EVALUATION REPORT

REACH

Efficacy trial report

Anna Stevens, Benjamin Willis, Ben Partridge, Claire Wolstenholme, Sean Demack, Laura Riley, Jessica Benson-Egglenton, Hongjuan Zhu and Charlotte Coleman

July 2026

Sheffield Hallam University

YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

About the Youth Endowment Fund

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

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

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

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

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

Youth Endowment Fund
C/O Impetus
10 Queen Street Place
London
EC4R 1AG

www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk

hello@youthendowmentfund.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1185413

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About the evaluator

The Sheffield Institute of Education is recognised for excellence and innovation in research, teaching and learning. It has been developing and delivering educational innovations and evaluations locally, nationally and internationally for over 25 years as one of the country's most successful providers of initial teacher education in one of the country's largest universities.

For more information, please visit: www.shu.ac.uk/sheffield-institute-education-research

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Eleanor Hotham, Judith Higginson and Louise Glossop for their valued support in running the trial and to Lisa Clarkson for her valued support with report editing.

Glossary/Abbreviations

BAU Business as usual

CPD Continuing Professional Development

DL Delivery lead

DV Domestic violence

EAL English as an additional language

ITT Intention to treat

IPE Implementation and process evaluation

LLR Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (a shorthand regional designation referring to Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council)

LM Logic model

MoU Memorandum of understanding

RCT Randomised controlled trial

SAP Statistical analysis plan

SDQ Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

SEN Special educational needs

SHU Sheffield Hallam University

SL School lead

SRDS Self-report Delinquency Scale

ToC Theory of Change

VRN Violence Reduction Network

YEF Youth Endowment Fund

YP Young person

YW Youth worker

Executive summary

REACH is a six-month mentoring programme for children aged 11–16 in secondary schools who are at risk of suspension and involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime. Children are referred to the programme by their school and, if eligible, they and their parents or carers are contacted to arrange an assessment to match the child with the most suitable youth worker. A trained youth worker meets with the child two to three times per week during the first eight weeks, followed by one to two sessions per week over the subsequent 10 weeks. The programme is structured around several core components. Following an initial phase focused on building a positive relationship between the child and the youth worker, the youth workers support children to develop social skills, confidence, wellbeing, resilience, positive relationships, and aspirations. The programme was developed by the Violence Reduction Network for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in collaboration with Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council.

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) funded a randomised controlled trial, which compared the impact of REACH to business as usual. A total of 594 children from 16 schools participated in the trial (301 in the intervention group, 293 in the control group). The evaluation aimed to establish whether REACH reduced children's behavioural difficulties, as measured by the externalising score of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), completed by teachers. It also measured the impact on other outcomes: emotional regulation, peer relationships, prosocial behaviour, anti-social behaviour, school attendance, suspensions and offending. The study included an implementation and process evaluation to examine barriers to and facilitators of implementation and how children, youth workers, teachers, parents and carers experienced the programme. This drew on interviews and focus groups with 29 children, 14 youth workers, 25 parents or carers, six delivery leads and eight school leaders; four observations of delivery; and analysis of monitoring and administrative data. The study took place between October 2022 and September 2025. 71% of the children in the trial were White; 9% were Asian or Asian British; 7% were from mixed or multiple ethnic groups; 7% identified as being from another ethnic group; 4% were Black, Black British Caribbean or African; and 2% were Gypsy, Rome, and Traveller.

Key conclusions
REACH demonstrated a **small positive impact** on children's behavioural difficulties. Children who received REACH showed fewer behavioural difficulties than children who did not receive the programme. This result has a **high security rating**.
REACH showed mostly positive impacts on the secondary outcomes: it had a small positive impact on emotional regulation and peer relationships, and a moderate positive impact on prosocial behaviour, as measured by teachers. The programme also showed a moderate positive impact on self-reported measures of behavioural difficulties, emotional regulation, peer relationships and prosocial behaviour. The programme had a small positive impact on anti-social behaviour and offending, a moderate positive impact on school attendance and a small negative impact on school suspensions. These are secondary outcomes and should be treated with caution.
Engagement with the programme and attendance were good, with participants attending 78% of the sessions offered. A low proportion (7%) of children dropped-out of the intervention.
Children reported highly positive experiences, describing youth workers as trusted, non-judgemental adults who provided emotional support, guidance and stability. Children valued the flexible and child-led approach and highlighted improvements in confidence, emotional wellbeing, maturity and motivation at school. Parents and carers valued the programme, in particular the consistent communication, practical support and reassurance provided.
Across all stakeholder groups, the programme's relational approach, flexibility and consistency of support and the lived experience and relatability of youth workers were highlighted as the programme's strengths.

YEF security rating

These findings have a **high security rating**. The trial was a well-designed two-armed randomised controlled trial. Attrition was relatively low: 11% of children who started the trial were not included in the final analysis. No significant threats to internal validity were identified.

Interpretation

REACH demonstrated a **small positive impact** on children's behavioural difficulties. Children who received REACH showed fewer behavioural difficulties than children who did not receive the programme. This result has a **high security rating**. REACH showed mostly positive results on the secondary outcomes: it had a small positive impact on emotional regulation and peer relationships, and a moderate positive impact on prosocial behaviour, as measured by teachers. The programme showed a moderate positive impact on self-reported measures of behavioural difficulties, emotional regulation, peer relationships and prosocial behaviour. The programme had a small positive impact on anti-social behaviour and offending, a moderate positive impact on school attendance and a small negative impact on school suspensions. These are secondary outcomes and should be treated with caution. There is statistical uncertainty regarding some of the outcomes.

Engagement with the programme and attendance were good, with participants attending 78% of the sessions offered. A low proportion (7%) of children dropped-out of the intervention. Those who had lower attendance at school also had lower attendance at REACH sessions, suggesting some challenges with accessing lower school attenders. Parents and carers were generally highly engaged once trust was established, although some families were initially wary of the programme and concerned about the role of youth workers. Early home visits and consistent communication were important in overcoming this. The programme's flexible and responsive delivery model was viewed as central to effective engagement and relationship-building. However, this flexibility also created challenges in defining compliance, measuring fidelity, and identifying which programme components drove outcomes, with the evaluation suggesting that relational quality may have been more important than strict adherence to the model. Children reported highly positive experiences of the programme, describing youth workers as trusted, non-judgemental adults who provided emotional support, guidance and stability. Children valued the flexible, child-led approach and highlighted improvements in confidence, emotional wellbeing, maturity and motivation at school. Parents and carers also viewed the programme positively, particularly valuing the consistent communication, practical support and reassurance provided. Operating in a context where relationships between school staff, and parents were often compromised, having an 'outsider' youth worker helped break down barriers. Youth workers often acted as neutral brokers, facilitating improved levels of mutual understanding and helping to recalibrate damaged relationships that could be further built on beyond the course of programme delivery itself.

Survey findings reinforced these perceptions, with most children reporting high levels of trust and comfort with their youth worker. School leads and delivery staff similarly viewed the programme positively, particularly valuing the intensive mentoring model, specialist expertise and additional mental health and family support capacity. Schools appreciated that the programme imposed a relatively low administrative burden once referrals had been made and felt it improved understanding of children's wider circumstances and vulnerabilities. Youth workers and delivery leads strongly valued the programme believing that responsiveness to children's needs was central to effective practice. Many described the relationship-building phase as the cornerstone of the programme, arguing that children would not engage meaningfully unless they first felt safe, understood and respected. Across all stakeholder groups, the programme's relational approach, flexibility and consistency of support and the lived experience and relatability of youth workers were highlighted as the programme's strengths. This report and the primary and secondary outcomes' findings present only the findings of one study. When considering implications, frontline professionals, policy-makers, and service commissioners should carefully consider the process evaluation and use their own professional judgement.

Summary of impact

Outcome	Effect size (95% confidence interval)	Impact	Evidence security	No. of children	P - value
Behavioural difficulties	−0.07 (−0.22; 0.07)	Small positive		526	0.33

Introduction

Background

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Strategic Needs Assessment revealed a local need for a new intervention that proactively identifies at-risk young people (YPs) at critical upstream moments to prevent future involvement in violence. Whilst Leicester and Leicestershire have lower rates of pupil exclusions and suspensions compared with the UK,[1] analysis by Leicester City Council showed that exclusions and suspensions are concentrated in areas with higher rates of serious violence and deprivation. Based on local data, we know that a significant proportion of at-risk YPs have been suspended and/or truanted and attend schools in areas with high crime rates and deprivation.[2]

There are racial inequities apparent in YPs who are at risk of school suspension/exclusion, and this likely relates to wider environmental and familial factors negatively impacting specific sub-sets of YPs. For example, we know that those who are regularly missing school are more likely to have been exposed to violence both in the home and in their local areas. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) surveyed over 7,500 YPs in the UK and found that young Black people and those with Mixed ethnicity are disproportionately represented in these violence figures, both as victims and as perpetrators, compared to White and Asian YPs.[3] These differences align with other public datasets, revealing that young Black people are over-represented in all areas of the criminal justice system, including arrests and stop-and-search activity. However, it remains a very nuanced picture, as the UK government's rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions in the 2022/23 school year show that Gypsy and Roma pupils had the highest rates of permanent exclusion and suspension, followed by White Irish Traveller pupils. Suspension rates were also higher among Caribbean, mixed White and Caribbean ethnicity and Black Caribbean[4]. Asian, Indian and Chinese exclusion rates were consistently below the national average for England. Permanent exclusion and suspension rates of both Black and White YPs were in line with the national average rate.

In public datasets, there were also racial differences in the reasons for suspensions, with a greater percentage of Black and Asian pupils receiving suspensions for physical assault and a greater percentage of White and Mixed ethnicity pupils being suspended for persistent disruptive behaviour, suggesting the drivers for suspension vary between different ethnic groups. However, rates for young Black people have been consistently falling since 2006 (which demonstrates that they have previously been over-represented in exclusion data), and it is likely that the reduction in the number of suspensions of Black pupils is driven by wider efforts more generally to reduce suspensions of all pupils[3]. Therefore, a programme such as Reach, although not targeted towards specific ethnic groups, is expected to have positive impacts on YPs of all ethnicities.

The evaluation will take into account the racial disparities that exist within the sector in terms of school suspensions/exclusions and explore these within the context of the local area and recruitment to the Reach Programme. As described later in this report, potential disparities will be considered by examining school-

[1] https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/
[2] https://www.violencereductionnetwork.co.uk/reports
[3] https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YEF-Children-violence-and-vulnerability-2022.pdf
[4] https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/

level suspension data by ethnicity and comparing this to recruitment to Reach by ethnicity. Qualitative data will also be examined to identify any barriers to engagement with regard to YPs and families from minority ethnic backgrounds.

With regard to the local context of this study, according to the 2021 Census,[5] 43.4% of Leicester City residents identified their ethnic group as Asian, 40.9% identified their ethnicity as White, 7.8% identified as Black, 3.8% as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 4.1% as Other. In Leicestershire and Rutland, by contrast, the large majority of the respective populations identify as White, and there are smaller proportions of residents from minoritised ethnic backgrounds (significantly lower than the England average).

Table 4 below sets out the suspension rates from 2022/23, comparing national rates with those for Leicester City and Leicestershire County. It shows that for Asian pupils, suspension rates are lower in both Leicester and Leicestershire compared with the national average, with the same being true for Black pupils. Pupils from Mixed, White and Other ethnic groups were more in line with the national average, with White pupils from Leicestershire having a slightly lower suspension rate than the national average.

Table 4: Suspension rates by ethnicity 2022/23[6]

Ethnic group	National suspension rate	Leicester suspension rate	Leicestershire suspension rate
Asian	3.16	1.64	1.77
Black	7.17	4.95	5.63
Mixed	10.01	9.34	10.1
White	10.6	10.78	9.08
Other	5.86	5.97	5.34

As explained in more detail below, the Reach Programme has undergone a feasibility study (December 2021 to September 2022), which demonstrated that the programme was feasible in its intended context and was ready to move on to an efficacy trial with internal pilot. The intervention's core components have been identified as showing promise in preventing involvement in crime and violence. Mentoring is effective in both reducing crime and the behaviours associated with crime and violence. Research suggests that, on average, mentoring reduces crime by 26%. There is also strong evidence that mentoring can reduce behavioural difficulties and substance use and improve self-regulation – three important predictors of violence. However, impact varies widely depending on the approach taken. Additionally, evidence indicates that combining mentoring with recreational activity is an enabling factor that can increase participation. There is also a growing evidence base demonstrating positive outcomes for teachable-moment interventions, with subsequent reductions in YPs' involvement in violence. On average, social skills training programmes have reduced the number of children involved in crime by 32%. Furthermore, research on social skills training suggests that its impact on preventing violence is likely to be high. Targeted programmes working with children who were already demonstrating a need for more intensive support have achieved greater impacts than universal programmes focused on primary prevention (YEF Toolkit, 2021; YEF What Works Review, 2020).

[5] How life has changed in Leicester: Census 2021

[6] Suspension rates by local authority and ethnicity: Suspensions - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures

The Reach Programme

Why

The development of the Reach Programme was led by the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) for LLR, in collaboration with Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, who are the delivery partners for this project. Its design was informed by the VRN's Strategic Needs Assessment, which revealed that 15–19-year-olds, followed by 10–14-year-olds, commit the highest rates of serious violence locally. Furthermore, it showed that YPs involved in serious violence are most likely to reside in the East and West of Leicester and Charnwood in Leicestershire County. Local data shows that the schools with the highest rates of suspensions and permanent exclusions are also based in the same hotspot areas. Currently, there is no local provision that provides intensive, responsive and contextually tailored support to at-risk YPs in an upstream environment.

Intervention

When and how much

Reach is a six-month intervention, where the youth worker (YW) meets with the YP two to three times a week for the first eight weeks, then for one to two sessions each week for the next 10 weeks. To be fully compliant, a YP is expected to have completed at least 32 sessions with their YW, although the number of sessions varies depending on the individual needs of the YP. Most sessions are an hour long, but this varies and may be longer for recreational activities. Following completion of the core components, the frequency of sessions between the YP and the YW reduces to once a week/fortnight. If a YP sustains positive behaviour for an additional four to six weeks, the YW initially discusses closing the case with their team manager and then with the YP and their parents/carers. If in agreement and if sustainability plans are in place which ensure that the YP and their family have formal and informal support networks in place if issues do occur in the future, the case is closed.

What

The Reach Programme is a targeted intervention aimed at YPs aged 11–16 in secondary schools (Years 7–11) who are at risk of suspension (i.e. they have carried out behaviour in their school that would normally qualify for a suspension), have at least three indicators of vulnerability (e.g. looked after, domestic violence or substance misuse in the home – please see Appendix D) and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as either a victim or perpetrator. It is a six-month, evidence-informed intervention,[7] with the potential to leverage a teachable moment. The teachable-moments interventions, often called Navigators programmes, make use of points in people's lives when they may be more inclined to seek help and support as a result of hitting a low point or a significant event. Navigators-style programmes provide three key activities: reach-in at the teachable moment, mentoring and signposting, all of which are largely reflected within the Reach Programme. It incorporates intensive and flexible mentoring, offers opportunities for prosocial activity and addresses individual, relationship and

[7] Please see the logic model (LM), theory of change (ToC) and list of references

community risk factors through structured learning components, such as social skills training. The Reach Programme provides an opportunity to explore the teachable-moment component in a school context.

The intervention consists of core components which are tailored to the needs and learning styles of the YPs. The following provides an overview of the core components and the structure of the programme as a whole:

Figure 1: Structure of the Reach Programme

LEVEL OF INTENSITY	HIGH																		LOW					
CORE COMPONENTS	WEEKS																							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1: Intensive, flexible and responsive mentoring support																								
2: Relationship Building																								
3: Understanding Behaviours																								
4: Social Skills Training																								
5: Confidence, Wellbeing and Resillience																								
6: Positive Relationships																								
7: Aspirations																								
8: Recreational Activities																								

Materials: The session materials for the core components all included aims and objectives, a method outlining how to deliver the session, links to resources that the YWs could draw on and a next-steps section for the YPs to work on.

Criteria for inclusion in Reach: YPs are identified by schools for inclusion if they are between 11 and 16 years of age, are at risk of suspension (i.e. they have carried out behaviour in their school that would normally qualify for a suspension), have three indicators of vulnerability (e.g. looked after, domestic violence or substance misuse in the home – please see Appendix D) and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as either a victim or perpetrator. Drawing on findings from the feasibility phase, it has been decided to also include persistent absenteeism in the eligibility criteria for this efficacy phase and internal pilot.

Referral and assessment procedure: Once a YP is identified, school staff make a referral to the programme using an online form (it should be noted here that for the pilot trial, the referral process was updated to incorporate consent for the evaluation, baseline data collection and randomisation; further detail is provided later in this document). The referral is triaged by the delivery team to assess eligibility within 24 hours, and their parents/carers are contacted to arrange an assessment as soon as practicable. The assessment explores the strengths, needs, risks and interests of the YP. This information is used to match the YP to the most suitable YW (please see the tailoring section below), who will act as a mentor for the duration of the intervention. The YW will then work with the YP through activities related to the core components, as set out below:

- *Relationship building:* The YW will engage in activities with the YP that they enjoy doing, such as cooking, gaming or going to the gym. During this phase of the intervention, the YW is expected to meet with a YP at least twice a week. The sessions are designed to be unstructured and fun, with the aim of developing a positive and trusting relationship between the YP and the YW.

- *Understanding behaviour:* Once a trusting relationship has developed, the sessions shift from an unstructured format to focusing on problem behaviours and emotional management. This phase begins with setting several goals and short-term milestones which link to the behaviours of concern identified by the referrer and those revealed as part of the assessment and relationship-building phase. The YP and the YW agree on an intervention plan, which sets out the goals, milestones and

planned activities. Using motivational interviewing, the YW asks the YP open questions to draw out their experiences of and perspectives on the drivers/causes of their behaviour. The YW provides emotional and practical support during these sessions as required.

- *Social skills training:* YWs deliver six sessions focusing on social skills training. These sessions involve recapping the situations and experiences which lead to negative displays of behaviour (as identified in the understanding behaviour activity). To begin with, sessions focus on the feelings that the YP feels, identifying the intensity of these feelings and understanding the difference between feelings and behaviours. Attention then turns to discussing the feelings and perspectives of others, such as family members, peers and teachers, including reading and interpreting social cues. These sessions include role play and perspective-taking. The remaining sessions focus on tools to help manage feelings, including relaxation and breathing exercises and communication skills.

- *Confidence, wellbeing and resilience:* Within these interactive sessions, the YW gets the YP to reflect on their confidence and wellbeing. They will talk about activities or situations which make them feel anxious and fearful. The YP has the opportunity to identify the activities that they are good at whilst talking about the aspects that they want to improve on. The YW will explain a range of helpful strategies for overcoming fears and facing challenges confidently. Towards the end of this phase, they also work on how to build resilience.

- *Positive family, peer and community relationships:* The YW discusses positive relationships with the YP. They explore positive and negative relationships in each domain:

  - Within the family: at home and extended family.
  - Positive and negative peers: what makes a positive/negative peer? How to resist negative peer influences?
  - Community: who is in their local community?
  - Formal/informal relationships.

  The YW will also speak to the YP's family and spend time with their friends to gain a contextual understanding of their family and peer relationships. If the YW perceives that the parents/carers would benefit from additional support (e.g. with housing, employment or communication skills), they will be referred to relevant services.

- *Identifying and achieving aspirations:* The YW works with the YP to identify what they would like to achieve for themselves in the future, including discussing different roles and sectors. Key activities include listing what they would like to achieve in the next three, six and 12 months and beyond, the steps to achieve that aspiration and who would help them achieve their aspirations.

- *Recreational activity:* During the relationship-building phase, the YW identifies purposeful recreational activities that interest the YP. These sessions take place alongside the more structured sessions outlined above. Where appropriate, family members and positive peers will be encouraged to participate in these activities. The YW will facilitate access to these opportunities and attend/participate if necessary to encourage participation. Whilst at the beginning, the recreational activities might include fun activities, such as bowling, the YW will aim to identify more sustainable activities which the YP can continue beyond the project, such as football, youth groups, music clubs or cooking/baking.

Who provided

The development of the Reach Programme was led by the VRN for LLR in collaboration with Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, which are the delivery partners for this project. They have been involved in co-designing this intervention and utilising their data and expertise to ensure the intervention is targeted in the right places and at the right YPs. They have led the intervention through the recruitment, onboarding and training of:

- 16 full-time equivalent (FTE) experienced YWs who provided intensive one-to-one support to at-risk YPs. The VRN provided formal training for the YWs, alongside drugs awareness training run by Turning Point. YWs were also encouraged to undertake training in areas pertinent to their role, such as safeguarding, adverse childhood experiences, county lines and awareness-raising relevant to YPs, such as social media use and drill music.
- 1.5 FTE team managers who are responsible for the line management of the YWs.
- 1 FTE project coordinator to lead on mobilising the intervention and overseeing delivery across the city and county.
- 1.5 FTE project officers to provide administrative support to the delivery team and to gather data/information for the evaluation.

