; hope; positive self-identity. More emotionally resilient and better able to understand triggers</p>	<p>Improved interpersonal skills – more able to: facilitate a safe space in which to have healthy conversations with their child; to see the situation from their child's perspective; feel hopeful that the situation can change and improve</p> <p>Reduced shame and stigma - more confident to support their child and/or identify the services available and access professional support; more able to constructively challenge their child</p>	<p>Improved practice - Feel empowered and confident to put learning into practice. More able to: recognise the trauma that young people have faced and structure support that takes account of this; understand the issues from the perspective of preventing exploitation and exclusion; take a solution focused rather than punishment-based response</p> <p>Improved interpersonal skills – more able to: empathise with the young person; recognise and engage with the issues; and more confident to deal with them in the school setting</p>		

Figure 19: Leeds mentoring - Barca Leeds



9 Appendix 4

9.1 Changes to delivery models

Figure 20: Changes to delivery models

Area	Changes to delivery model/plan
Bradford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The holiday provision and mentoring provider organisations worked with different cohorts of young people (see section 3.4.1 for more detail). • Brathay Trust begun delivery in November rather than September, due to challenges with establishing partnership working between the school and provider organisation in the early stages of implementation. • Brathay Trust and JAMES' planned residential was delayed until the end of March due to schools not having enough time to review relevant paperwork in original timescales. • Holiday provision moved from the school to the community centre because the school did not want to open in holiday time. • The Youth Association worked with girls in term time as well as holiday periods to ensure consistency of support, because the cohort was not receiving mentoring provision from Brathay Trust.
Calderdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-year assemblies were delivered to five-year groups instead of three to reach more young people with the available resource.
Kirklees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-year assemblies were delivered to five-year groups instead of three to reach more young people with the available resource. • Implementation of the St Giles support was delayed (it started in January 2023 instead of September 2022) due to a fatal stabbing of a student after school. This decision was made by the provider organisations and the school because it was felt that the school staff and pupils needed time to process the incident before the provision began, and that an intervention aimed at reducing SYV might be too sensitive to deliver in the immediate aftermath. • Originally St Giles planned to deliver weapons awareness assemblies as well as county lines assemblies in Kirklees. However, this was cancelled after the incident described above.

Area	Changes to delivery model/plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Giles had initially planned for two mentors to provide support in Kirklees, but only one was deployed. This was not considered to be a problem because the school had another mentoring programme on offer so demand could be met.
Leeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barca-Leeds added extra elements to the mentoring element of the provision due to an underspend. This included drop-in mentoring sessions for the wider school population and an after-school youth club to ensure continued support and opportunities to engage in positive activities for the cohort, and to enable friends of the existing cohort to join in. The location of the holiday provision was moved from the school to a community centre. The aim of this was to increase engagement by offering the provision closer to young people's home (thereby increasing accessibility), and by disassociating it with school which might not be considered a positive space for some young people accessing the provision. The original plan was for The Youth Association and partners to deliver the holiday provision in the summer of 2022 and for Barca-Leeds to then take on work in school from September. However, as funding for Barca-Leeds was delayed, The Youth Association started delivering work to the young people in term time to ensure support was sustained. This was then continued throughout the delivery period to ensure consistency.



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