How

The programme components are delivered face-to-face by YWs specifically recruited and trained for this programme. Sessions are mostly one-to-one between the YW and the YP. However, the YP's family and peers are also encouraged to take part and engage with some sessions where this is appropriate and seen as beneficial for the YP.

Where

The YW arranges sessions at times and in places that work for the YP. Adopting a contextual safeguarding approach, the YW spends time with the YP in the spaces that they occupy, including their school, street-based environments and at home. This enables the YW to develop a comprehensive understanding of the YP's lived reality and collect further information about their strengths and needs.

Tailoring

Although it is expected that YPs will complete all components, if some activities are assessed as not needed or if a YP demonstrates a need to have extended time on some components, the schedule is amended flexibly to fit with the YP's needs, and the six-month period is extended accordingly. Thus, the order and extent to which the core components are delivered are tailored to the individual.

The Reach Programme was designed to be suitable for different racial and ethnic groups, with a diverse team of YWs recruited to the programme, particularly in Leicester City, reflecting the more diverse population in this area compared with the predominantly White population in the county area. Where possible and appropriate, YPs were matched to YWs with a similar cultural/ethnic background, and the YWs worked closely with the YPs' families to build trusting relationships.

Logic model, blueprint and theory of change

The updated logic model (LM) is presented in Figure 2 with the theory of change (ToC), and the original LM is presented in Appendix C. During the feasibility study, these were honed following workshops with stakeholders and subsequently refined in line with findings from the feasibility study report (updates to the LM at that point are shown in red text). These documents were reviewed and further refined throughout the course of the efficacy with an internal pilot study in liaison with the delivery team (updates at this stage are shown in green text). Please see the timetable below for the time periods of delivery of the intervention. The programme was designed to be sensitive to and appropriate for different racial and ethnic groups, with a diverse team of YWs recruited (see the section on recruitment in the implementation and process evaluation [IPE] section). For future studies of the Reach Programme, we would recommend further development of the LM and ToC, taking into account the findings from this study and employing further relevant theory. The LM and ToC development should include, as discussed above, consideration of the time it takes for YPs' emotional and relational changes (observed in the qualitative data) to translate into measurable behavioural outcomes, such as improvements in school attendance and figures on suspensions and offending.

Figure 2: Logic model

INPUTS →	OUTPUTS		→ OUTCOMES		
What resources do we need?	**Activities** What do we need to do in order for individuals to accomplish the short-term outcomes?	**Participation** What must be reached for the short-term outcomes to be achieved?	**Short term (2 months)** What preconditions must be met for the medium-term outcomes to be achieved?	**Medium term (4 months)** What preconditions must be met for the ultimate goal to be achieved?	**Long term (completion of intervention)** What are the long-term outcomes?
• Financial support from YEF to cover staffing, equipment, recreational activity and travel and subsistence • Hiring staff and training youth workers (YWs) to ensure that they're highly skilled and culturally competent • School buy-in and in-kind resources to complete referrals • Training for key stakeholders in schools to ensure understanding of eligibility criteria and aims of intervention • Learning materials and project documents (e.g. referrals forms, assessments) for the delivery of the intervention • Existing strategic and operational governance structure, organisational infrastructure and policies (e.g. safeguarding) to escalate barriers and problem-solve • Referral partners (e.g. sports clubs, housing) who are aware of the intervention and anticipate referrals	• Clear and concise online referral form for schools • Prompt response following referral for young person (YP) – if YP meets eligibility based upon referral information and data systems, YW attempts to contact YP and their parents/carers within 24 hours and arranges assessment as soon as practicable • Delivery team ensure referral process is straightforward for schools thus minimal costs and maximum reward for schools • Ongoing communication between youth worker (YW) and school to update on progress and encourage positive reinforcement from teachers in school • Comprehensive and contextual assessment of YP to identify strengths, needs, risks and interests – information used to match YP to YW • Parents/carers early engagement in and support for the intervention, includes participating in assessment and monthly reviews, and receiving support for parenting techniques if required • Extensive phase (4-6 weeks) of relationship-building between YW and YP involving fun, recreational activities (e.g. sports, art, music) • Flexible delivery in the spaces that YP feel safe and comfortable • Sessions on core components which are tailored to YP's needs, interests and learning styles: 1. Social skills training 2. Confidence, wellbeing and resilience 3. Family, peer and community relationships 4. Identifying and achieving aspirations • Facilitating access to and encouraging participation in purposeful and sustainable recreational activities • Monthly reviews of progress towards key milestones involves YW talking to YP, parents/carers and school. If milestones haven't been met, YP and YW will continue to work on relevant core components (e.g. social skills training) • Case closure process- when key milestones are met YW discusses plans with team manager, speaks to YP and parents/carers to assess views and gain agreement and ensures sustainability plans are in place (e.g. formal and informal mechanisms to access support if problems arise)	• Children and YP (11-16 years old) who are at risk of exclusion or who are persistently absent from school, and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as both a victim or perpetrator • 16 schools (ten in the City and six in the County) depending on YW numbers with the highest rates of suspensions agree to participate • Teachers refer eligible YP • 672 referrals received during trial period • 88% of YP referred are recruited to the programme (i.e. 88% of referrals are eligible) • YW and YP meet two to three times a week during the relationship building stage • Flexible and responsive delivery in terms of mode and intensity with core components used as a backbone • 75% of YP receive a minimum of 32 sessions	• High rates of attendance and participation in sessions • Development of a positive and trusting relationship with YW • Improved understanding of the causes/drivers of problem behaviours (e.g. individual, familial, school, peer, and contextual factors) • Increased awareness of and ability to label emotions • Increased understanding of positive local opportunities • Increase in parental support for programme • Increased parental understanding of their role in reducing suspension outcomes	• Improved social skills • Reduction in negative behaviours at school • Increased confidence • Improved goal setting desires • Improved understanding of negative peer influences • Improved communication between YP and their family • Parents/carers uptake of support if needed (e.g. with housing, employment, parenting) • Increased engagement in positive recreational activities • Increase in parental understanding of drivers of suspensions • Exert positive influence on peers • Improved maturity	• Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management • Reduction in exclusions or problem behaviours • Increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing • Improved attendance at school • Improved relationships with family and reduction in conflict in the home • Increased aspirations • Sustained engagement in prosocial recreationa activities • Increased network of positive peers and trusted adults

Issues arising during the project

Recruitment to the Reach Programme was on the whole successful, with the target numbers reached as predicted. There was some indication of a saturation of referrals at the efficacy stage for some schools; four new schools were onboarded at the efficacy stage to be confident of reaching the required numbers. Compliance with the intervention was set to be a minimum of 32 sessions and the delivery of all six core components. At the pilot stage, 65.5% of cases were fully compliant, which dropped to 51.8% at the efficacy stage. However, as shown in the analysis, full compliance did not have a significant impact on outcomes. Response rates were high for the teacher Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), with teachers indicating familiarity with this measure and ease of completion. With regard to the YP measures, response rates were lower for those in the control group,[8] and some YPs were reported to have found the Self-report Delinquency Scale (SRDS) challenging to complete.

[8] Please see trial design section and impact evaluation results section for a full discussion of the control group and response rates

Evaluation objectives

Research questions or study objectives

Upon completion of the baseline and outcome data, the impact evaluation will focus on the following research questions (RQs) as set out below:

Primary research question

- **RQ1**: What is the difference in behavioural difficulties measured using the externalising score from the teacher-report SDQ between the intervention group and a business as usual (BAU) control?

Secondary research questions

- **RQ2**: What is the difference in emotional regulation and peer relationships measured using the internalising score of the teacher-report SDQ between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ3**: What is the difference in behavioural difficulties measured using the externalising score from the self-report SDQ between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ4**: What is the difference in emotional regulation and peer relationships measured using the internalising score of the self-report SDQ between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ5**: What is the difference in prosocial behaviour measured using the prosocial score of the teacher-report SDQ between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ6**: What is the difference in prosocial behaviour measured using the prosocial score of the self-report SDQ between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ7**: What is the difference in offending behaviours measured using the variety of delinquency score from the SRDS between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ8**: What is the difference in offending behaviours measured using the volume of delinquency score from the SRDS between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ9**: What is the difference in attendance at school measured using administrative data between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ10**: What is the difference in the number of suspensions measured using administrative data between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ11**: What is the difference in the number of offences as measured using administrative data between the intervention group and a BAU control?
- **RQ12**: What is the difference in being a suspect of an offence as measured using administrative data between the intervention group and a BAU control?

Subgroup analyses

The monitoring data collected by the delivery team comprises detailed demographic data on the YPs, including:

- Sex
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Special educational needs (SEN)
- Eligibility for free school meals (FSM)
- Number of risk factors

Appropriate variables were incorporated into the impact analysis to assess any differences in terms of the primary outcome by subgroup. The subgroup analysis RQs are set out below, followed by a justification for each subgroup category:

- **RQ13:** Are any differences in the primary outcome (teacher-report SDQ externalising score) observed with regard to the ethnicity of the YPs?
- **RQ14:** Are any differences in the primary outcome (teacher-report SDQ externalising score) observed with regard to the sex of the YPs?
- **RQ15:** Are any differences in the primary outcome (teacher-report SDQ externalising score) observed with regard to the age of the YPs?

The subgroup analysis by ethnicity will further inform the RQs set out in the IPE, which explore to what extent the intervention is reaching YPs from ethnic minority backgrounds and will allow an exploration of whether outcomes differ by ethnicity. In terms of the sex of the YP, the qualitative findings from the feasibility study showed that young males recruited to the Reach Programme responded well to a predominantly female YW team, suggesting that the gender of the YW was less important in terms of the responsiveness of male participants. Exploring this factor in the subgroup analysis will further inform this RQ by allowing an exploration of any differences in outcomes between male and female participants. Findings from the feasibility study suggested that schools were keen to refer YPs at the earliest point possible in their lives, given that the Reach Programme is intended as a preventative intervention. An analysis of outcomes by age will allow insight into whether the Reach Programme shows any difference in outcomes for younger participants.

Fidelity to programme and dosage

The following RQs are part of the IPE and aim to explore how, for whom and under what conditions the intervention worked. Detailed monitoring data on time spent per core component and activities undertaken is being collected for each YP by the YWs. This information will be summarised to form two variables:

- Whether all core components were covered.
- How much time was spent with the YW in total (using time per core component data rather than number of sessions in total, given the variability in length of sessions).

These two variables will be linked to outcome data and will address the following RQs:

- **RQ16:** How is the completion of the core components of the Reach Programme associated with the primary outcome?
- **RQ17:** How is the amount of time that a YP spends with their YW associated with the primary outcome?

Compliance average causal effect analysis

Drawing on the fidelity/dosage variables described above, a binary compliance variable will be constructed and used to undertake a compliance average causal effect (CACE) analysis.

This analysis would also be used to address a further impact evaluation RQ as follows:

- **RQ18:** What is the CACE for the Reach Programme for the primary outcome?

Alongside the impact evaluation, a comprehensive IPE was undertaken. Please see Table 11 for the full list of IPE RQs, how these link to the logic model and the participants involved.

Please see the links below for final published versions of the Reach evaluation protocol and statistical analysis plan (SAP):

Protocol:
https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/REACH-Efficacy-trial-protocol-Jan-2024.pdf

SAP:
https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/REACH-Efficacy-Trial-SAP_Final-July-2024.pdf

Ethics and trial registration

Ethical review

The ethical review for the pilot stage was completed and approved prior to data collection for the pilot phase with reference number ER48532519. An additional ethical review was undertaken and approved for the efficacy phase, with reference number ER61328257. The trial was registered with the ISTCTN, with registration number ISRCTN84175869.

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) has established research ethics procedures in place to ensure that research is undertaken in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice and academic integrity. It aims to promote good practice throughout the assessment of ethical issues and compliance with legal requirements. This can be found at https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/ethics-and-integrity. These processes align with the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association and the British Sociological Association and operate through the University Research Ethics Committee and the Faculty Research Ethics Committees. The project team will always follow these procedures, including operating to standardised protocols concerning anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, rights to withdraw and secure (electronic and physical) data storage. The research team is experienced and committed to working in an ethically appropriate and sensitive way, and its members are familiar with the ethical issues that arise when working with diverse groups of participants. Copies of our ethics policy, principles and procedures are available at http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice. SHU ensures that professional standards and the wellbeing of research participants are protected and always maintained.

Schools were approached to take part via the Reach delivery team. Upon agreement to participate, schools were asked to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) containing detailed information on the project, the responsibilities of the school, the evaluator and the deliverer, and details on data protection and the processing of participants' data. Opt-in consent was gained from the parents/carers of the YP prior to participation in the trial in the form of a letter sent out to parents/carers, who were asked to look through the information with their child and return an opt-in consent slip to the school. SLs also had a telephone conversation with parents/carers where appropriate to explain participation in the trial. Please see Appendix E for the MoU and recruitment documents.

Data protection

A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) was undertaken for the trial, given the sensitive nature of the data involved and the vulnerable nature of the participants. The DPIA was submitted with the ethical review. The DPIA included a detailed assessment of risks involved and outlined all participant data to be processed, how/where the data is stored and shared, and how long the data is retained for.

A privacy notice was sent to schools and to parents/carers of the YPs involved in the project to allow SHU to have access to the referral data and monitoring data collected by the delivery team. Three separate data-sharing agreements were set up with the delivery partner (separate ones for each local authority involved and for the violence reduction network) for the duration of the efficacy trial to incorporate the sharing of the name, date of birth (DOB) and Unique Pupil Number of each YP for submission to the YEF data archive. They also included details on the collection of data in other fields, such as SEN, ethnicity, FSM status, suspension data, attendance data and offending data. All evaluation data collected will be submitted to the YEF data archive, and participants will be fully informed via a privacy notice. The data-sharing agreements specified that SHU and the local authorities/VRN are separate data controllers for the project.

At the end of the study, the pupil data supplied to the SHU evaluation team by the schools will be shared with the Department for Education (DfE), and evaluation data will be submitted to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The DfE will pseudonymise the data, so it is no longer possible to identify any individual YP from the study data. The DfE will then transfer the data to the YEF data archive, which is stored in the ONS's Secure Research Service. The YEF is the controller of the information in the archive. It will be possible for information in the archive to be linked with information about the pupils from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and the Police National Computer. This will help approved researchers find out the long-term impact of the projects funded by the YEF.

For the qualitative fieldwork, participant information sheets containing a privacy notice were distributed to all participants prior to the interviews being conducted. For the YPs and parents/carers involved, this information was tailored to be as accessible as possible. Consent forms were completed by all participants prior to the fieldwork taking place.

In terms of data storage, all recordings on digital devices were removed once the audio file had been stored securely on the password-protected shared drive. The audio files were sent to be transcribed using the SHU secure data transfer system Zendto, and once the transcript was returned, the copies of the audio files were removed.

For the write-up of the report, school names will not be reported, and any references to schools will use a number (i.e. School 1 to School 6). Participants were also anonymised or described using their first initial only for reporting purposes.

The processing of personal data through the evaluation is defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as a specific task in the public interest. The legal basis for processing personal data will be 'Public Task' – Article 6 (1) (a & e). SHU has established data protection (https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/information-governance-policy) and research ethics (https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/ethics-and-integrity) policies and procedures aligned with legal requirements and the research society's standards of good practice. The project team will always follow these procedures, including operating to standardised protocols concerning anonymity; confidentiality; informed consent; rights to withdraw; and secure data privacy, security, storage, transfer and processing.

Our research centre consults with the SHU data protection officer and information governance lead on all matters regarding data security. All staff receive data protection training, and all projects are conducted in compliance with legislation, including GDPR. The SHU data protection policy statement can be found at https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research.

Please see Appendix E for copies of participant information sheets and privacy notices used in the project.

Project team/stakeholders

Delivery team

Table 5 below sets out the full delivery team involved in the delivery of the Reach Programme.

Table 5: Stakeholders and interests

Violence Reduction Network		Leicester City Council		Leicestershire County Council	
Grace Strong – Director	Involved in development (pilot phase and efficacy phase)	Nicola Odom – Partnership and Service Development Manager	Involved in development (November 2021 – March 2022)	Carly Turner – Youth and Justice Service Manager	Involved in development (November 2021 – June 2025)
Millicent Gant – Programme Manager	Involved in development (efficacy phase)	Ivor Sutton – Team Manager in Early Help & Prevention	Involved in development (November 2021 – present)	Rachel Lobel – Team & Partnership Manager in Youth and Justice	Involved in development (November 2021 – June 2025)
Stevie-Jade Hardy – Head of Data, Evidence & Evaluation	Involved in development (pilot phase)	Ayesha Desai – Reach Team Manager	Involved in development, implementation and delivery (December 2021 – present)	Emily Jackson – Reach Team Manager	Involved in development, implementation and delivery (December 2021 – September 2024)
Bethany Grewcock – Strategic Data & Insights Manager	Involved in development (efficacy phase)	Simon Chetwyn – Project Manager	Involved in set-up and onboarding schools (January 2022 – October 2022)	Corinne Melbourne – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (January 2021 – August 2024)
		Max Fisher – Reach Team Project Officer	Involved in development (January 2022 – April 2024	James Stephens – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (March 2021 – June 2025)
		Marlene Carpentier – Reach Team Project Officer	Involved in development and monitoring (December 2024 – present)	Danielle Robbie – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (January 2023 – April 2024)
		Charlotte Allitt – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (January 2022 – Nov 2022)	Kudzanai Charter – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (January 2023 – June 2024)
		Charlotte Smith – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (January 2022 – Dec 2022)	Ajada Bridges-Matthew – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (August 2024 – June 2025)

		Zarah Lee – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (February 2022 – present)	Danielle Robbie – Reach Team Manager	Involved in development, implementation and delivery (September 2024 – June 2025)
		Karen Norton – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (February 2022 – present)	Matthew Symons – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (September 2024 – June 2025)
		Priyah Dosanjh – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (June 2022 – December 2024)	Ellie Smith -Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (April 2024 – June 2025)
		Arwel Hughes – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (in post September 2022 – January 2024)		
		Jake Woodings – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (in post-February 2023 – present)		
		Umar Nurgat – Youth Worker	Involved in development and delivery (in post-February 2023 – present)		
		Melissa Thomas – Youth Worker	Involved in delivery (in post-May 2024 – September 2025)		

Evaluation team

Anna Stevens, Senior Research Fellow (Co-PI/PM). Anna is co-principal investigator and project manager for the evaluation. She is the key contact for the evaluation team and the lead for the overall conduct of the study. Anna has over 14 years' experience in educational trials for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and leads the YEF cross-team working group at SHU. Anna has extensive experience in educational research projects and is particularly skilled in the management of randomised controlled trials (RCTs), quantitative data collection, amalgamation and statistical analysis.

Ben Willis, Senior Research Fellow (Co-PI/PM). Ben brings 18 years of research experience focused on children and YPs across educational and youth-based settings. His research interests focus on the broader dimensions of education, including children and YPs' health/wellbeing and, more recently, adventure learning–based initiatives. He has particular expertise in IPE and leads on this strand. Ben recognises the importance of clear and effective communication with deliverers, participants and funders**.**

Dr Charlotte Coleman, Deputy Head of Psychology, Sociology and Politics (Co-PI). Charlotte is the co-principal investigator for the project and will lead on the development of research tools and on the qualitative analysis. She has extensive experience in crime reduction and mentoring programme evaluation. She is experienced in working with YPs, vulnerable groups and schools.

Sean Demack, Principal Research Fellow (Statistical advisor). Sean is a statistical advisor to the project. Sean has led the design and analysis of numerous large-scale/national RCT-centred evaluations. He also has published on the methodology of educational RCT designs and contributed to the critical application of statistics in research around racism and ethnicity.

Ben Partridge, Senior Lecturer (IPE design, fieldwork and analysis). Ben conducted a share of the pilot and efficacy stage qualitative fieldwork and analytic work with the YPs and YWs and is a co-author of the report. Ben has experience in qualitative data collection and analysis through his work focusing on forensic psychology and death and bereavement experiences in educational settings. In his previous posts, Ben has over nine years' experience working in education settings with YPs.

Laura Riley, Senior Lecturer in Criminal Justice, Department of Law and Criminology (Project fieldworker, advisor and analyst). Laura is a qualified probation officer, youth offending practitioner and manager, specialising in child criminal exploitation, children in care and custody, and preventative family support. Laura has extensive experience working with marginalised YPs from diverse ethnic backgrounds. She has experience of qualitative data collection and analysis and is a co-author of the report.

Claire Wolstenholme, Research Fellow (qualitative analysis). Claire has nearly 20 years of education research and evaluation experience. Claire specialises in qualitative methods and has undertaken a variety of projects with children and YPs in schools. She has particular interests in male student mental health, higher education, social and educational policy, and the wider aspects of education, including children and YPs' engagement, wellbeing and inclusion.

Jessica Benson-Egglenton, Research Fellow. Jessica is an experienced researcher, specialising in educational inequalities and widening participation in higher education. As a sociologist of education, she brings over 12 years' experience spanning embedded institutional roles and large-scale trials, with expertise in mixed-methods approaches, theory of change and project management.

Hongjuan Zhu, Researcher. Hongjuan provided support with trial management, as well as quantitative data collection and analysis for the evaluation. She has extensive experience in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Hongjuan has contributed to education research projects for the EEF, the Institute of Physics, and the YEF.

Methods

Trial design

Table 6: Trial design

Trial design, including number of arms		Two-arm randomised controlled trial
Unit of randomisation		Individual
Stratification variable(s) (if applicable)		School
Primary outcome	**Variable**	Behavioural difficulties
	Measure (instrument, scale, source)	Teacher-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) externalising score [0 to 20]
Secondary outcome(s)	**Variable(s)**	• Emotional regulation and peer relationships (teacher-report SDQ) • Behavioural difficulties (self-report SDQ) • Emotional regulation and peer relationships (self-report SDQ) • Prosocial behaviour (teacher-report SDQ) • Prosocial behaviour (self-report SDQ) • Variety of delinquency • Volume of delinquency • Number of suspensions • Attendance at school (%) • Level of offending
	Measure(s) (instrument, scale, source)	• Teacher-report SDQ internalising score [0–20] • Self-report SDQ externalising score [0–20] • Self-report SDQ internalising score [0–20] • Teacher-report prosocial score [0–10] • Self-report prosocial score [0–10] • Variety of delinquency (SRDS) • Volume of delinquency (SRDS) • Number of suspensions • Attendance at school (%) • Number of offences • Number of times as a suspect of an offence
Baseline for primary outcome	**Variable**	Behavioural difficulties
	Measure (instrument, scale, source)	Teacher-report SDQ externalising score [0 to 20]
Baseline for secondary outcome(s)	**Variable**	• Emotional regulation and peer relationships (teacher-report SDQ) • Behavioural difficulties (self-report SDQ) • Emotional regulation and peer relationships (self-report SDQ) • Prosocial behaviour (teacher-report SDQ) • Prosocial behaviour (self-report SDQ) • Variety of delinquency • Volume of delinquency • Number of suspensions • Attendance at school (%) • Number of offences • Number of times as a suspect of an offence
	Measure (instrument, scale, source)	• Teacher-report SDQ internalising score [0–20] • Self-report SDQ externalising score [0–20]

		• Self-report SDQ internalising score [0–20] • Teacher-report prosocial score [0–10] • Self-report prosocial score [0–10] • Variety of delinquency (SRDS) [0–19] • Volume of delinquency (SRDS) [0–209] • Number of suspensions • Attendance at school (%) • Number of offences • Number of times as a suspect of an offence

The study was designed as a two-armed efficacy trial with an internal pilot,[9] with randomisation at the individual level within schools. YPs within each of the 16 schools were allocated to either receive the Reach Programme or BAU (50:50 allocation ratio). A financial resource was given to schools to facilitate engagement with the evaluation and as compensation for staff time. The financial resource was also intended to be used flexibly for schools to support their BAU cases. Given the rolling nature of referrals and the differing needs of the YPs involved, it was not possible to provide uniform support for the control group; instead, schools used the resource flexibly to support the control group, and/or YPs received the support they would have received had Reach not been available. A full discussion of this is presented in the IPE section.

The primary outcome measure was behavioural difficulties as measured by the externalising score contained within the teacher version of the SDQ (Goodman, 2001). The secondary outcomes are the other subscales of the teacher version of the SDQ: the internalising score and prosocial score. In addition to this, YPs were also asked to complete the YP version of the SDQ and the SRDS. From these two measures, the three subscales of the YP SDQ were used (externalising score, internalising score and prosocial score), and the two subscales of the SRDS were used (variety of delinquency score and volume of delinquency score). Further secondary measures used were drawn from administrative data submitted by the schools (attendance data) and sourced from the local authorities (number of suspensions). Data on the number of offences committed and whether the YP had been a suspect in an offence were drawn on as final secondary outcomes, sourced from the VRN.

Detailed data on ethnicity was collected by the delivery team and was used to assess the representativeness of the achieved sample in terms of baseline/outcome measure completion and in terms of balance in the intervention and control groups. This data was also used to compare recruitment to Reach with the number of suspensions by ethnicity within the sample of schools (please see the IPE). Further, this data was used in the subgroup analysis, along with data on age and gender, to look at the impact according to these factors.

Participant selection

Referrals were received from a sample of 10 schools in the Leicester City area, and six schools in the Leicestershire County area across both the internal pilot and efficacy phases. The internal pilot phase ran from January 2023 to December 2023 and involved a total of 12 schools, followed by an efficacy phase which ran from January 2024 to June 2025 and involved the original 12 schools, with an additional four schools recruited. Delivery of the intervention and evaluation methods was consistent during both stages, with rolling cohorts used throughout. Schools were identified for the Reach Programme based on their higher

[9] Please see YEF guidance for a full description of an internal pilot: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/3.-YEF-Evaluations-Guidance-Pilot-studies-March-2022.pdf

number of suspensions compared with the local population of schools and their locality in terms of being in areas with higher rates of serious violence and deprivation.

The target number of eligible referrals was 600; in total, 594 eligible referrals were received. Participants were defined as "children and young people aged 11 to 16 years old who are at risk of suspension or who are persistently absent from school[10] and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as either a victim or perpetrator." The criteria also take account of YPs having three or more risk factors, as denoted by the online referral form (Appendix D). Please see the section below for a detailed description of the referral process and consent procedures.

Outcome measures

Baseline measures

Baseline measures were administered/collected prior to randomisation and were all equivalent to the outcome measures, which were collected at one time point subsequent to finishing the Reach Programme or the equivalent amount of time for the control group (six months).

Primary outcome

The primary outcome measure for the Reach trial was behavioural difficulties as measured by the externalising score contained within the teacher version of the SDQ (Goodman, 2001). The SDQ teacher version is a 25-item scale used to assess behaviour in the school context in 4–16-year-olds. This consists of five subscales: conduct problems scale, hyperactivity scale, emotional problems scale, peer problems scale and prosocial scale. The externalising score measures behavioural difficulties and is the sum of the conduct and hyperactivity scales. This links well with the ToC in terms of improved behaviour management, reduced negative behaviours in school and reduced problem behaviours both in and out of school. This is also one of the YEF's core outcome measures.

Secondary outcomes

The variables employed for the secondary outcome analysis were derived from the teacher-report SDQ, the self-report SDQ, the SRDS and administrative data on suspensions, attendance and offending. The teacher-report SDQ internalising score is the sum of the emotional and peer problems scales and forms one of the secondary outcomes, which links to improved emotional regulation, increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing, and also an increased network of positive peers. The teacher-report prosocial score formed a further secondary outcome and links to improved social skills. The self-report SDQ (completed by the YPs) externalising score, internalising score and prosocial score were also used as secondary outcome measures, linking to the LM in the same way as the teacher version and providing validation of findings from the primary outcome. As noted above, translations of questionnaires were offered if required by YPs, and teachers were given clear guidance on how to support YPs if they had any issues understanding the questions (whilst not influencing their responses).

[10] Persistently absent was added as a criteria following the feasibility stage given evidence suggests their outcomes are similar to those who are at risk of suspension.

The SRDS was also employed as a secondary outcome measure. This measures delinquent behaviour by assessing the frequency and severity of any delinquent acts committed. Two outcome measures were produced from this: the variety of delinquency score and the volume of delinquency score. The former is a measure of how many different types of delinquent behaviours the YP has reported, and the latter is a measure of how often these were reported. This fits with the LM in terms of reduced negative behaviours at school, fewer suspensions or problem behaviours and improved attendance at school.

A further three outcome measures were from administrative data: suspensions, attendance and offending behaviours. Using this administrative data provides further validation of the self-report measures in terms of attendance and offending behaviours, which link to the LM as described above. Using data on suspensions as a secondary outcome links directly to the LM in terms of a reduction in suspensions.

Attendance data was reported as a percentage of attendance at school by the YP. This was collected at the point of referral from the school and collected again from the schools at the same time as the teacher-report SDQ outcome measure. Data on suspensions (number of previous suspensions) was also collected from schools at the point of referral. This data was collected directly from the local authorities by the delivery partner at the point of closure to the Reach Programme and the equivalent time period for the control group, and it was shared with SHU to be matched with the final dataset using the YP's name/school/DOB to achieve accurate matching.

Baseline data and outcome data were collected using an online survey tool (Qualtrics). The link to the teacher-report SDQ was distributed to teachers as part of the referral process. The self-report SDQ and the SRDS were then administered to YPs via SLs, who were provided with detailed guidance on the facilitation of this. Translations of questionnaires or hard copies were made available if required. Data was collected independently from the Reach team and submitted directly by teachers/YPs to the evaluation team. The teacher-report SDQ was completed online at the point of referral. A full set of guidance was given to all schools by SHU to explain how and when to complete baseline measures, who should complete the teacher-report SDQ (i.e. an appropriate SL with close knowledge of the YP) and how to facilitate measure collection with the YPs, indicating that YPs can be supported with understanding questions but that staff should not influence their responses. All data was submitted straight to SHU using the online survey tool (Qualtrics), and both staff and YPs were reassured of the confidentiality of their responses in the introductory blurb. The member of staff completing the SDQ was asked for their name and role at the point of data collection to ensure that, where possible, the same person completed the follow-up SDQ. The YPs themselves were given an online link via SLs to complete both the SDQ and SRDS online, or a paper version was offered if preferred. SHU checked that baseline data had been completed prior to randomisation.

Sample size

Minimum detectable effect size (MDES) estimates were obtained from power analyses undertaken using the PowerUp software (Dong et al., 2013, sheet BIRA**2**_1r) as described in the equation below.[11] For the

[11] Dong, N., & Maynard, R. A. (2013). PowerUp!: A tool for calculating minimum detectable effect sizes and minimum required sample sizes for experimental and quasi-experimental design studies. Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 6(1), 24-67.doi: 10.1080/19345747.2012.673143. https://www.causalevaluation.org/power-analysis.html

Reach evaluation, this is a blocked RCT design such that in each block (school), YPs are randomly allocated to the Reach Programme or to the control group. The power analysis was conducted in the following way:

$$MDES_{RCT(Blocked)} \sim M_{J-L-1}\sqrt{\frac{ICC_2(1-R_2^2)\varphi}{J} + \frac{(1-ICC_2)(1-R_1^2)}{P(1-P)Jn}}$$

Where:

- J = number of blocks (schools)
- n = number of individuals per block (YP per school)
- L = number of (block level) covariates to be used in the impact analyses (this might include a variable used to stratify or minimise in randomisation)
- P = the proportion of individuals assigned to the intervention in each location/block – which would be 0.5 within a balanced design
- M_{J-L-1} is the group effect multiplier value from the t-distribution for a two-tailed test with alpha=0.05 & beta=0.80, equal variances assumed with J-L-1 degrees of freedom
- ICC_2 is the cluster (location/block) level intracluster correlation (ICC); the proportion of variance in the outcome between blocks
- R_2^2 = proportion of between cluster/block level variance that is reduced by covariate(s) – block-level explanatory power.
- R_1^2 = proportion of within-block variance that is reduced by covariate(s) – participant level explanatory power
- φ = Treatment effect heterogeneity (which is usually set to be zero for efficacy trials – larger effectiveness trials might be powered to detect this)

If we assume zero treatment effect heterogeneity and a balanced design … P = 0.5 and φ = 0, equation 1.1 simplifies to equation 1.2:

$$MDES_{RCT(Blocked)} \sim 2M_{J-L-1}\sqrt{\frac{(1-ICC_2)(1-R_1^2)}{Jn}}$$

This removes R_2^2 from the equation (because φ = 0), so only explanatory power at the YP level influences the statistical sensitivity of the blocked-RCT design.

The impact of the ICC on sensitivity is the opposite of what is seen with clustered RCT designs that randomise at the cluster level. For clustered designs with randomisation at the cluster level (e.g. school), higher ICCs are associated with higher MDES estimates. In blocked-RCT designs with randomisation at the individual level within each block (e.g. school), higher ICCs are associated with lower MDES estimates. This is because the blocked-RCT design fixes things so that the cluster (or block) level is completely accounted for – i.e. the Reach intervention and BAU control groups are randomised in exactly the same locations (or blocks). Therefore, as the cluster-level variance in the outcome increases proportionally (i.e. as ICCs increase), an increasing quantity of random 'noise' is completely accounted for, and this results in increased statistical sensitivity (as seen with decreasing MDES estimates).

As ICC_2 increases, $(1-ICC_2)$ and (therefore) the MDES estimate decreases. So, to estimate the smallest effect size that a blocked design could detect as statistically significant ($P < 0.05$, two-tailed) with a statistical power of 0.80 or higher (MDES), the following details are needed:

- J = number of schools = 12 at pilot; 12 at stage 2 ~ 24 in all. n = children and YPs per school = 25. L = number of (block level) covariates = 0
- M_{J-L-1} is the group effect multiplier… value from the t-distribution for 2-tailed test with alpha = 0.05 & beta = 0.80, equal variances assumed with J−L−1 (24−0−1 = 23) degrees of freedom.
- ICC_2 is the cluster (location/block)-level ICC; the proportion of variance in the outcome between blocks: unknown, estimated as 0.13 from baseline pilot data
- R_1^2 = proportion of within-block variance that is reduced by covariate(s) – participant-level explanatory power. This was estimated at between 0.50 and 0.60 based on findings from Adventure Learning (Willis et al., 2023). Also presented in Table 7 are calculations based on a participant-level correlation of 0.32, which was calculated from the full set of pilot data for this trial that was available.

The power calculations assumed an intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis with 100% complete baseline/outcome data and that the only systematic difference between the Reach group and the control group was their group membership (all other differences are random). Table 7 below presents the sample size calculations, showing firstly the estimates presented in the protocol from which the sample size for the study was drawn (600 YPs) to achieve an MDES of 0.18–0.19. This was determined a priori using correlation estimates (0.50 to 0.60) drawn from the EEF Adventure Learning Trial (Willis et al., 2023) and drawing on the Reach baseline pilot data for the ICC (0.13). The sample size of 600 YPs was discussed with the delivery partner, and the timescales to achieve this sample size were agreed, also taking into account practical considerations in terms of delivery with regard to the caseload of YWs. Upon completion of the internal pilot, an updated participant-level correlation of 0.32 was used (calculated from the full set of pilot data), which would achieve an MDES of 0.21 for the same sample size (Table 7). Both of these estimates assumed a total of 24 schools with 25 YPs per school (12 schools participated in both pilot and stage 2 evaluations, and these accounted for 24 school clusters in the combined efficacy with the internal pilot sample). In fact, a further four schools were recruited at the efficacy stage, thus giving a total of 28 clusters which were used in the post-hoc estimates as described below.

The analyses of the final efficacy sample that combined data from the internal pilot and stage 2 evaluations provided post-hoc estimates for the school-level ICC (0.11) and covariate explanatory power at the YP level (r^2 = 0.21, r = 0.46) (also presented in Table 7). With zero attrition, the baseline sample comprising 594 YPs in 28 schools results in a post-hoc MDES estimate of 0.20. Accounting for the 11.4% attrition in the ITT analysis, the number of YPs falls to 526. Assuming that attrition is random, this results in a post-hoc MDES estimate of 0.21.

Table 7: Sample size calculations

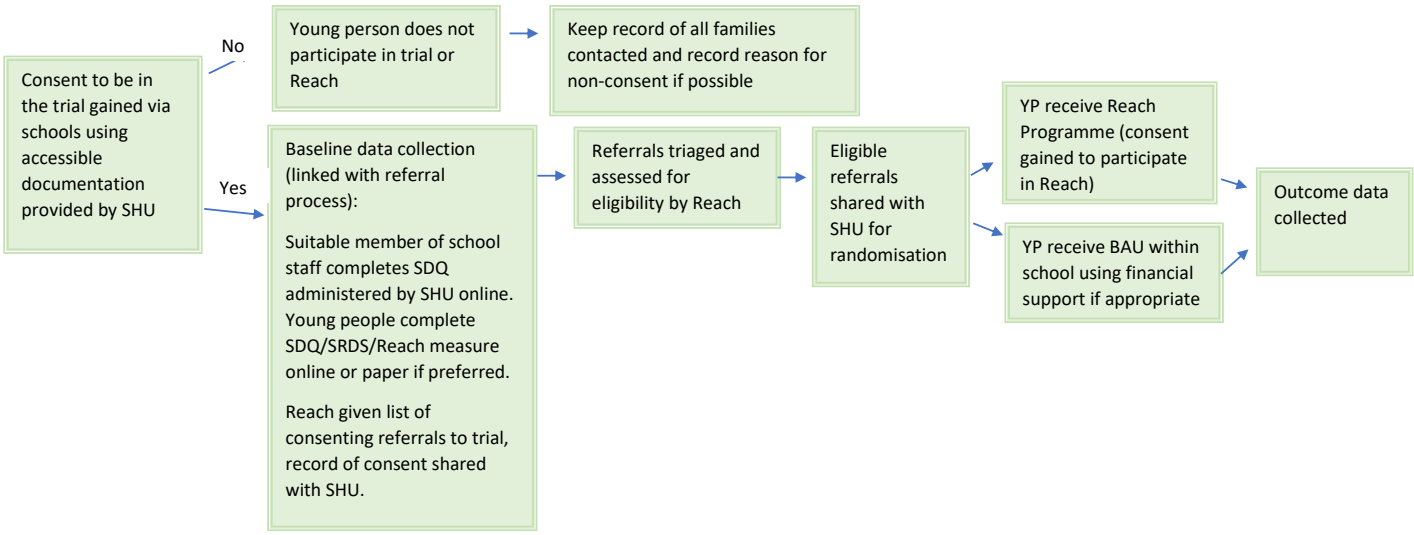
Sample = 600 children and young people (YPs) across 24 clusters (25 YPs per cluster)		Protocol	Randomisation: drawing on Reach pilot data for intracluster correlations (ICC) and correlation estimates	Post-hoc estimates (analysis stage)
Minimum detectable effect size		0.18-0.19	0.21	0.20 (0.21 taking into account 11.4% attrition)
Pre-test/ post-test correlations	Level 1 (participant)	0.50 to 0.60	0.32 (R^2=0.10)	0.46 (R^2 = 0.21)
	Level 2 (cluster)	n/a[1]	n/a[1]	n/a[1]
Intracluster correlations	Level 1 (participant)	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]
	Level 2 (cluster)	0.13	0.13	0.11
Alpha[1][1]		0.05	0.05	0.05
Power		0.80	0.80	0.80
One-sided or two-sided?		Two	Two	Two
Number of participants	Intervention	300	300	301
	Control	300	300	293
	Total	600	600	594

Randomisation

Within each school, the evaluation team randomised half of the eligible referred YPs (post consent and baseline data collection) to receive the Reach Programme, with the other half forming the BAU control group. Once the numbers of referrals within schools were set, randomisation was fixed within each school using a random number generator in Excel to determine group allocation. Two specified members of the evaluation team undertook randomisation, which was blind to participants and providers. Once participants had been randomised, information about group allocation was passed on to the Reach delivery team via a secure online transfer, and the delivery team then informed the schools of group allocation.

The referral process was rolling, where participants commenced at different time points and participated in the programme for varying lengths of time. The evaluation team worked closely with the delivery partner and the schools to implement the referral process, consent procedures and baseline data collection. Consent to be in the evaluation was gained through schools at the outset using documentation/scripts provided by SHU to the schools. Figure 3 below maps out the process:

Figure 3: Referral process incorporating consent/baseline data collection and randomisation



Statistical analysis

All analyses followed the YEF's statistical analysis guidance. The methods of analysis described here were chosen prior to data collection. Multi-level linear regression models were constructed that acknowledged that pupils are clustered in schools. Specifically, schools were included as random effects within two-level random intercept multilevel models. Elff et al. (2021) justify the use of this approach with a smaller number of clusters. The Reach trial is an efficacy trial and therefore conditional inference only was made (i.e. not generalising beyond the sample of schools included in the study). In each of these two models, the follow-up teacher-report SDQ externalising score was the outcome variable, and the trial arm (1 = Reach or 0 = Control) was included as the key pupil-level explanatory variable. The baseline teacher-report SDQ externalising score was included as a covariate at both the pupil and school levels. An ITT approach was taken that included all YPs randomly allocated to Reach or to the control group regardless of whether the Reach Programme was engaged with. The ITT approach best preserves randomisation (and therefore the strength of internal validity) and will provide the most robust estimate of the causal impact of the Reach Programme. The headline ITT analysis combined data from the internal pilot and efficacy stages, but follow-on sensitivity analyses explored impact at each stage. The impact of Reach was estimated by converting the model coefficient for the trial arm variable into Hedges' g effect sizes using the equation below, where T is the treatment mean, C is the control mean, δ^2_{sch} is the school-level variance and δ^2_{pup} is the pupil-level variance:

Figure 4: Effect size equation

$$ES = \frac{(T - C)_{adjusted}}{\sqrt{\delta^2_{sch} + \delta^2_{pup}}}$$

For the primary outcome analysis and follow-on exploratory analyses, statistical uncertainty was expressed as standard errors of multilevel model coefficients and the use of 95% confidence intervals. All multi-level models were conducted in STATA version 16. Specifically, parameter estimates were obtained using the mixed suite of commands in the STATA software.

Primary analysis

The primary outcome measure for the Reach trial was behavioural difficulties as measured by the externalising score contained within the teacher version of the SDQ (Goodman, 2001). The SDQ teacher version is a 25-item scale used to assess behaviour in the school context in 4–16-year-olds. This consists of five subscales: conduct problems scale, hyperactivity scale, emotional problems scale, peer problems scale and prosocial scale. The externalising score measures behavioural difficulties and is the sum of the conduct and hyperactivity scales. This links well with the ToC in terms of improved behaviour management, reduction in negative behaviours in school and reduction in problem behaviours both in and out of school. This is also one of the YEF's core outcome measures.

As specified in the SAP, the primary analysis adopted an ITT approach that deployed multilevel linear regression with the teacher-report SDQ externalising score as the outcome. The multilevel analysis acknowledged the clustering of YPs into schools and included two YP-level covariates (group membership and baseline teacher-report SDQ externalising score) and one school-level covariate (mean teacher-report SDQ externalising scores). To avoid collinearity, the YP- and school-level SDQ covariates were centred as specified in the SAP and restated in the equation form below:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_j + \beta_2 (X_{ij} - \bar{X}_j) + \beta_3 \left(\bar{X}_j - \bar{X}\right) + \vartheta'_j + \varepsilon'_{ij}$$

Where:

- Y_{ij} is the teacher-report SDQ externalising score for YP i in school j at the outcome.
- T_j is the YP-level group identifier, which will take the value 1 = Reach or zero = Control
- β_1 is the coefficient that estimates the difference between the Reach and control groups, adjusted for the baseline teacher-report SDQ externalising score, i.e. $\beta_1 = (Reach - Control)_{adjusted}$. The $\beta_1$coefficient will be used to estimate the impact of the Reach programme.
- X_{ij} is the teacher-report SDQ externalising score for YP i in school j at baseline, centred around $\bar{X}_j$, the school-level mean, i.e. $(X_{ij} - \bar{X}_j)$
- $\bar{X}$ is the school-level grand mean teacher-report SDQ externalising score used to centre $\bar{X}_j$, the school-level mean, i.e. $\bar{X}_j - \bar{X})$
- ϑ'_j and ε'_{ij} are random effects that remain at the school and pupil levels and are assumed to be distributed normally in the population with zero means and variances of σ_c^2 and τ_c^2, respectively, and these variances need to be conditionally uncorrelated

The estimate of the impact of the Reach programme was standardised as an effect size by dividing by the standard deviation obtained from the variance partition estimates for the empty/null model.

Table 8 below provides an example analysis model for the primary RQ, which is in line with the model specified in the SAP.

Table 8: Example analysis model research question (RQ) 1

Analysis and sample	Level 1 (pupil) covariates	Level 2 (school) covariates	Outcome variable
Empty model			Follow-up teacher-report SDQ externalising score
Intention-to-treat sample **(RQ 1)**	Group (1 = Reach participants school, 0 = Control group participants) Baseline teacher-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) externalising score	Mean school-level baseline teacher-report SDQ externalising score	

Secondary analysis

The variables employed for the secondary outcome analysis were derived from the teacher-report SDQ, the self-report SDQ, the SRDS, and administrative data on suspensions, attendance and offending. The teacher-report SDQ internalising score is the sum of the emotional and peer problems scales and formed one of the secondary outcomes, which links to improved emotional regulation, increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing, and also an increased network of positive peers. The teacher-report prosocial score formed a further secondary outcome and links to improved social skills. The self-report SDQ (completed by the YP) externalising score, internalising score and prosocial score were also used as secondary outcomes, linking to the LM in the same way as the teacher version and providing validation of findings from the primary outcome.

The SRDS was also used as a secondary outcome. This measures delinquent behaviour by assessing the frequency and severity of any delinquent acts committed. This fits with the LM in terms of reductions in negative behaviours at school, reductions in suspensions or problem behaviours and improved attendance at school.

A further three outcome measures were analysed from administrative data: suspensions, attendance and offending behaviours. Using this administrative data provided further validation to the self-report measures in terms of attendance and offending behaviours, which link to the LM as described above. Using data on suspensions as a secondary outcome links directly to the LM in terms of a reduction in suspensions.

Attendance data was reported as a percentage of attendance at school by the YP. This was collected at the point of referral from the schools and collected again from the schools at the same time as the teacher-report SDQ outcome measure. Data on suspensions (number of previous suspensions) was also collected from the schools at the point of referral. At the point of closure, this data was then collected directly from the delivery partner, along with the equivalent time period for the control group, and shared with SHU to be matched with the final dataset using the YP's name/school/DOB to achieve accurate matching.

The analysis of secondary outcomes will be conducted in the same way as for the primary outcome. Table 9 below provides an example analysis model for RQ7.

Table 9: Example analysis model for research question (RQ) 7

Analysis and sample	Level 1 (pupil) covariates	Level 2 (school) covariates	Outcome variable
Empty model			Follow-up variety of delinquency score from the SRDS
Intention-to-treat sample **(RQ 7)**	Baseline variety of delinquency score from the Self-report Delinquency Scale (SRDS) Group (1 = Reach participants school, 0 = Control group participants)	Mean school-level variety of delinquency score from the SRDS	

Analysis in the presence of non-compliance

The ITT analysis provides the most robust estimate of the *causal* impact of the Reach Programme on the primary outcome. This is because the ITT analysis focuses on preserving randomisation and so best ensures that the only difference between the Reach intervention group and the control group is group membership (all other differences are random). However, the ITT analysis does not take compliance with the Reach Programme into account. In other words, the ITT analysis captures the causal impact of Reach for YPs who are randomised to the Reach Programme. To estimate the impact of Reach for YPs randomised to the Reach Programme *and* who received the programme as intended (and specified), a compliance analysis was undertaken. A combination of fidelity and dosage of Reach was drawn on to construct a compliance variable at the YP level. This will identify a subsample of YPs in the Reach intervention group who spent the required amount of time with their YWs in which ALL of the core components of Reach were covered. This would be defined as receiving a minimum of 32 sessions with YWs and receiving all core components to be compliant. Detailed information on time per core component, which informed this variable, was collected by the delivery team. Associations between fidelity and dosage and outcomes were undertaken as IPE analyses, whilst the binary compliance variable (1 = compliant, 0 = not compliant) will be used to estimate the CACE using an instrumental variable and a two-stage least squares approach via the STATA 'ivregress' command and adjusting the standard errors for clustering at the school level. The first stage modelled the compliance binary outcome, with group membership included as a covariate. The predicted value for the compliance outcome was then entered into a second-stage model that replicated the ITT analysis of the primary outcome but replaced group membership with the predicted compliance.

The CACE analyses will provide the best estimate for the impact of Reach for YPs who have received the programme as intended (and specified) in terms of fidelity and dosage. However, because the CACE does not preserve randomisation, causal conclusions cannot be drawn from these analyses. The ITT and CACE analyses together provide two perspectives: an estimate of the causal impact of being allocated to receive Reach (ITT) and an estimate of the impact of receiving Reach as intended and specified (CACE).

Missing data analysis

The amount of missing data for the teacher-report SDQ externalising score ITT analysis was summarised, and possible reasons for missing data are discussed in the report. As specified in the SAP (p15), bivariate patterns of missingness are described (i.e. % missing across all variables included in the ITT analyses plus auxiliary variables) and then modelled using a multilevel logistic regression model, with the YP level binary missing variable as outcome and the same variables used to examine baseline balance included as explanatory variables. This model was used to assess the feasibility of undertaking multiple imputation of missing data. Multiple imputation was then undertaken using the STATA 'MI Impute' command that imputed

100 datasets (with a burn-in of 20 datasets). The impact analysis for the primary outcome was then re-run within the imputed datasets using the STATA 'MI Estimate: Mixed' command with Rubin's rules (Rubin, 1987) used to combine imputed estimates of the group membership coefficient. The impact estimate obtained from the imputed datasets was then compared with the ITT estimate.

Subgroup analyses

The subgroup analyses were specified a priori and reflected the description of this analysis in the protocol. Exploratory analyses of subgroups examined evidence of differential impact relating to YP ethnicity, sex and age. Subgroup analyses by ethnicity further informed the RQs set out in the IPE, which explore how far the intervention is reaching YPs from ethnic minority backgrounds and allowed for an exploration of whether outcomes differed by ethnicity. In terms of the gender of the YP, the qualitative findings from the feasibility study showed that young males recruited to the Reach Programme responded well to a predominantly female YW team, suggesting that the gender of the YW was less important in terms of the responsiveness of male participants (although this would need further research involving higher numbers of male YWs to allow a full comparison). Exploring this factor in the subgroup analyses further informed this RQ by allowing an exploration of any differences in outcomes between male and female participants. Findings from the feasibility study suggest that schools were keen to refer YPs at the earliest point possible in their lives, given that the Reach Programme is intended as a preventative intervention. Analyses of outcomes by age provided insight into whether the Reach Programme showed any difference in outcomes for younger participants.

The final categories for ethnicity and age were decided upon examination of the final achieved sample to inform the categories that contained sufficient numbers for analysis. Detailed data on these subgroups was collected as part of the monitoring data and was matched into the final dataset.

As illustrated in Table 10 (using RQ13 as an example), subsample analyses were undertaken by including two additional variables in the model: a main effect term (i.e. ethnicity, gender or age) and an interaction between this and group membership. These analyses examined evidence of the differential impact of Reach. If the interaction term is found to be statistically significant, follow-on analyses will undertake separate impact analyses for the subsamples.

Table 10: Example analysis model for research question (RQ) 13

Analysis and sample	Level 1 (pupil) covariates	Level 2 (school) covariates	Outcome variable
Empty model			Follow-up variety of delinquency score from the SRDS
Intention-to-treat sample **(RQ 13)**	Group (1 = Reach participants school, 0 = Control group participants) Baseline variety of delinquency score from the Self-report Delinquency Scale (SRDS) Sex (1 = Female, 0 = Male) Sex* group interaction	Mean school-level variety of delinquency score from the SRDS	

Additional analyses and robustness checks

As specified in the SAP, a follow-on sensitivity analysis was conducted exploring the impact at the pilot stage and the efficacy stage separately. Further exploratory analyses were conducted following on from findings from the subgroup analysis looking at impacts in Leicester City and Leicestershire Council, respectively.

Intra-cluster correlations

For the primary outcome measure and corresponding baseline measure (teacher-report SDQ externalising score), ICCs at the school level will be estimated using the 'estat icc' command in STATA. In the analysis section, a table is included that presents the variance decomposition for the two levels, school and pupil, along with the ICC estimates.

Estimation of effect sizes

The impact of the Reach Programme (compared with the control) on the teacher-report SDQ externalising scores was estimated using the coefficient for the group membership covariate included in the ITT. This coefficient was standardised into an effect size by dividing by the unconditional standard deviation from the null/empty model described in the equation (Figure 5) below.

Figure 5: Effect size

$$ES = \frac{(Reach-Control)_{adjusted}}{\sqrt{\delta^2_{School} + \delta^2_{YP}}}$$

Where:

- $(Reach - Control)_{adjusted}$ is the mean difference in the teacher-report SDQ externalising scores for the Reach intervention group and the control group, adjusted for other variables and clustering in the final impact model.
- $\delta^2_{\mathrm{School}}$ and δ^2_{YP} are both obtained from the null (empty) model. $\delta^2_{\mathrm{School}}$is the variance in the teacher-report SDQ externalising scores between schools and δ^2_{YP} is the residual variance in the teacher-report SDQ externalising scores found within schools and between YPs.
- $\delta^2_{School} + \delta^2_{CYP}$ is the total variance in the teacher-report SDQ externalising scores and $\sqrt{\delta^2_{School} + \delta^2_{CYP}}$ is the total standard deviation used to standardise the adjusted mean difference in the equation (Figure 5). Similarly, the upper and lower 95% confidence intervals for group membership will be divided by the $\sqrt{\delta^2_{School} + \delta^2_{CYP}}$ variable to provide 95% confidence interval estimates for the effect size.

Estimation of intra-cluster correlations

For the teacher-report SDQ externalising scores at both baseline and outcome, unconditional ICCs at the school level will be estimated using a null (empty) two-level multilevel variance components model. Additionally, for the primary outcome at follow up, a conditional ICC will be estimated using the partitioned variance that remains at the school and YP levels after the final impact model is fitted. Within the analyses, a table will present the variance decomposition for the two levels (school and YP), along with the ICC estimates calculated using the equation (Figure 6) obtained directly using the STATA 'estat icc' command.

Figure 6: Intra-cluster correlations calculation

$$\mathrm{ICC} = \frac{\mathrm{Variance}_{\mathrm{School}}}{\mathrm{Variance}_{\mathrm{School}} + \mathrm{Variance}_{\mathrm{YP}}}$$

Implementation and process evaluation

Research methods

Our multidisciplinary mixed-gender research team recognises and understands, through our teaching, research and practice experience across education, sociology, psychology and criminal justice and working with vulnerable and marginalised children, the intersecting needs of our participants, including poverty, educational exclusion, care status, racial discrimination and cultural identity. Our identity as a research team is shaped by our lives and career development as special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) teachers, youth justice practitioners, care leavers, researchers and educators. This knowledge and understanding informs our approach to our research – the design of our research instruments, skills in engaging and interviewing participants, analysis of data and presentation of our findings – ensuring cultural competency, minimisation of bias and recognition of structural inequality.

The evaluator gathered data for the IPE through fieldwork interviews and observations of delivery, surveys and secondary analysis of monitoring data. These methods and relevant participant categories are summarised in the list below. Table 11 sets out further details of the IPE methods, including participant numbers.

- Parents/carers (one-to-one telephone interviews)
- SLs (one-to-one telephone interviews)
- Delivery leads (DLs) (remote group interview via Microsoft Teams)
- YWs (face-to-face or telephone interviews)
- YPs (one-to-one and small group face-to-face interviews)
- Observations of delivery (carried out in person)
- Mentor-Youth Alliance Scale (MYAS) online survey (administered to YPs, exploring the relationship between the YP and their YW)[12]
- Email survey of SLs
- Secondary analysis of monitoring data, tracker data and suspension data provided by Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council.

Compliance and fidelity were explored using detailed information collected by the delivery team, alongside qualitative perspectives from participant interviews. Usual practice in schools was explored through an email survey sent to SLs, alongside qualitative data collected relating to this.

Data collection instruments were based on those employed in the previous feasibility study, which were developed to include further RQs arising from findings of that study. Three members of the evaluation team collected data with participants. A team of five evaluators analysed the qualitative data, with internal meetings convened to discuss the analysis.

Analysis

All qualitative data from the interviews was recorded and fully transcribed for analysis purposes. With the use of NVivo 12 software, data was analysed using thematic codebook analysis. This approach, which is

[12] This is considered part of the IPE given that it was administered to those recruited to Reach only (i.e. the intervention group).

similar to framework analysis (Gale et al., 2013), afforded the use of the RQs as a deductive analytic framework whilst also providing scope for some inductive analytic work using data coded to each RQ. The deductive approach ensures that the write-up answers the study questions, thus meeting the needs of the YEF evaluation whilst also allowing for issues specific to YPs, YWs, schools and stakeholders to come to the fore. Each interview was coded with the RQ framework operating as themes, and codes were developed within each question. Five lead researchers worked on the coding of the data for validation purposes. A descriptive summary of the findings is presented in a later section of this report, using quotes from participants to illustrate findings under each thematic area. The process for selecting quotations used in the report was iterative and informed by IPE analysis team meetings at different intervals. These meetings allowed team members responsible for analysing and writing up different RQs to share the key findings for their sections; avoid unnecessary duplication; achieve a set of quotations that were broadly balanced across pilot and efficacy phases, city and county regions and the range of stakeholders interviewed; and ensure that no one source was disproportionately represented. Researchers used their professional judgement concerning which specific quotations best illustrated the relevant theme. The narrative preceding the quotation(s) seeks to make clear whether they are representative of the consensus view, a contrasting perspective or a one-off stance.

TheMYAS[13] was distributed to YPs receiving Reach at the point of case closure on the Reach Programme, using Qualtrics software to measure the relationship between the YP and their YW. This data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software and was reported as part of the IPE, given that it only involved those recruited to Reach (i.e. the intervention group). The monitoring data collected by the Reach team was provided to the SHU evaluation team, along with Reach trackers data which detailed time spent per core component for each YP. This data was triangulated with the qualitative data where appropriate (for example, regarding fidelity, dosage and reach of the programme). Data on suspensions in the 16 schools in the study was also provided to SHU by the local authorities to allow for a comparison with the demographic profile of the YPs recruited to the programme in terms of ethnicity to further inform the extent to which the programme was reaching its intended recipients.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to sample the schools to be interviewed, with the lead contact for Reach in schools as the interviewee. This method was deemed most appropriate given the smaller sample size and need for pragmatism. The average age of the YPs interviewed was 13, which reflects the average age of the YPs recruited to the Reach Programme. Of the YPs interviewed, 56% were male compared with 66% of those recruited to the trial; 69% of YPs interviewed were White British compared with 71% of those recruited to the trial, with the other YPs interviewed being Asian, Black and Mixed race. In terms of the parent/carer interviews, 63% of participants were White British, with other interviewees being Asian, Black and Mixed race. Two of the interviews with parents/carers were conducted with an interpreter because their first language was not English. Table 11 below sets out the numbers of participants involved in the qualitative fieldwork and in the monitoring data.

[13] The mentor–youth alliance: The role of mentoring relationships in promoting youth competence - ScienceDirect

Table 11: Implementation and process evaluation methods overview

Research question	Implementation/Theory of Change (ToC)/logic model (LM) relevance	Participants/data sources (pilot stage)	Participants/data sources (efficacy stage)
1. Community-level factors: What is the level of need and readiness for change in the context where the intervention will take place?	Assess improvements in school attendance, reduction in family conflicts and increases in the aspirations of a young person (YP) to understand any reductions in community support resources needed and increases in what resource/benefit the YP can bring to the community. "Improved attendance at school – ToC". "Improved relationships with family and reduction in conflict in the home – ToC". "Increased aspirations – ToC". "[YPs] aged 11–16 years old are at risk of or have received a fixed-term suspension and have three indicators of vulnerability – LM".	Delivery lead (DL) group interview (three participants)	DL group interview (three participants)
2. Organisational factors: What are the key issues facing the schools/communities around suspensions/disadvantage/crime?	Explore and understand the causes/drivers for problem behaviours (e.g. individual, familial, school, peer and contextual factors). "Improved understanding of the causes/drivers for problem behaviours – ToC". "Schools with the highest rates of fixed-term suspensions agree to participate – LM".	DL group interview (three participants) School lead (SL) interviews (four participants)	DL group interview (three participants) SL interviews (four participants)
3. Organisational capacity: What is the readiness and capacity for change in the settings in which the intervention will take place? Are the culture, coordination, communication and leadership sufficient to enable implementation? How do schools/DLs perceive the sustainability of the intervention looking ahead?	Assess the extent to which staff make appropriate referrals and provide additional support to YP when at school. "Reduction in suspensions or problem behaviours – ToC". "Improved attendance at school - ToC". "Schools with the highest rates of fixed-term suspensions agree to participate – LM"	SL interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants)	SL interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants)

4. Recruitment and retention of youth workers (YWs): Has the programme been able to recruit and retain suitable YWs with relevant experience? Is there diversity among the YW team?	Assess whether the programme is reaching the target criteria regarding experience/skills and diversity to support YW/YP relationship-building and skills development of YPs. "Development of positive and trusting relationship with YW – ToC". "Retain YWs throughout pilot period – LM".	DL group interview (three participants) YW interviews (four participants)	DL group interview (three participants) YW interviews (10 participants)
5. Matching process and relationship building phase: Have the YPs been allocated to a suitable YW? Is the relationship-building phase successful?	Assess the allocation and matching process, which assesses needs and mentor skill/experience to enable YW/YP relationship-building. "Development of positive and trusting relationship with YW – ToC/LM". "YWs and [YPs] meet two to three times a week during the relationship-building stage – LM".	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (nine participants) DL group interview (three participants) Mentor-Youth Alliance Scale (MYAS) (completed by YPs on the Reach Programme)	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) DL group interview (three participants) MYAS (completed by YPs on the Reach Programme)
6. Referral process, eligibility criteria and reach of the programme: Is the level of referrals as anticipated? Are the eligibility criteria successful in accessing the intended population? What are the criteria that would make a YP potentially ineligible for the programme? Reach: What is the rate of participation by intended recipients? Are there any disparities in terms of **consent** to the evaluation with regard to reaching families/YPs from minority ethnic backgrounds? Are there any disparities in terms of **participation** in the evaluation with regard to reaching families/YPs from minority ethnic backgrounds?	Refinement and standardisation of eligibility criteria to ensure appropriate inclusion of YPs. "75% (n = 90) of [YPs] referred are recruited onto programme – LM".	SL interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data Secondary data collected from local authorities (suspension rates by pupil characteristics)	SL interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data Secondary data collected from local authorities (suspension rates by pupil characteristics)

7. Implementation support system: What strategies and practices are used to support high-quality implementation? What training and ongoing support or technical assistance is available?	Hiring staff and training YWs to ensure that they're highly skilled and culturally competent. -LM "Assessment of relationship outcomes between YP and YWs – LM". "Development of positive and trusting relationship with YW – LM".	SL interviews (four participants) YW interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants)	SL interviews (four participants) YW interviews (10 participants) DL group interview (three participants)
8. Fidelity/adherence: To what extent do implementers adhere to the intended delivery model?	To gain an overview of fidelity to the programme across the eight YWs. "Prompt response (within 24hrs) from YWs after critical moments to arrange assessment – LM". "Comprehensive and contextual assessment of YP to match YP to YW – LM". "YWs and YPs to meet two to three times a week during the relationship-building stage – LM". Extensive relationship-building phase (four to six weeks) to include recreational activities – LM". "Facilitating access and encouraging participation in purposeful and sustainable activity – LM".	YW interviews (four participants), Interviews with YPs (nine participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data	YW interviews (10 participants), Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data
9. Dosage: How much of the intended intervention has been delivered?	Assess ongoing delivery and make estimates of future expected delivery. "75% (n = 67) of YPs are recruited onto the programme – LM". "75% of YPs complete the programme – LM". "YPs complete 80% of core component sessions – LM".	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data
10. Quality: How well are the different components of the intervention being delivered?	Assess the experiences of delivery and participation for each element of the intervention to refine processes and improve likely outcomes. "YPs complete 80% of core component sessions – LM". "75% (n = 67) complete the programme – LM".	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants) Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (15 participants)	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants) Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (10 participants)
11. Responsiveness: To what extent do the participants and their parents/carers engage with the intervention?	Assessment of engagement with intervention, mentor and peers. "High rates of attendance and participation in sessions – LM". "Increased and sustained engagement in prosocial recreational activities – LM". "Increased network of positive peers and trusted adults – LM".	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) SL interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants)	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) SL interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants)

Are families from Black, Asian and other minority backgrounds more hesitant in terms of developing a trusting relationship with their child's YW?		Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (15 participants)	Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (10 participants)
12. Peer relationships: Has peer engagement work been undertaken as expected? Have YPs received and engaged with appropriate activities to develop social awareness and skills?	"Increased network of positive peers and trusted adults – LM". "Improved social skills – LM". "Improved understanding of negative peer influences – LM".	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) DL group interview (three participants) Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (15 participants)	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants DL group interview (three participants) Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (10 participants)
13. Intervention differentiation: To what extent are the intervention activities sufficiently different from existing practices? What business-as-usual (BAU) supports are the YPs allocated to the control group experiencing?	To inform BAU and what YPs allocated to the control group are experiencing.	SL interviews (four participants) Focus groups/interviews with YPs allocated to the control group across two schools (seven participants)	SL interviews (four participants) Focus groups/interviews with YPs allocated to the control group across 2 schools (six participants)
14. Resources: Feasibility and appropriateness of the resources required to deliver the intervention.	Clear and accessible intervention materials. Good understanding and use of learning outcomes for activities.	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants)	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants)
15. Barriers: Exploring the barriers to the implementation of the Reach Programme.	NA	YW interviews (four participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) SL interviews (four participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants)	YW interviews (10 participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) SL interviews (four participants) Observations of delivery ×2 DL group interview (three participants)
16. Impact evaluation processes and procedures (for details of the specific impact evaluation research	NA	SL interviews (four participants)	SL interviews (four participants)

questions, please see the impact evaluation section above): Is individual-level randomisation practicable and acceptable in this context? Are there any issues regarding spillover (e.g. resentful demoralisation, YPs allocated to a control group coming into contact with YWs)? Are consent procedures/baseline and outcome measurement procedures practicable and appropriate?		Focus groups/interviews with YPs allocated to the control group across two schools (seven participants) Interviews with YPs (nine participants) Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (15 participants) YW interviews (four participants) DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data	Focus groups/interviews with YPs allocated to the control group across 2 schools (six participants) Interviews/focus groups with YPs (seven participants) Remote/face-to-face interviews with parents/carers (10 participants) YW interviews (10 participants) DL group interview (three participants) Monitoring data

Note: ToC = theory of change; LM = logic model

Table 12: Timeline

Time period	Task	Who*
October to December 2022	Preparatory work with schools and the delivery team	e, d, s
	The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) received the final efficacy protocol/draft information sheets/consent forms/privacy notice/memorandum of understanding (MoU)	e
	The YEF received the final information sheets/consent forms/privacy notice/MoU	e
	The YEF received SHU's ethics approval	e
January 2023	Schools returned the signed MoU	e, d, s
	Schools sent out information sheets and consent forms to families (up to December 23)	e, d, s
	Schools received opt-in consent from families and share with Reach/SHU (up to December 23)	e, d, s
	Schools started the referral process (up to December 23)	e, d, s
	Baseline data was collected from school staff and young people (YPs) (up to December 23)	e, s
	Randomisation (up to December 23)	e, d, s
	Reach team received intervention cases and delivered the Reach Programme on a rolling basis (up to December 23)	d
	Implementation and process evaluation (IPE) tools were designed	e
	Cost data was collected and analysed (throughout the fieldwork period)	e, d, s
February 2023 to May 2023	Made contact with schools to arrange school lead interviews	e
	Made contact with schools to arrange interviews with YPs	e, s
	Initial transfer of monitoring data	e, d
June 2023 to August 2023	Final referrals received prior to summer break (by June 23)	d, s
	Collection of outcome measures upon completion of the programme/six-month period for the control group (up to December 23)	e, s
	Interviews with YPs receiving Reach	e, d
	Interviews with YWs	e, d
	Interviews with parents/carers of the YPs receiving Reach	e, d
September 2023 to December 2023	YPs completed the programme, and the final set of outcome data was collected	d, s
	Focus groups/interviews with the YPs allocated to control	e, s
	Delivery lead interview	e, d
	Preparatory work with schools and the delivery team and confirmation of the final schools for the efficacy stage	e, d, s
	The YEF received the final efficacy protocol/draft information sheets/consent forms/privacy notice/MoU	e
	The YEF received the final information sheets/consent forms/privacy notice/MoU	e
	The YEF received the SHU ethics approval for the efficacy stage	e
January 2024	Schools returned the signed MoU for the efficacy stage	e, d, s
	Schools sent out information sheets and consent forms to families (up to December 24)	e, d, s
	Schools received opt-in consent from families and shared with Reach/SHU (up to December 24)	e, d, s
	Schools started the referral process (up to December 24)	e, d, s
	Baseline data was collected from school staff and YPs (up to December 24)	e, s
	Randomisation (up to December 24)	e, d, s
	The Reach team received intervention cases and delivered the Reach Programme on a rolling basis (up to July 25, with final new referrals received by December 24)	d
	IPE tools were designed based on findings from the pilot study	e
	Cost data was collected and analysed (throughout the fieldwork period)	e, d, s

February 2024 to May 2024	The YEF received the statistical analysis plan	e
	Interviews with key school contacts	e, s
	Initial transfer of the monitoring data	e, d
June 2024 to August 2024	Final referrals received prior to summer break (by June 24)	d, s
	Collection of outcome measures upon completion of programme/six-month period for the control group (ongoing up to July 25)	e, s
	Interviews with YPs receiving Reach	e, d
	Interviews with YWs	e, d
	Parent/carer interviews of YPs receiving Reach	e, d
September 2024 to December 2024	Continued to receive new referrals at the start of the school year	d, s
January 2025 to July 2025	Focus groups/interviews with the YPs allocated to control	e, s
	School survey collected information on control group activity and the use of the financial resources allocated to schools	e, s
	Interviews with YPs receiving Reach (later stage)	e, s
	Interviews with YWs (later stage)	e, d
	Interviews with parents/carers of YPs receiving Reach (later stage)	e, d
	All YPs complete the Reach Programme, and the final set of outcome data was collected (by July 25)	e, s
	Transfer of final monitoring data	e, d
	Group interview with the delivery team	e, d
August 2025 to November 2025	Statistical analysis of baseline and outcome data	e
	Qualitative/quantitative analysis of the IPE data/school/costing data/school data/monitoring data	e
	Report write-up	e
December 2025 to July 2026	The YEF received the draft evaluation report	e
	Revisions were made to the report following the feedback and peer review process	e
	Data archived	e
	Evaluator completed support for the YEF publication process	e

Note: e= evaluator, d = delivery lead, s = schools

Impact evaluation results

Participant flow, including losses and exclusions (internal pilot and efficacy data combined)

Figure 7: Participant flow diagram

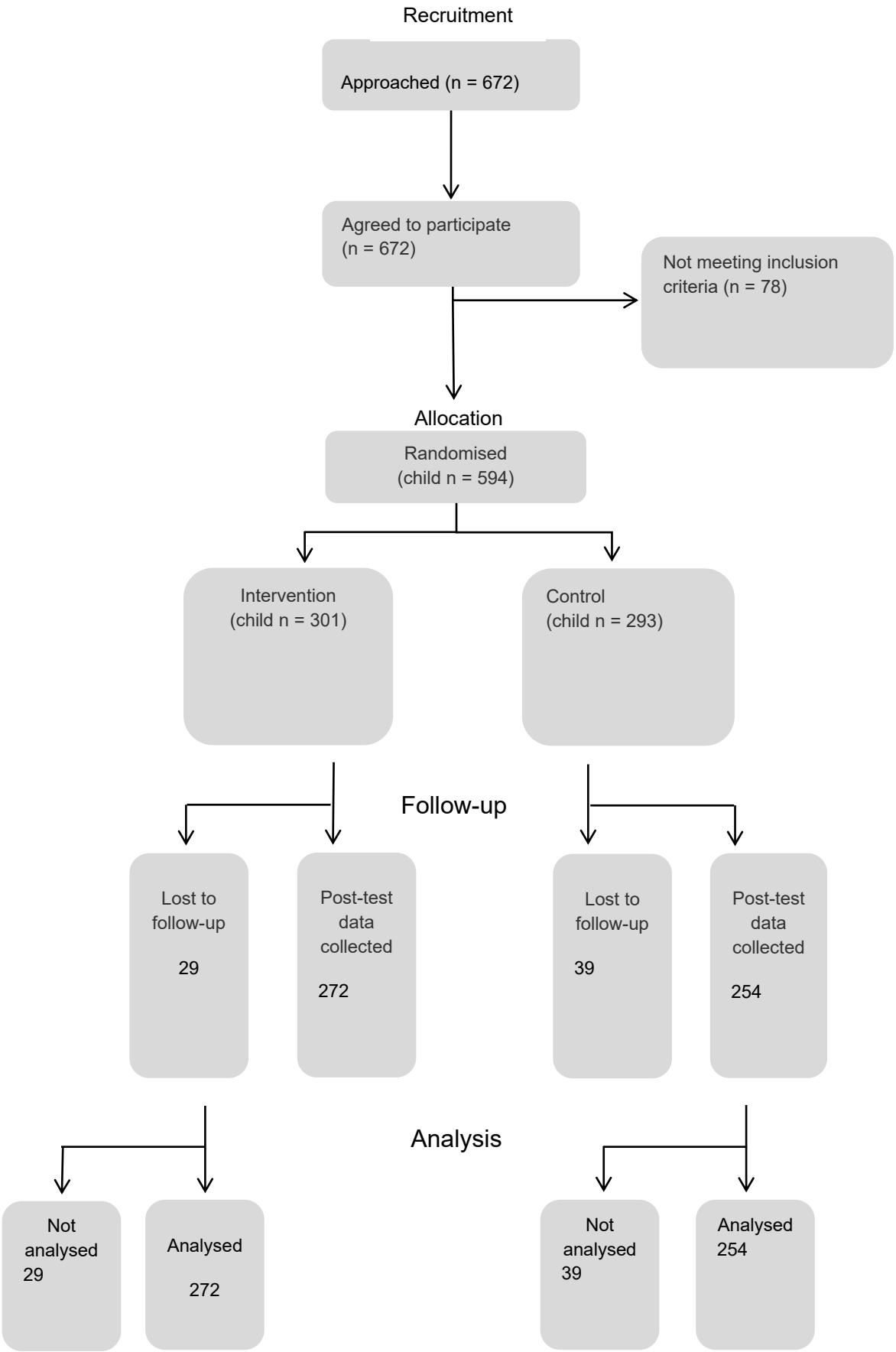


Table 13: Demographic characteristics

	Referred	Recruited	Randomised	T0 data	Final sample
Ethnicity					
Asian or Asian British	69	56	56	55	52
Treatment			27	26	26
Control			29	29	26
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	23	21	21	21	19
Treatment			11	11	9
Control			10	10	10
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	51	42	42	42	38
Treatment			25	25	23
Control			17	17	15
Gypsy/Traveller	14	12	12	12	11
Treatment			6	6	6
Control			6	6	5
White	466	419	419	410	363
Treatment			207	203	184
Control			212	207	179
Other ethnic groups	44	40	40	40	39
Treatment			23	23	22
Control			17	17	17
Male	438	394	394	389	347
Treatment			200	196	177
Control			194	193	170
Female	233	199	199	195	179
Treatment			101	100	95
Control			98	95	84

Note: T0 = baseline

Attrition

Out of the 594 YPs randomised, a total of 526 useable responses were returned for the primary outcome, giving an overall attrition rate of 11%. Attrition is slightly higher in the control group, at 13% compared with 10% for the intervention group. Reasons for attrition included the YP having moved schools, or, in some cases, the YP being home-schooled. In other cases, the YP had been permanently excluded from school. As

such, teachers felt unable to complete the teacher SDQ follow-up due to not having seen the YP for a long period of time. There are no significant differences in terms of attrition based on the ethnicity of the YP.

Table 14: Pupil-level attrition from the trial (primary outcome)

		Intervention	Control	Total
Number of participants	Randomised	301	293	594
	Analysed	272	254	526
Participant attrition (from randomisation to analysis)	Number	29	39	68
	Percentage	10%	13%	11%

Participant characteristics

As discussed in the background section of the introduction, schools were identified for the Reach Programme due to their higher number of suspensions compared with the local population of schools and due to being located in areas with higher rates of serious violence and deprivation. These schools were selected, as they were deemed more likely to have sufficient numbers of YPs who met the eligibility criteria for Reach. Comparing the sample of the schools recruited to the trial to the population of schools across Leicester City and Leicestershire County revealed an average Attainment 8 score of 44.3% for the 16 schools[14] recruited to the trial, compared to a regional average of 45.5% for Leicester City and 46.2% for Leicestershire County. With regard to school absence, an average of 26.4% of pupils were persistently absent within the 16 schools recruited to the trial, compared with regional averages of 24.1% for Leicester City and 23.6% for Leicestershire County.[15]

Table 15 below presents the baseline characteristics of the YPs randomised to the trial. In terms of the baseline measure for the primary outcome (teacher SDQ externalising score), the mean score was identical for the intervention and control groups (13.0), indicating a good balance in terms of this variable. A good balance was also achieved in terms of area; within Leicester City, 51.0% were randomised to the intervention group, compared with 50.2% in Leicestershire County. With regard to the sex of the YPs, an even balance was achieved with equal proportions of females and males allocated to the intervention group (50.8%). A good balance was also achieved in terms of ethnicity (caution should be taken here when interpreting the categories with lower numbers); in the largest two ethnic groups, White and Asian, 50.6% and 51.8%, respectively, were allocated to the intervention group. Further, in terms of FSM, 51.8% of those eligible for FSM were allocated to the intervention group compared with 50.2% of those not eligible for FSM.

[14] This is given as a total across the city and county due to the lower number of schools in the county.

[15] https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/

Table 15: Baseline characteristics of groups as randomised

Setting-level (categorical)	Intervention group		Control group		
	n/N (missing)	Count (%)	n/N (missing)	Count (%)	
Leicester City	173/339	173 (51.0%)	166/339	166 (49.0%)	
Leicestershire County	128/255	128 (50.2%)	127/255	127 (49.8%)	
Participant-level (categorical)	**n/N (missing)**	**Count (%)**	**n/N (missing)**	**Count (%)**	
Female	101/199	101 (50.8%)	98/199	98 (49.2%)	
Male	200/394	200 (50.8%)	194/394	194 (49.2%)	
Asian	29/56	29 (51.8%)	27/56	27 (48.2%)	
Black	10/21	10 (47.6%)	11/21	11 (52.4%)	
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	17/42	17 (40.5%)	25/42	25 (59.5%)	
Other ethnic groups	17/40	17 (42.5%)	23/40	23 (57.5%)	
White	212/419	212 (50.6%)	207/419	207 (49.4%)	
Eligible for free school meals (FSM)	183/353	183 (51.8%)	170/353	170 (48.2%)	
Not eligible for FSM	107/213	107 (50.2%)	106/213	106 (49.8%)	
Participant-level (continuous)	**n/N (missing)**	**Mean (SD)**	**n/N (missing)**	**Mean (SD)**	**Effect size**
Baseline teacher-report SDQ externalising score	296/584 (10)	13.0 (3.7)	288/584 (10)	13.0 (3.6)	−0.01

Note: SDQ = Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Outcomes and analysis

Primary analysis

Table 16 shows the results for the headline ITT analysis of the primary outcome: the teacher SDQ externalising score. The measure is scored from 0 to 20, and the lower scores represent fewer behavioural problems; thus, a negative effect size indicates a positive impact. The effect size for the primary outcome was −0.07 (CI low: −0.22; CI high: 0.07), indicating a small positive impact on reducing YPs' behavioural difficulties subsequent to receiving the Reach Programme. There is statistical uncertainty around this finding, which is illustrated by the 95% confidence intervals, which span from −0.22 through zero (no difference) up to +0.07; therefore, we are not able to conclude that the small positive impact observed was statistically significant.

It should be taken into consideration here that between baseline and follow-up, a notable improvement in behavioural problems was seen for both the intervention and control groups; a full discussion of control group activity is provided in the IPE. This is further illustrated in Appendix A, Table 2, which shows effect sizes between the baseline and follow-up time points separately for the control and intervention groups, indicating that whilst YPs experiencing the Reach Programme did make improvements in terms of behavioural problems, the control group also made improvements. Whilst improvement over time was steeper for the intervention group compared with the control group, this did not result in a statistically significant difference at outcome.

Table 16: Primary analysis

	Unadjusted means				Effect size		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedgesg (95% CI)	p-value
Teacher Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire externalising score	272 (29)	10.9 (10.4; 11.5)	254 (39)	11.3 (10.8; 11.8)	526	−0.07 (−0.22; 0.07)	0.33

Note: CI = confidence interval

Secondary analysis

Table 17 below presents findings from the headline ITT analysis of the secondary outcomes comprising further subscales of the teacher SDQ, subscales from the YP SDQ and SRDS, and administrative data on attendance, suspensions and offending. With the exception of the prosocial subscale, for all SDQ and SRDS measures, a negative effect size indicates a positive outcome. An effect size of −0.05 (CI low: −0.18; CI high: 0.09) was observed for the teacher-report SDQ internalising score, indicating a small positive impact of the Reach Programme in terms of emotional and peer problems; however, this does not reach statistical significance (p = 0.52). The effect size observed for the teacher-report prosocial subscale is slightly larger than the externalising and internalising subscales, with an effect size of 0.12 (CI low: −0.02; CI high: 0.26), indicating a moderate positive impact in terms of prosocial behaviour for those allocated to the Reach Programme. This does not reach statistical significance (p = 0.10). Again, as for the primary outcome, the confidence intervals span zero; therefore, we are not able to conclude that the positive impacts observed were statistically significant.

In terms of the YP SDQ measures, more caution should be taken with these findings, given the higher levels of attrition, particularly for control group respondents. Overall, the findings from the YP SDQ subscales indicate a larger impact than those from the teacher-report SDQ subscales for the Reach Programme. The effect size for the YP SDQ externalising score was found to be −0.17 (CI low: −0.34; CI high: 0.00), close to statistical significance (p = 0.05). A similar effect size of −0.15 (CI low: −0.32; CI high: 0.02) was found for the YP internalising score, not reaching statistical significance (p = 0.09), whilst the effect size for the YP prosocial score was similar to that of the teacher-report SDQ prosocial score at 0.13 (CI low: −0.07; CI high: 0.33), and

not statistically significant (p = 0.20). Given that the confidence intervals include or span zero for these measures, we are not able to conclude that the positive impacts observed were statistically significant.

With regard to the SRDS measures, it should be noted firstly that the mean scores were generally low on the scale, indicating a low level of involvement in offending behaviours among the cohort at both baseline and outcome. This is further reflected in the administrative offending data, where 84.0% of those analysed had not committed any offences at baseline. In terms of the variety of delinquency score, an effect size of −0.15 (CI low: −0.34; CI high: 0.05) was observed, indicating a moderate impact on the intervention group in terms of less involvement in offending behaviours, which does not reach statistical significance (p = 0.14). The effect size observed for the volume of delinquency score was small, at −0.02 (CI low: −0.22; CI high: 0.18) and not statistically significant (p = 0.85). Turning to the administrative data on offending, an effect size of −0.02 (CI low: −-0.10; CI high: 0.05) was observed for the number of offences committed, which was not statistically significant (p = 0.56). A similar effect size of −0.04 (CI low: −0.18; CI high: 0.10) was observed for the number of times a YP had been a suspect of an offence, which again was not statistically significant (p = 0.54). For all these observations, the confidence intervals spanned zero; therefore, we are not able to conclude that the positive impacts observed were statistically significant.

In terms of attendance, an effect size of 0.10 (CI low: −0.03; CI high: 0.22) was observed, which was not statistically significant (p = 0.132). It should be noted here that both intervention and control groups experienced a slight drop in attendance between baseline and outcome data collection; however, at the point of baseline data collection, attendance was slightly lower for those in the intervention group compared with the control group; thus, the intervention group experienced less of a reduction in attendance compared with the control group. Caution should be taken with this outcome. Given that this was based on data collected from schools directly, this finding would benefit from further research based on attendance data from the NPD. A small effect size of 0.02 (CI low: −0.04; CI high: 0.08) was observed for the number of suspensions, which was not statistically significant (p = 0.51). Again, given that the confidence intervals span zero for these measures, we are not able to conclude that the positive impacts observed were statistically significant.

With regard to both the teacher-report and YP SDQ subscales and the variety of delinquency scores, although the effect sizes were observed to be small/moderate and did not reach statistical significance, they are consistent in terms of direction, and, thus, taken together indicate that the Reach Programme is associated with positive impacts for YPs. It should also be noted that across the board for these measures, improvements were seen in terms of the mean scores for both the intervention and control groups (Appendix A, Table 2). As noted above, the IPE provides a full discussion of the support that the control group experienced and discusses evidence of spillover effects.

Table 17: Secondary analysis

	Unadjusted means				Effect size		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
Teacher-report SDQ internalising score	272 (29)	6.18 (5.70; 6.66)	254 (29)	6.57 (6.07; 7.07)	526 (272; 254)	−0.05 (−0.18; 0.09)	0.52
Teacher-report SDQ prosocial score	272 (29)	4.08 (3.78; 4.37)	254 (29)	3.89 (3.58; 4.19)	526 (272; 254)	0.12 (−0.02; 0.26)	0.10
YP SDQ externalising score	222 (79)	11.41 (10.89; 11.92)	119 (174)	11.73 (11.03; 12.43)	341 (222; 174)	−0.17 (−0.34; 0.00)	0.05
YP SDQ internalising score	220 (81)	6.10 (5.63; 6.57)	119 (174)	6.71 (6.04; 7.37)	339 (220; 119)	−0.15 (−0.32; 0.02)	0.09
YP SDQ prosocial score	220 (81)	6.45 (6.18; 6.72)	119 (174)	6.18 (5.82; 6.55)	339 (220; 119)	0.13 (−0.07; 0.33)	0.20
YP SRDS variety of delinquency score	222 (79)	3.42 (3.07; 3.76)	119 (174)	3.73 (3.18; 4.28)	339 (220; 119)	−0.15 (−0.34; 0.05)	0.14
YP SRDS volume of delinquency score	222 (79)	11.25 (9.54; 12.96)	119 (174)	10.65 (7.74; 13.55)	339 (220; 119)	−0.02 (−0.22; 0.18)	0.85
Number of offences	297 (4)	0.30 (0.21; 0.38)	285 (8)	0.41 (0.29; 0.53)	582 (297; 285)	−0.02 (−0.10; 0.05)	0.56
Number of times suspected of an offence	297 (4)	1.20 (0.96; 1.43)	285 (8)	1.42 (1.14; 1.71)	582 (297; 285)	−0.04 (−0.18; 0.10)	0.54
Attendance at school	253 (48)	75.24 (72.47; 78.01)	241 (52)	75.64 (72.63; 78.66)	494 (253; 241)	0.10 (−0.03; 0.22)	0.13
Number of suspensions	294 (7)	4.93 (4.23; 5.64)	287 (6)	4.34 (3.75; 4.94)	581 (294; 287)	0.02 (−0.04; 0.08)	0.51

Note: CI = confidence interval; SDQ = Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; YP = young person; SRDS = Self-Report Delinquency Scale

Analysis in the presence of non-compliance

Compliance with the Reach Programme was measured using a combination of fidelity (whether a YP received all core components of Reach) and dosage (number of sessions a YP had with their YW). Compliance was met when a YP received the six core components and had at least 32 sessions with their YW.

Of the 301 YPs randomised to the Reach group, 232 (77%) received all six core components. The mean number of sessions YPs had with their YWs was 33.8 (95% CI low: 32.0; CI high: 35.5). In total, 192 YPs in the Reach group (64%) had at least 32 sessions with their YWs. Overall compliance was estimated at 56.8% (171 of the 301 YPs in the Reach group met the fidelity and dosage criteria). This increased to 57.7% when the sample was restricted to the 272 YPs in the Reach group with complete baseline and outcome teacher-report SDQ externalising scores.

The CACE analysis was obtained using the STATA 'ivregress' command, with adjustment for standard errors to acknowledge clustering at the school level. Table 18 presents the effect size estimates from the CACE analyses.

Table 18: Compliance average causal effect (CACE) analysis

	Samples: Young people (missing)
Reach	272 (29)
Control	254 (39)
	594 (68)
	Effect size estimates (95% CIs)
Intention to treat analysis	−0.07 (−0.22; 0.07)
CACE IV (ivregress)	−0.14 (−0.49; 0.22)
F-test for exogeneity	F(1,15) = 0.18; p = 0.68

Within the complete case ITT sample, compliance was estimated at 58%, and the Pearson correlation between group membership and compliance was 0.63. The CACE estimate obtained from the STATA 'ivregress' command was −0.14 (CI low: −0.49; CI high: 0.22), which compares with the ITT estimate of −0.07 (CI low: −0.22; CI high: 0.07). The F-test for the first stage of the instrumental variable model was small and not statistically significant: F(1,15) = 0.18, p = 0.68.

Whilst the ITT and CACE estimates were all negative, indicating reduced teacher-reported behavioural problems among YPs, with high compliance marginally increasing the positive impact, neither estimate reached statistical significance. Therefore, the most appropriate conclusion is that we did not observe sufficiently strong evidence that the Reach Programme had an impact on the primary outcome. For further discussion of compliance, please see the IPE section on fidelity and dosage.

Missing data analysis

The Reach evaluation had an overall attrition rate of 11.4% (9.6% in the Reach group and 13.3% in the control group). As specified in the SAP, patterns of missingness were examined across the covariates included in the ITT analysis[16] and seven additional auxiliary covariates.[17] Multilevel logistic regression was then applied,

[16] Teacher SDQ externalising score at baseline and group membership

[17] Evaluation phase, area (county or city), YP ethnicity, YP gender, YP SEND, YP FSM, YP year group

which modelled the probability of missingness across the nine covariates to identify any that accounted for a statistically significant amount of variation in the missing outcome data.

Reasons for missingness

Reasons for attrition included the YP having moved schools, or, in some cases, the YP being home-schooled. In other cases, the YP had been permanently excluded from school. As such, teachers felt unable to complete the teacher-report SDQ follow-up due to having not seen the YP for a long period of time. Further to this, on occasions when teachers had moved on from the school, an alternative member of staff with close knowledge of the YP completed the follow-up where possible.

Missing data analysis

Table 19 presents the bivariate patterns of missingness in the ITT analysis across the nine specified variables.

Table 19: Bivariate patterns of missingness

	Reach	Control	All
Scale covariates: Teacher-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) externalising score at baseline:			
Cases with missing teacher-report SDQ externalising score at follow up			
Mean (95% CIs)	14.4 (13.0; 15.8)	14.6 (13.4; 15.7)	14.5 (13.6; 15.4)
N	24	34	58
Cases with teacher SDQ externalising score at follow up			
Mean (95% CIs)	12.9 (12.4; 13.3)	12.8 (12.4; 13.3)	12.8 (12.5; 13.1)
N	272	254	526
Categorical covariates: n missing/N; %			
Group membership	29/301; 9.6%	39/293; 13.3%	68/594; 11.4%
Evaluation phase			
Pilot	14/110; 12.7%	21/107; 19.6%	35/217; 16.1%
Efficacy	15/191; 7.9%	18/186; 9.7%	33/377; 8.8%
Area			
City	15/173; 8.7%	13/166; 7.8%	28/339; 8.3%
County	14/128; 10.9%	26/127; 20.5%	40/255; 15.7%
Ethnicity			
White	23/207; 11.1%	33/212; 15.6%	56/419; 13.4%
BAME	*	*	12/171; 7.0%
Year group			
Year 7	10/61; 16.4%	12/58; 20.7%	22/119; 18.5%
Year 8	*	*	14/139; 10.1%
Year 9	*	*	11/139; 7.9%
Year 10	10/80; 12.5%	10/84; 11.9%	20/164; 12.2%
Year 11	*	*	*
FSM status			
Not FSM/unknown	19/118; 16.1%	13/123; 10.6%	32/241; 13.3%
FSM	10/183; 5.5%	26/170; 15.3%	26/353; 10.2%
SEND			
Not SEND/unknown	19/199; 9.5%	29/204; 14.2%	48/403; 11.9%
SEND	10/102; 9.8%	10/89; 11.2%	20/191; 10.5%
Gender			
Female	6/101; 5.9%	14/98; 14.3%	20/199; 10.1%
Male	23/200; 11.5%	25/194; 12.9%	48/394; 12.2%

*Cell count less than 10

Note: BAME = black, asian and minority ethnic; FSM = free school meals; SEND = special educational needs and disablities

The logistic regression model identified two covariates that were independently associated with missingness:

- **Teacher-report SDQ externalising score at baseline.** Higher attrition was associated with higher teacher-report SDQ externalising scores at baseline.
- **Area.** Attrition was higher in the county (15.7%) than the city (8.3%).

As specified in the SAP, the STATA 'MI Impute' command was used to impute missing values for teacher-report SDQ externalising scores at follow up (primary outcome) and baseline. A burn-in of 20 was used, and then 100 datasets were imputed. The STATA 'MI Estimate: Mixed' command was then used to obtain an estimate of the impact of Reach for the imputed data. The results of this are shown in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Complete case intention to treat and imputed impact estimates (teacher-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire externalising score at outcome)

	Unadjusted means				Effect size		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
Original intention to treat	272 (29)	10.9 (10.4; 11.5)	254 (39)	11.3 (10.8, 11.8)	526 (272, 254)	−0.07 (−0.22; 0.07)	0.331
Estimate with imputed data	301 (0)	11.0 (10.5; 11.5)	293 (0)	11.4 (10.9, 12.0)	594 (301, 293)	−0.17 (−0.45; 0.11)	0.242

Note: CI = confidence interval

The estimate from the imputed data (-0.17, CI low: −0.45; CI high: 0.11) was larger than the ITT estimate (−0.07, CI low: −0.22; CI high: 0.07) but neither estimate reached statistical significance. We therefore maintain the conclusion that the evaluation did not provide sufficiently strong evidence that the Reach Programme had an impact on teacher-reported SDQ behavioural difficulties.

Subgroup analyses

As specified in the SAP, exploratory analyses of subgroups examined any evidence of differential impact on the primary outcome relating to the ethnicity, sex and age of the YPs. The three RQs were set out as follows:

- **RQ13:** Are any differences in the primary outcome (teacher-report SDQ externalising score) observed with regard to the **ethnicity** of the YPs?
- **RQ14:** Are any differences in the primary outcome (teacher-report SDQ externalising score) observed with regard to the **sex** of the YPs?
- **RQ15:** Are any differences in the primary outcome (teacher-report SDQ externalising score) observed with regard to the **age** of the YPs?

For sex and age of the YPs, the regression model for the primary outcome was re-run, including a main effect term (i.e. sex and age) and an interaction between this and group membership. With regard to the sex of the YPs, the interaction term was not found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.643$); therefore, we can conclude that there is no evidence that the Reach Programme had a differential impact in terms of the sex of the YPs. In terms of the ages of the YPs, data on actual age at the time of receiving the intervention/BAU (i.e. 11 to 16 years) was used and specified as a continuous variable in the interaction term. The interaction

term was not found to be statistically significant (p = 0.476) with regard to the age of the YPs. We can therefore conclude that there is no evidence of differences in terms of the ages of the YPs on the primary outcome.

With regard to the ethnicity of the YPs, subgroup analyses were considered bearing in mind the numbers of YPs within each ethnicity category (Table 21).

Table 21: Subgroup analysis; ethnicity of young people

Ethnicity of young people*	n	%
Asian	52	10.0
Black	19	3.6
Gypsy/Traveller	11	2.1
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	38	7.3
Other ethnic groups	39	7.5
White	363	69.5
Total	**522**	**100.0**

*Missing data n = 4

Based on the numbers presented in Table 21, it was decided to undertake a separate impact analysis for the White subgroup and the Asian subgroup, given that these were the only two subgroups with n > 50. These findings should be treated with some caution, given the smaller number of Asian YPs. Whilst not reaching statistical significance (p = 0.24), the effect size for Asian YPs was found to be −0.28 (CI low: −0.74; CI high: 0.18), which differs notably from that for White YPs, which was −0.04 (CI low: −0.21; CI high: 0.14) and not statistically significant (p = 0.68). As noted, a degree of caution should be taken when interpreting these findings, given the lower numbers in the Asian category; however, there is some indication that the Reach Programme was more effective for Asian YPs than for White YPs in terms of teacher-reported behavioural difficulties. It should be noted here that 96% of Asian YPs within the sample were located in the city area. It was therefore considered important to conduct additional analyses with regard to area (i.e. city/county). This is explored in the additional analysis section.

Table 22: Primary outcome by ethnicity of the young people (Asian and White subgroups only)

	Unadjusted means				Effect size		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome/group	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
Asian	26 (1)	8.15 (6.36; 9.95)	26 (3)	9.19 (7.60; 10.87)	52 (26;26)	−0.28 (−0.74; 0.18)	0.24
White	184 (23)	11.44 (10.78; 12.10)	179 (33)	11.84 (11.22; 12.47)	363 (184; 179)	−0.04 (−0.21; 0.14)	0.68

Note: CI = confidence interval

Additional analyses

As specified in the SAP, additional analyses were undertaken to present the effect sizes for the pilot phase and efficacy phase separately. This was considered important because of the different time periods of data collection and the addition of other schools brought in for the efficacy phase. Undertaking this analysis revealed a notably larger effect size for the pilot phase than for the efficacy phase. At the pilot phase, the effect size was found to be −0.24 (CI low: −0.52; CI high: 0.03), not reaching statistical significance (p = 0.08), whilst for the efficacy phase, the effect size was notably lower, at −0.01 (CI low: −0.21; CI high: 0.19) and not statistically significant (p = 0.92) (Table 23). This reveals a noteworthy difference in impact between the two phases. Appendix A, Table 2 also illustrates this, where a larger effect size can be seen between baseline and follow-up at the pilot stage for the intervention group compared with the control group; however, at the efficacy stage, the effect sizes for the intervention and control groups were very similar. This shows that whilst the effect size for the control group remained similar between the pilot and efficacy phases, the effect size for the intervention group reduced somewhat. Possible reasons for this difference are explored in the IPE section. Based on this finding and given the more positive impact found in the pilot phase, a repeat efficacy trial would be beneficial in terms of future research.

Table 23: Primary outcome by phase (pilot/efficacy)

	Unadjusted means				Effect size		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome/group	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
Pilot	96 (14)	10.54 (9.74; 11.34)	86 (21)	11.58 (10.68; 12.48)	182 (96; 86)	−0.24 (−0.52; 0.03)	0.08
Efficacy	176 (15)	11.17 (10.46; 11.88)	168 (18)	11.14 (10.47; 11.80)	344 (176; 168)	−0.01 (−0.21; 0.19)	0.92

Note: CI = confidence interval

Following on from the subgroup analysis findings in relation to ethnicity, given that 96% of Asian YPs were located within the city area, it was deemed important to conduct analyses relating to the area where the YP was based (i.e. city/county). Table 24 below shows that with regard to the primary outcome for YPs in the city area, the effect size was −0.27 (CI low: −0.47; CI high: −0.07) and statistically significant (p < 0.05), which provides clear evidence that the Reach Programme led to a reduction in teacher-reported behavioural problems in the city area. In terms of the county area, the effect size was found to be positive at 0.21 (CI low: 0.00; CI high: 0.41) but did not reach statistical significance (p = 0.05). This positive effect size indicates that YPs receiving the Reach Programme in the county area experienced a lower reduction in behavioural problems compared to their counterparts in the control group. Appendix A, Table 2 further illustrates this; whilst YPs in the control group in the city area had a slightly larger negative effect size compared with YPs in the control group in the county area, YPs in the intervention group in the city area had a much larger negative effect size compared to YPs in the intervention group in the county area. Thus, whilst YPs in the control group experienced a similar level of reduction in behavioural problems across both the city and county areas, YPs receiving the Reach Programme in the city area experienced a notably larger reduction in behavioural problems compared to those receiving the Reach Programme in the county area. This may relate to the finding that the intervention appeared to have been more effective for Asian YPs who were predominantly city-based. Whilst this finding is important, it should be highlighted here that this only relates

to the primary outcome, and exploring this finding with regard to the secondary outcomes is outside the scope of this study. Further, it is important to state here that this difference was not stark in the qualitative findings, which showed a positive impact across both areas. This is fully explored in the IPE section.

Table 24: Primary outcome by area

	Unadjusted means				*Effect size*		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome/group	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
City	158 (15)	10.19 (9.50; 10.88)	153 (13)	11.35 (10.67; 12.03)	311 (158; 153)	−0.27 (−0.47; −0.07)	0.01
County	114 (14)	12.00 (11.16; 12.84)	101 (26)	11.19 (10.31; 12.06)	215 (114; 101)	0.21 (0.00; 0.41)	0.05

Note: CI = confidence interval

Following on again from the subgroup finding with regard to the Asian subgroup, it was also considered pertinent to investigate whether this finding was replicated within the administrative data, given the low level of missingness and objectivity of this data. Whilst there was a slight difference found in terms of attendance outcomes, this was relatively small and thus not presented below; however, in terms of suspensions, the difference was certainly noteworthy, with Asian YPs experiencing more positive outcomes compared with White YPs. The effect size observed for Asian YPs was −0.29 (CI low: −0.62; CI high: 0.04) (p = 0.09), compared with 0.03 (CI low: −0.04; CI high: 0.10) (p = 0.42) for White YPs. As with the finding in relation to the primary outcome, this finding did not reach statistical significance and should be treated with caution given the lower numbers of Asian YPs (Table 25). However, taking these findings together strengthens the indication overall with regard to more positive outcomes for Asian YPs.

Table 25: Suspensions by ethnicity

	Unadjusted means				*Effect size*		
	Intervention group		Control group				
Outcome/group	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	n (missing)	Mean (95% CI)	Total n (intervention; control)	Hedges g (95% CI)	p-value
Asian young people	27 (0)	1.78 (1.11; 2.45)	27 (2)	2.70 (1.81; 3.60)	54 (27; 27)	−0.29 (−0.62; 0.04)	0.09
White young people	200 (7)	5.49 (4.54; 6.44)	208 (4)	4.96 (4.17; 5.75)	408 (200; 208)	0.03 (−0.04 ;0.10)	0.42

Note: CI = confidence interval

Implementation and process evaluation results

Community-level and organisational factors

- *What is the level of need and readiness for change in the context where the intervention will take place?*
- *What are the key issues facing the schools/communities around suspensions/disadvantage/crime?*

Overall, the qualitative data suggested that average rates of pupil premium eligibility and community-level socio-economic deprivation in participating schools and their locations were higher than what is typical nationally, reflecting the intended sampling of schools with higher numbers of suspensions and in areas with higher rates of serious violence and deprivation (see participant selection section above). The following quotations were selected as snapshots of two SLs' perceptions of deprivation in their areas:

> *90% of our students are in the lowest percentile for deprivation in the country… We have over 50 first languages spoken at the school. So, we're very diverse, and we believe that our diversity is one of our real strengths, but we serve a really poor community, where they have real hardships in their lives. (Pilot, SL 1, city)*

> *The area we're in is *, which is quite a deprived area, and so a lot of our kids are vulnerable and deprived at home. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)*

The community-level factors that were identified as contextually significant to the schools participating in the Reach Programme evaluation included:

- **Anti-social behaviour,** including substance/alcohol misuse and increased vaping. Typically, these behaviours were linked to pupil suspensions, as this SL described:

  > *So, generally, most of the suspensions I do are… drug and alcohol related. Vaping is a real concern within a lot of the schools within our locality. Obviously, we always work with the police closely about any other local threats and what our students might be doing outside of school with other students. (Pilot, SL 4, city)*

- **Perceived limited employment prospects**, which were said to have translated into inter-generationally low aspiration and divergent opinions as to the worth of school

  > *The issues that are facing the school at the moment are mainly low aspiration. So, a lot of students that are simply going, 'Well I don't want to do that; I don't need school', and, sometimes, that is anecdotally influenced from the parents, that they say, 'I didn't do this, or I didn't like school', and there's been a bit of a cycle there sometimes. (Pilot, SL 3, county)*

- **High crime rates and safeguarding concerns**. SLs recurrently drew attention to their communities having to contend with increased knife crime and certain YPs being at heightened vulnerability to county lines exploitation. Such concerns were relevant to both city and county schools, as these selected quotes illustrate:

  > *So… across England,… knife crime has risen, so we know that we have students here that carry a knife or have carried a knife. (Efficacy, SL 7, city)*

  > *Our three local threats would be radicalisation, county lines and knife crime. So, that's within our local area, not necessarily within the school. (Pilot, SL 4, city)*

Focused safeguarding concerns, which sit… predominantly in this [area's] county lines. (Efficacy, SL 6, county)

Connected to these community-level factors, SLs also outlined several specific school-related issues that their schools were facing. These included:

- High pupil mobility. Senior leaders in a number of schools cited high turnover of pupils as an additional challenge to be navigated in terms of continuity and stability for the YPs' lives both within and outside of school.
- Greater socio-emotional and mental health issues among YPs. These manifested as heightened school avoidance and behavioural challenges ranging from greater low-level disruption through to more extreme behaviours.
- Increased rates of suspensions and permanent exclusions. To put these into context, the narrative from most SLs was that they did not apply such measures lightly. Many of them explained that historically, their schools were firmly below the national average levels of suspensions and exclusions, but such was the increased severity of behaviours and incidents that it was deemed necessary to take proportionate action. This SL quotation concisely captures the challenges:

  We're a school that doesn't believe in suspending students. We try and exhaust all other options before we get to a point of suspension, and [we] give students as many fresh starts as we possibly can, but some of the extreme behaviours that we have seen this year have resulted in an increase in our figures. (Pilot, SL 1, city)

Some SLs identified the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic as an exacerbating factor, for example, in this county school:

We have been a school which hadn't permanently excluded… prior to 2022, not permanently excluded for a long time, but then the exclusions increased massively. We had a big increase in suspensions post-COVID, permanent exclusions. Last academic year was six permanent exclusions, which were all from the same year group as well, which was quite a young year group… They were the younger students, which were Y8 [Year 8] at the time. (Pilot, SL 3, county)

It was against this backdrop of community-level and school-level issues that SLs were drawn towards the Reach Programme intervention, as exemplified in the next subsection.

Organisational capacity

- *What is the readiness and capacity for change in the settings in which the intervention will take place?*
- *Are the culture, coordination, communication and leadership sufficient to enable implementation?*
- *How do schools/DLs perceive the sustainability of the intervention looking ahead?*

In the pilot phase, schools had some existing provision for pupils who would be in the target group. This provision included curriculum support, pastoral care, mental health support and an alternative provision that was sometimes brought in from an external provider. One SL described a violence prevention programme due to start in the academic year after the Reach Programme. In the efficacy phase, the SLs interviewed described a similar range of existing provision, including in-house mentoring, for example through a learning and behaviour mentor; counselling services, both internal and commissioned; mental health support; and community-based programmes brought into schools. There was also discussion of

reduced timetables, meetings with parents, alternative provision, involvement of the inclusion team and education welfare officers, and managed moves to different schools.

Referring to the need for the Reach Programme, senior leads explained why they believed the programme was beneficial for their school. Key points commonly cited include the specialist nature of the intervention, the intensity of the mentoring, the involvement of parents/carers and the need in school for extra support for pupils' mental health. The following quotations help illustrate these points:

> *It's the bridge between parents and us… an indication of what is going on in that household. What is that young person's lived experience away from home?… We need something specialist like the Reach Programme because there is no other, in my opinion, no intervention or programme out there can replicate that work in terms of that very intense mentoring, the kind of work with parents too also holding us to account, which we are very welcoming to. (Efficacy, SL 5, city)*

> *Schools are really struggling with mental health, and the CAMHS* [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] *waiting list is huge. It's just that extra bit of support that we're getting is absolutely brilliant, and we really do appreciate it. (Pilot, SL 2, city)*

Further, some SLs linked the appeal of Reach to the need in schools to tackle the increasing challenges of behaviour management and rising numbers of suspensions and permanent exclusions.

The senior leadership staff across schools appeared to be broadly on board with the Reach Programme in the pilot phase and were interested to see the impacts of the programme. Implementation in schools, from the perspective of school staff, was mostly related to the referral process. Although one SL described referrals as "*an additional time burden*", school staff "*absolutely saw the value of investing that time*". Staff time was therefore said to be front-loaded, with much to do at the start of the programme before they felt able to take a step back once referrals started to go through, as this SL explained:

> *The way that it's set out for me from the Reach guys, once I put that referral in, they just contact the kids and the parents, and there's no need for me anymore. We've got a brilliant relationship with our Reach workers [when] they're in school. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)*

For some staff, the process of undertaking the referral had afforded more detailed knowledge and understanding of their YPs, which they felt improved their relationships.

There was a mixed picture of logistics and communication with schools from the point of view of the YWs who said that some schools communicated well and always had a room available, whereas others were less accommodating or communicative. An example given was that some schools did not always alert the YWs to major events, such as the YP being suspended. This led, on occasion, to the YW arriving at school for an appointment, only to be told that the YP had been sent home.

At the efficacy stage, Reach DLs had concerns about poor communication in around one-third of the schools they were working with, attributed to staffing changes which entailed a degree of communication breakdown or to the Reach offer not being filtered down to the correct staff in schools. These communication difficulties had led to inappropriate or delayed referrals at these schools, which may have been a factor in why less positive outcomes were observed in the impact evaluation at the efficacy stage. DLs also perceived that a small number of schools may not have been fully committed to the programme or may not have allowed Reach to be effective; connectedly, there was a perception that in certain instances,

a pupil's referral to the Reach Programme had not come soon enough, meaning that the SL's negative views of a student were so firmly entrenched that there was limited scope for reconciliation.

SLs generally perceived the programme to be sustainable in terms of school capacity. As reported above, most SLs interviewed felt that the organisational burden of the programme on the school and the modest time commitments required from school staff were manageable.

Looking ahead to the YPs' transitions at programme end, exit plans were said to be developed by the YWs to identify a trusted adult in a YP's life, work with the school to bring in that trusted adult and convene a handover-style meeting. Nevertheless, the loss of the YP's YW was a key concern for the parents/carers and YPs who were interviewed, as identified in the Barriers section of this report.

Sustainability is also potentially affected by YW continuity on the programme, linked to issues of programme funding and YW contracts being fixed term. These points are addressed in the next subsection on recruitment and retention.

Recruitment and retention of youth workers

- *Has the programme been able to recruit and retain suitable YWs with relevant experience?*
- *Is there diversity among the YW team?*

The DLs successfully recruited both female and male YWs to the team, although there was a larger proportion of female YWs. The mixture was appreciated by the schools and YPs involved, as in the case of these two (female) YPs who preferred to have a female YW:

> *It wasn't like something that was 'Oh, it's so good; I got it' because I had already had mentors before. I've had like two or three before. And when I realised, like, it was a girl, it was better; I was like, 'Oh my god, it's a girl; it's really good'. (Efficacy, YP 14 [female], city)*

> *I can speak to males, but I just feel like women would understand me more because they used to be my age. Yeah. (Efficacy, YP 16, [female] county)*

In terms of ethnicity, there seemed to be more diversity across city YWs compared to county, which broadly reflected the demographic profiles of the areas:

> *The demographics of the areas that we work in are predominantly White British, and [the] makeup of our staff team in the country is that we've got two White British females, one White British male and then one Black African male, so the diversity of the people that we work with isn't as broad as the city (Pilot, DL, county)*

Collectively, the pool of YWs had a wide range of highly relevant previous professional work and/or volunteering experiences, providing a wealth of transferable skills and competencies. Examples included:

- YW roles across a diverse range of previous settings, including the "The King's Trust"
- Nursing
- Alternative education provision
- Mainstream teaching (primary/secondary)
- Youth offending–related work
- Summer camp worker
- Youth-based volunteering through the church

- Volunteering for a charity associated with domestic abuse

In addition to the professional/volunteering track records of the appointed YWs, their lived experiences were seen as valuable complements which made them potentially more relatable to the YPs. A powerful example is provided below:

> *When I was younger, about 14, 15, I was a part of that [criminality]. I've dealt with it, and I understand the young people, and I, kind of, understand where they're coming from. I think it's just one of those where you can't really teach somebody because I think if you get somebody coming in, not saying, 'I know how you feel'. I never do that at the start, but if you know where they're coming from and [know] there is that, because if it worked for me and I could get through those hard times, they can too. I think that's a massive part of it. (Pilot, YW 4, city)*

Being able to draw on a set of YWs with diversity in work and life experience, as well as gender, ethnicity and religious background, afforded the DLs flexibility in pairing each YP with the most suitable YW. The matching process is explored in the next section.

Connected to the strong selection process, there was already a high level of preparedness among the appointed YWs to work with the target group of YPs. They brought insight and awareness – and often lived experience – of the kinds of challenges and circumstances the YPs faced, and so were well placed to support them. As one YW summed it up:

> *The young people, they're a big challenge, but we know what we're walking into. You know what you're getting. (Pilot, YW 2, county)*

Furthermore, the YWs made consistent references to the high level of support they experienced in their roles. They valued the formal induction processes and ongoing support offered by strategic leads but also the collegiality of their fellow YWs with whom informal sharing of practice was routine. These positive experiences of support contributed to a generally high rate of retention of YWs in post. Nevertheless, the precarity of the YWs' fixed-term contracts and anxieties about job security are relevant to retention. There had been initial uncertainty as to whether the YEF would approve the transition from the pilot to the efficacy phase. Then, looking beyond the end of efficacy, YWs' jobs were not assured. This YW explained how at the pilot phase, the uncertainty created persistent financial anxiety, but that they and their teammates remained committed to the programme:

> *Because it's a new programme, we're only funded up until, I'm not 100% sure, but I think it goes up to December, which is not a bad thing. The manager has been keeping us updated, almost weekly, but I think it affects people in general, just because… everyone is trying to rent, so having that little thing in the back of your mind thinking that you're not going to have it, and it does affect people, but we're all sticking through it. They sound quite positive about us going ahead. (Pilot, YW 4, city)*

Some DLs acknowledged these challenges, reporting that some staff had left their Reach roles for more secure jobs:

> *It's been really difficult… to keep that kind of morale up when you're on a fixed-term contract… We had more staff leave, in terms of move on and get permanent positions, either within the council or outside of the council. (Efficacy, DL)*

In at least one case, a YW cited their age as a factor in their decision to find a permanent post, suggesting that precarity poses a greater risk to workers in older age brackets:

> *Yeah, I'm * [an age approaching later stage of career], and I thought, 'I can't keep going for interviews. As a youth worker I'm going to have a sell-by date at some point'. (Efficacy, YW 7, county)*

Matching process and relationship-building phase

- *Have YPs been allocated to suitable YWs?*
- *Is the relationship-building phase successful?*

Responsibility for matching YWs to YPs fell to the city and county leads who took a largely pragmatic approach, balancing geographical catchment, the YP's preferences/needs and good fit. The interview data indicates that they succeeded in allocating appropriate YWs to the YPs.

As the basis for the matching system, each YW was attached to two secondary schools to maximise efficiency in travel time but also to develop more consistent and deeper relationships across different staff connected to schools. This approach was initially started in counties during the pilot but was soon replicated across cities. Each YW was also put in a male/female pairing to enable local cross-matching if a YP in a school needed a YW of a different/same gender. The DL described the flexibility of this system:

> *It's worked so well in the county as well, with having a main school per youth worker; we are going to move to that model, so I'm having each youth worker cover two schools so they get to know the staff a lot better. So, they will have a main school… So, I will still have that flexibility as well because I've paired all my youth workers as male/female, so if there was a case where specifically they request a male or a female youth worker, geographically, where the schools are all located, they are all paired off, so we sort of match them over. (Pilot, DL)*

The diversity in the YWs' experiences and personal characteristics gave the DLs scope in the matching process to consider a YP's potential fit with different YWs – geographical constraints permitting.

Matching gender was often more than a matter of expressed preference, requiring careful consideration of a YP's individual circumstances, as the DL explained:

> *If I've got a referral come through and it's a female, for example, a female student, it's been really helpful actually asking the school how do they engage with males? Do you think that they would actually prefer a female, or actually do you think that they would really benefit from having that sort of male role model in their life? And the [schools] have been able to say, 'Actually, due to some of the sensitive issues that are going on, a female would be better'. Then I've been able to, kind of, match that with the female youth worker based in the area, and vice versa. We've had incidents where, actually, we've said, 'They actually get on with males; can we have a male?' And then we've been able to give a male. So, it has been really useful. (Pilot, DL)*

The YWs themselves universally agreed that the matching process was effective and skilfully done by the leads:

> *I feel like I can adapt pretty well as well, so I think because of that, I feel like every young person that I've worked with, I've had a good relationship with, and I think I have been matched really*

well because our manager… [Reach lead] is very good at matching the young people with the youth workers. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)

In the vast majority of cases, parents/carers/guardians and YPs emphatically endorsed the matchings and talked about how compatible and well-suited the assigned YW was. This was attributed to factors including the YWs' lived experiences, being young and having similar cultural reference points (i.e. music/TV shows), whilst, contrastingly, others emphasised it was their differences that were valued most. The positive relationship was also commonly attributed to YWs' professional conduct, friendliness, positivity, integrity (trust) and versatility and to them being consistently emotionally available for YPs, as the quotes below illustrate:

I've got quite a lot of feedback from young people and parents, for our feedback, and a lot of them have said how much they value the non-judgemental listening youth worker that they have seen where they've made improvements (Pilot, DL)

I feel more understood because [youth worker] has been in my situation before. She has been the loud girl that gets picked on a lot, so she knows exactly how I'm feeling, and it's better to speak to her about it than my dad… to have someone to understand, [rather] than people who don't understand. So, it's way better just to express my feelings to her and not get yelled out for the things that I say. (Efficacy, YP 17, county)

We've got the same sense of humour. Mentally, like I said, I can be mad so easy, but I was mad once, and as soon as I've seen [youth worker], I think he said, ', how has your day gone today?' and that, and I was pretty much calm just from him… Yeah, he's got a vibe and warm presence to be around. So, it's like one of them where if you're upset and you're near him, he could calm you down straight away pretty much. (Efficacy, YP 18, city)*

As part of our job, you wear different hats. One day, you have to go full-on big sister mode. The second, you're a family support worker, social worker. Then, you're their mentor. Then, you're their anger management worker. We wear all different hats, and some of them don't even have relationships with their parents, so you play the mum and dad roles. You've got to do it all. (Pilot, YW 3, city)

Positive and trusting relationships with the YWs were not exclusive to the YPs. Several parents/carers emphasised how much their contact with the YW meant to them personally too:

I think we've got a good relationship. Like I said, I just class her as one of my friends. (Pilot, P/C (parent/carer) 1, city)

She's been a shoulder to cry on really… Sometimes I'll ring her and say, 'I'm just looking for a bit of advice. What would you advise?' So, she's been a diamond, a massive help, to be honest. (Pilot, P/C 2, city)

There was acknowledgement that good matching and relationship-building might not guarantee the readiness of the YP to engage fully in the programme, as this YW explained in relation to one case:

To me, it's not necessarily that we're not matched properly. It's more around he's not ready for the programme. So, in terms of being matched with the young people, it kind of worked out alright. (Pilot, YW 2, county)

From parents/carers' perspectives, there was one isolated case in which a parent felt that their child's YW was not ideally suited because the parent would have preferred greater alignment of cultural values. Nevertheless, the parent was complimentary about the YW's efforts and emphasised there was no judgement directed at them.

The relationship-building phase was frequently characterised as the cornerstone of Reach – an intense but essential feature of the intervention. Its importance was underlined by the increased frequency of YWs' sessions with YPs, running at least twice weekly during this period. In the context of YPs (and sometimes their families) being disengaged from school and/or distrustful of professionals, this phase was described as critical for the YWs to demonstrate their commitment and establish positive and trusting relationships with not just the YPs, but also their families and school staff. YWs and DLs alike shared their views that the effectiveness of the intervention hinges on the success of the relationship-building:

> *I don't think we would be as effective for youth workers if we didn't have that relationship-building phase because it really, really helps to put the young person in familiar environments… then let them know that, 'What you're telling me, it's a safe space for you to tell me that. How you are and how you behave, I will keep that for you'… I do not think that we would have been able to effectively work with young people after the relationship-building phase if that phase wasn't there. (Pilot, YW 2, county)*

> *So there have been a few where actually engagement has not been great for various reasons, and they haven't been able to make that connection with their youth worker, and I think that's what it ultimately comes down to is that relationship-building phase that will determine that and the parental onboarding as well, so, if you've got parents on board then there has been better engagement from the young person. (Pilot, DL)*

As well as greater frequency of sessions, choosing appropriate session locations and formats helped establish positive and trusting relationships. There was flexibility in where the sessions were held to suit the preferences of the YPs and others involved and according to the stage of the programme. For example, often the first session(s) were scheduled to take place in the family home. This was an opportunity to develop rapport not only with the YP in their familiar environment but also with their parents/guardians. In most instances, this provided the parents/guardians with sufficient reassurance about the fit of their child's YW and helped demystify what their brief was. This parent's words exemplify the sense of reassurance:

> *At first, I was a bit, 'Do I trust them?' because, obviously, it's new. I've never had anything like this. I was thinking, 'Are they social services? Are they really just checking up?' You just panic about things like that, and I had a chat. At first, I was a bit, not wary, but it's a stranger with your child, but now she's amazing. (Pilot, P/C 8, county)*

Thereafter, once trust was established, the YWs' communications with parents/carers tended to be remote (e.g. telephone calls or texts), whilst the face-to-face work concentrated on the YP themselves in settings where they could be potentially more open, such as at school or in neutral venues (e.g. youth clubs).

YWs having that early ringfenced time and space with YPs was crucial for establishing trust and actively listening to the YPs. There were several instances where the YP felt confident enough in this safe space to confide something that gave the YW the opportunity to take steps that led to demonstrable positive impacts on the YP. Being able to fulfil what was promised (e.g. an activity) and/or put in place a practical intervention for the YP at an early stage helped to validate trust in the YW, as this parent explains:

*Everything that we've been advised has happened. Everything she said could be put in place has been put in place. She has promised to take him to mini golf, and she's [taken] him to mini golf. Not only that, but she's taken one of *'s friends as well, so what's been offered is the word 'allocated', right? You know what I mean? Everything that's been offered, we've been given, if that makes sense… I've been offered things before from other charities or whatever they're all called and… [they didn't fulfil] their end of the bargain, if that makes sense, whereas everything * said has happened. (Efficacy, P/C 9, county)*

In the example below, it was during an early relationship-building session that it became apparent that the YP was fulfilling a previously unrecognised young carer role, and the YW was then able to implement suitable steps:

Yeah, well, that's where the building relationships bit is crucial because obviously, you just start off just getting to know them, allowing them the space to talk and to be themselves, and then the more that they get to know you, the more that they trust you. And she was very open about what her needs were, how she felt. She was struggling with a bit of poor mental health, a little bit. She had a bit of self-harm. A lot of it is self-esteem stuff, and she talked about some of the things that were happening at home, and she appreciated having somebody older to talk to that could relate to what goes on in a relationship is nothing to do with you, and then it identified how much she was doing at home, and she realised she was a young carer, but it kind of hadn't been picked up, and so getting her that referral to the young carers, which gave her [an] opportunity to join a group out of school and be around other young carers was really fundamental in helping her build herself, so I can't take all the credit. (Efficacy, YW 7, county)

The relationship-building phase represents a finite window for the YW to showcase what Reach has to offer and to connect with the YP. These sessions are, therefore, less structured and more open-ended than subsequent modules, with a clear focus on developing trust and rapport. As the following YW points out, if the YP does not trust or connect with them, then ultimately, they are likely to withdraw from the programme:

The relationship-building phase is the most important part of the programme. Like, you can't do any other work if that young person doesn't trust you. So even if – like in my case it wasn't, but if the engagement was an issue, there is a barrier straight away because that person is not going to see you and they're not going to trust you. There has been so many times that families have thought I'm a social worker or a police officer… So it's just like building that relationship through the family, and the young person [will] feel comfortable with you because without that, there is just no point in even doing the programme. (Efficacy, YW 9, city)

In their interviews, YPs commonly talked about the value of having a trusted adult with whom they could confide their feelings and experiences without feeling judged:

*It's reassured me that I've still got someone there for me… because without *, I did feel really alone. I had no one to talk to because I felt they were going to tell this and then everyone will know, but with *, she's so good about not telling anyone. She keeps it to herself unless it's causing my safety harm, which is fair enough. It's nice to have it there because I still like [that] I'm not on my own… it's like she's my best friend. (Pilot, YP 3, county)*

Things like, mainly, you won't get judged. A lot of the time, from your friends, you'll get judged. From your family, you could. School, you're going to get judged. She won't judge you. She cares what you say. (Pilot, YP 7, county)

Finally, the relationship-building phase was facilitated by the small amount of ring-fenced funds available to the YWs to put towards their YPs' favoured recreational activities (see the Resources section for further detail). Purposeful and/or fun activities were valued as a medium through which conversations with YPs could emerge, as they felt less self-conscious than in a more direct face-to-face format.

Turning to the survey data, this largely reflected findings from the qualitative data on the positive relationships between YPs and their YWs. Over the course of the pilot and efficacy stages, YPs were asked to complete the MYAS[18] survey comprising 10 statements (set out in Table 26 below) which explore the relationship between the YPs and their YWs. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statements on a 4-point scale: very false, false, true or very true. Table 26 summarises the results but sets out only the proportions for true and very true, given the low cell counts for false and very false. In total, 219 out of the 301 YPs (72.7%) responded to this survey. As can be seen from the table, the vast majority of YPs indicated true or very true for each statement, reflecting the positive and trusting relationships that most YPs had with their YWs. The most positive response was seen for the statement 'my youth worker is happy when good things happen to me', with 60.0% indicating very true. A similar proportion (57.9%) indicated very true for 'my youth worker cares about me'. A smaller proportion indicated very true for 'my relationship with my youth worker is important to me' and 'I try to follow my youth worker's advice' (35.6% and 24.7%, respectively).

Table 26: Mentor-Youth Alliance Scale survey

	True %	Very true %	Total n
My youth worker (YW) is happy when good things happen to me.	39.1%	60.0%	**215**
My YW cares about me.	40.7%	57.9%	**214**
I feel comfortable with my YW.	44.2%	54.4%	**215**
I trust my YW.	44.2%	53.5%	**215**
I enjoy talking with my YW.	48.1%	50.5%	**212**
I look forward to the time I spend with my YW.	50.2%	47.4%	**211**
I feel my YW cares about me, even when I do things s/he does not approve of.	53.7%	43.5%	**214**
I would feel sad if something bad happened to my YW.	55.1%	41.1%	**214**
My relationship with my YW is important to me.	59.7%	35.6%	**216**
I try to follow my YW's advice.	68.8%	24.7%	**215**

Referral levels, eligibility criteria and reach of the programme:

- *Are the levels of referrals as anticipated?*
- *Are the eligibility criteria successful in accessing the intended population?*
- *What are the criteria that would make a YP potentially ineligible for the programme?*
- *What is the rate of participation by intended recipients?*

[18] https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/measurement-guidance-toolkit/#mentoring-relationship-quality-and-characteristics--mentoryouth-alliance-scale-myas

- *Are there any disparities in terms of **consent** to the evaluation with regard to reaching families/YPs from minority ethnic backgrounds?*
- *Are there any disparities in terms of **participation** in the evaluation with regard to reaching families/YPs from minority ethnic backgrounds?*

Level of referrals and eligibility

Eligible participants were defined as children and young people aged 11 to 16 years old who are at risk of suspension or who are persistently absent from school and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as either a victim or perpetrator. The referral criteria also specified that each YP had three or more risk factors, as set out on the online referral form (Appendix D). Overall, levels of referrals were as anticipated for the Reach Programme; a total of 594 YPs were randomised out of a projected 600.

Moving from the pilot to the efficacy phase, DLs had concerns that some of the smaller schools might struggle to meet referral targets but were confident that the larger schools, particularly those in areas of relatively high deprivation, would find it fairly easy to get the referral numbers. Four new schools were onboarded at the efficacy stage to help ensure that targets were met.

In terms of ineligibility, a total of 78 referred YPs were ineligible (11.6% of referrals) overall. The proportion increased slightly between the pilot phase, when 10.3% of YPs referred were deemed ineligible, and the efficacy phase, when 12.3% were ineligible. Reasons for ineligibility included:

- YP did not meet the eligibility criteria.
- YP had moved to be home-educated.
- YP was already accessing alternative support which was meeting the same needs.
- Needs identified on the referral form were deemed more suitable to services other than Reach.
- In some referrals at the efficacy stage, the YP had previously been allocated to the control group in the pilot and thus was deemed ineligible in the efficacy phase.

From the perspective of the SLs, the referral criteria appeared to be working well. SLs described scrutinising data on behaviour points and suspensions to identify pupils to refer. One SL explained that a complex case panel was used to deliberate on the individual needs of each YP before deciding if Reach would be appropriate for them:

> *So, for some young people, we didn't believe that Reach would work for them, so we considered different approaches. Say, for example, going down the SEND route or the Mental Health Services team route, where we thought actually it's more mental health-based and they need support with that. (Efficacy, SL 5, city)*

As SLs reflected on referrals in the efficacy phase, a cautionary point emerged with regard to schools that had been involved with Reach for a longer period of time. It was suggested that the longer the school's prior involvement in Reach (i.e. for those involved since the pilot phase and for some also in the previous feasibility phase), the greater the reduction in the number of YPs in school who were clearly in need of the intervention. This potentially led to schools applying referral criteria less strictly, as described by the SL quoted below, which may explain the slight increase in ineligible referrals between the pilot and efficacy phases.

For us, it's getting a little bit more difficult in the fact that you can't refer kids who have already been through it, so I'm now scraping the barrel, if that makes sense. I'm scratching around to try and think, 'Right, which kids can I put on here? They don't necessarily meet that criteria, but I think it might be worthwhile'. Do you know what I mean?... So, we have had to manipulate the criteria a little bit, but it works. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)

These implications may inform the findings from the impact evaluation, which revealed more positive outcomes at the pilot stage than the efficacy stage in terms of teacher-reported externalising behaviour. As discussed above, one reason for this may be that some of the schools which had been in both the pilot and efficacy stages were finding it more difficult to meet the numbers required as time went on (also taking into account that schools had to fulfil numbers for both the intervention and control groups). In other words, the YPs who schools felt would have benefitted most from Reach had already been referred at the pilot stage. This was not the experience of all schools, however. At the efficacy stage, one SL described the referral criteria as ideal. The perspective of DLs was that the tightening and streamlining of the inclusion criteria in the pilot year meant that the correct cohort of YPs was more likely to be reached.

There were a few occasions, as noted by one SL, where the criteria used would not capture some YPs who needed support, for example, those who were close to suspension rather than suspended. This was also the case for YPs in the younger year groups, where teachers wanted to allow time for them to settle in, or those where there were known problems outside of school, such as police involvement, but where this had not yet appeared in school behaviour. Also, YPs who were deemed school refusers were not being picked up due to having not been in school long enough for suspensions to happen. It was said that these YPs could then fall off the radar. Lastly, there was a small number of YPs who would either not engage or not consent to the referral and therefore could not be included.

In terms of YPs with lower attendance at school, the monitoring data revealed a relationship between attendance at Reach sessions and attendance at school, with those receiving fewer than 32 Reach sessions having an average (mean) school attendance of 69.4% and those receiving 32 or more Reach sessions having an average attendance of 82.4%. Thus, in the case of those lower-attending YPs recruited to Reach, it appeared more challenging to access them during the programme than their higher-attending peers.

In the pilot phase, one YW talked about a small number of YPs who were deemed too far gone, those who had been involved in violent crime and could not be easily contacted directly or through a parent/carer, and so sessions could not be set up. The YW felt that this time and effort had therefore been wasted, as it could have gone to another YP. Conversely, in the efficacy phase, a YW had been allocated a YP whom they felt did not need the intense support offered by Reach. This resonates with the finding above that at the efficacy stage some SLs found it harder as time went on to refer YPs who they felt could really benefit from the programme.

Another category of YPs who were referred but not ultimately included were those with multiple supports already in place; therefore, there was concern about disrupting existing provision by offering the Reach Programme as an addition. Lastly, where pupils were newly transferred to a school, SLs talked about wanting to exhaust the school's existing provision before referring the pupil to Reach.

Demographics of participating young people

In total, 66.0% of the participants randomised were male and 34.0% of participants were female. This ratio in terms of gender reflects the national picture, with higher rates of suspensions of boys compared with

girls. The mean age of participants was 13 years old, which reflects the national peak suspension rate occurring in Year 9.[19]

In terms of ethnicity, the profiles of YPs randomised to the trial were compared against the profiles of YPs receiving suspensions in a sample of schools recruited to the trial. In the county areas, the number of randomised YPs from ethnic minority backgrounds was too small to make a meaningful comparison. However, Leicestershire County Council provided suspension figures for the six county schools in the 2024/25 academic year, showing that 94% of suspensions were given to White British YPs, compared with 92% of those recruited to the trial being White British. Meanwhile, 4% of suspensions in the sample of county schools were given to YPs from Mixed or Multiple ethnicity backgrounds, compared with 3% recruited to the trial.

In the Leicester City area, looking at the eight schools which made referrals prior to September 2024, the schools' administrative data on suspensions was taken from the academic year 2023/24 so that the time period matched as far as possible. Figures are based on the total number of suspensions, so a YP could have more than one suspension in the total count. Table 27 below shows that within each ethnicity category, the proportion of YPs receiving suspensions is similar to the proportion of YPs randomised to the trial in the eight city schools. In total, 54.3% of those randomised within this sample were White, compared with 56.5% of YPs across the eight schools, whilst 15.9% of YPs randomised within this sample were Asian, compared with 17.8% receiving suspensions within the schools. Further, 6.2% of YPs randomised were Black, compared with 8.2% receiving suspensions within the schools, and 10.3% were Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, compared with 13.2% receiving suspensions within the schools. Thus, recruitment to the Reach Programme was representative in terms of ethnicity with regard to the number of suspensions received within the school sample. This finding, when considered together with the finding from the impact evaluation that Asian YPs experienced more positive outcomes than White YPs, indicates that Reach was successful in terms of accessing YPs from ethnic minorities. For Asian YPs in particular, Reach was successful in both accessing this group of YPs and achieving positive outcomes.

Table 27: Young people randomised compared with numbers of suspensions in schools by ethnicity

	Young people randomised (within city and prior to September 24) n	%	Number of suspensions city schools (2023/24)	%
Asian	54	15.9	156	17.8
Black	21	6.2	72	8.2
Gypsy/Traveller	8	2.4	12	1.4
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic groups	35	10.3	116	13.2
Other ethnic groups	33	9.7	15	1.7
White	184	54.3	495	56.5
Unknown	4	1.2	10	1.1
Total	**335**		**876**	

[19] Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

In the qualitative data on reaching YPs from minority ethnic backgrounds, there was a lack of agreement among interviewees about perceived disparities in consent to the programme. One SL (city) felt that White British YPs were hardest to reach, whereas another said that YPs from minority ethnic backgrounds were more difficult to reach because establishing communication with their parents could be problematic:

> *We do find sometimes, we actually can't put the kids on the programme because we cannot at all get in touch with parents after multiple attempts, which is disappointing. (Pilot, SL 2, city)*

On this point, another SL drew attention to the barriers that could emerge when engaging with families of YPs with English as an additional language (EAL).

> *So, parental engagement can be quite challenging because parents often do a lot of shift work, and sometimes, their level of English understanding isn't as good as we'd hope, and we need translators. (Pilot, SL 4, city)*

One YW pointed out that different ethnic backgrounds led to different needs in YPs. In relation to this, at the efficacy stage, a parent of faith expressed concern about their child being on the Reach Programme. Their apprehension stemmed from the child being taken to recreational activities by the Reach worker, and the parent feared that the child may then want to do similar activities alone. The parent felt that the child's sex and religiosity meant that they should not be undertaking recreational activities without a parent present.

Nevertheless, separately to the question of which kinds of pupils could be harder to reach, it was interesting to note that even in very ethnically diverse schools, the SLs indicated that White British YPs were those most at need of the intervention. The following quote by a city SL is representative:

> *Groups-wise, like I mentioned, we are just below 50% EAL, and I have no issue behaviour-wise with hardly any of my EAL students, to be honest with you. It is our disadvantaged White British students that are the problem. They're the main crux of what I deal with on a daily basis. So, truancy is still our biggest issue; it really is, and I've got a hardcore group of girls, and when I say a hardcore group, I'm talking five? (Efficacy, SL 8, county)*

Implementation support system

- *What strategies and practices are used to support high-quality implementation?*
- *What training and ongoing support or technical assistance is available?*

A core approach to ensuring the high-quality implementation of the Reach Programme in line with expectations was the system of internal group meetings and supervisions that YWs and DLs held regularly. Two kinds of supervision were described. Case supervision provided opportunities for YWs to talk through their cases and feed advice forward into their future sessions with particular YPs. Personal supervision supported YWs with personal development to make sure their training needs were met and they had appropriate opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD).

> *Every time we have a personal supervision, or anything like that, we have case supervision and personal supervision. Case supervision covers our cases, basically, and we get support around things that we might be finding challenging as well. So, we will say to her what's working well, what's not working well, and then she'll support us around that if we need it. Then, personal supervision, we talk about training, upcoming training events, as well [as what] she thinks would be useful. (Pilot, YW 3, City)*

Most group supervision was weekly, with individual case supervision every four weeks and whole-team meetings every six weeks. This system provided YWs with one-to-one line manager support, along with peer support, where cases could be discussed and strategies and practices developed. Aside from scheduled supervision sessions, YWs could request ad hoc supervision to help them with issues on particular cases to maintain or enhance high-quality delivery.

The scope of the system of meetings went beyond case discussions and personal development. Every six to eight weeks, dedicated time was given to programme development to discuss school uptake and to ensure that the programme delivery was meeting the needs of the YPs.

The logistics of coordinating whole-team meetings for the Reach Programme YWs was not without its challenges, given the large size of the youth work team. A DL reflected that with caseloads increasing, it had become "*a little bit unmanageable for everyone to meet every week*", so meeting frequency was reduced but remained regular. Coordinating regular meetings may have posed a challenge if the team and the programme continued to expand, which may be a consideration for the future.

The YWs spoke highly of the DLs. The professional support and guidance provided by the DLs had positive impacts on the YWs' ability to deliver the programme effectively, and they felt supported with their personal needs at work. The YWs also praised the DLs for their leadership style and management skills, including their collaborative and democratic approach to problem-solving, feedback and change. The breadth of the praise is illustrated across these two quotations:

> *We all sing her praises. I've always been really fortunate to have good managers, and if I'm half of what she's like as a manager – she's great. She puts things in place for me. I can talk to her about things that are work-related and also personal things if I need some support. I'm dyslexic, so there are things in place for me that I need support with when it comes to things like recording and things like that. So, she's shown me ways around it. There are things in place. (Pilot, YW 3, city)*

> *[Delivery lead] is really good,[and] she doesn't mind change. So, let's say something's not working, it just gets changed so quickly, and everyone's word is being used. It's not just managers saying, 'This is not working'. It's spread throughout the team in the city. What does everyone want, not what does the company want? The youth workers are actually delivering this programme. So, I think that's really good because we can always provide feedback. (Pilot, YW 4, city)*

A tracker system was another means of ensuring high-quality implementation of the programme. (For more on the tracking system, see the section on fidelity/adherence.) Trackers allowed YWs and DLs to monitor the core component delivery to ensure that all YPs received all aspects of the programme; for example, as one YW described below:

> *We also have trackers that track each of our sessions, and on the tracker, it says what core component you [covered] in that session, so I can visually see what we've done. So, say if we've done loads but we've not covered, I don't know, social skills, for example – at the next session, I will bring a brief plan of social skills, and I will weave it into what we're talking about. (Efficacy, YW 9, city)*

Monitoring on the Reach Programme also involved internal data collection and analysis, for example, via feedback forms:

We have our own feedback forms for our own monitoring purposes as well, and it's just keeping on track of where everyone's at with all of those. (Pilot, DL)

These internal monitoring processes were standard practice for the Reach delivery team, independently of the requirements of the evaluation. The practices supported the DLs, in particular, to have oversight of YPs' progress and engagement with the programme, helping the leads identify and respond to issues and ensuring a continued focus on high-quality delivery.

A further leadership strategy for standardising the high-quality practice and delivery of the Reach Programme was the development of a policy framework within which the delivery teams work:

So, in January, we did the effective practice guidance that we've developed. So, we just developed a little policy for ourselves to work within, and we delivered that and the intervention. We have done quite a lot of intervention planning around those resources and stuff and how to actually formulate an intervention plan. (Pilot, DL)

School involvement and buy-in

It was clear from the interview data that school buy-in was crucial to the successful implementation of the programme. The delivery team worked closely with schools to ensure that they were fully on board, understood the purpose of Reach and had clarity of expectations and roles. SLs were largely pivotal in facilitating this process.

The account of one SL below provides an example of where the ingredients for successful school buy-in and ongoing involvement were put in place. The DL communicated key information about Reach effectively to the school, including face-to-face meetings with school staff. There was appropriate dissemination of information by the SL to other staff in school, including obtaining senior leadership approval. The school coordinated its pupil referrals and regularly communicated progress to the Reach delivery team, with the SL maintaining oversight of each referral.

Yeah, so I was contacted by, I think it was [delivery lead] and [SHU lead] at the start. They wanted to arrange a meeting. They said they've got the pilot project; I didn't know what it was about. [delivery lead] came in to school and discussed what the programme was. I then took that to the head teacher and said, 'This is something I think it would be great for the students here if they get this opportunity'. Took that to the head. The head agreed. And then it was shared with the pastoral team initially, so each year group has a head of year and pastoral mentor, and we spoke to those about it. [Delivery lead] then came in, and we arranged for [delivery lead] to come in to talk to them as well to explain what it's about and what the criteria were for accessing the programme, and then it was a case of me just making sure that we communicated with [delivery lead]: how many referrals have we had? How many more do we need to do? – and just making sure that when a referral is sent in, it was sent to me, so the pastoral team did it. I would then quickly just double-check it and make sure I thought it was a reasonable or a suitable application. (Pilot, SL 3, county)

SLs talked of having ample information and access to Reach leads (who were said to be supportive and responsive to queries), being able to make informed choices and understand the ask from schools:

I met with [Reach intervention lead] at the very beginning of the implementation, and so I think that I met with her twice before we signed up as a school. She went through the whole

programme, and there's nothing not to like on that programme. I would be very surprised if any school said they didn't want to be part of that. So yeah, it was very much that I felt supported. If I had any queries, I could email them immediately, and I know that they would respond. (Efficacy, SL 5, city)

The delivery teams sought to make the organisational and information-sharing processes as easy as possible for schools so that schools had minimal time costs but maximum reward. Perspectives from schools were largely that the work involved was not onerous, as one SL explained:

We had two workers, or three including [delivery lead]; that was quite an easy process to do. So, I think that we didn't have a massive part to play once we'd done our referral role. It was then just if you needed information from us, and what was beneficial was that the workers then were contacting us for information rather than the other way around, and they were like, 'Can you tell me about this?' And we were like, 'Yes, fine, this is what's happened', rather than us having to think, 'I've got somebody else to contact', they were reminding us and asking us for what information they [needed] to conduct their duties and their roles. (Pilot, SL 3, county)

Schools also played a role in mediating parental engagement in the Reach Programme. Often, parents have an established relationship with schools where there was a degree of trust, which, for an outside agency, is hard to establish straight away. For example, in some cases, senior staff had telephone conversations with parents/carers to provide information and reassurance and to pave the way to getting them on board with the programme:

Everyone else, the heads of year have done a lot of the phone calls, and we've explained it to them, and I think some of the parents who are a bit wary, once they meet the Reach worker, they've been really good. (Pilot, SL 4, city)

Training for delivery teams

Delivery teams had various training opportunities through the Reach Programme, some of it in-house and some of it provided externally. When a new member of staff joined the Reach team, they received the corporate induction training from the local authority, which is delivered to all new joiners as part of a standard package of induction.

Specific training sessions were developed in-house to upskill YWs in areas where they lacked experience or needed further support, for example, analysing assessments and writing in a more critical and reflective way. Such training goals were sometimes identified through internal auditing and quality-assurance processes, as explained by a DL during the pilot:

For example, this last quarter, October to December, whilst caseloads have been low, we have really been looking at wanting to see how we can improve the development programme even more and [looking] at some of the areas that [maybe need] developing. So, some of the things that me and [DL], after doing a lot of QA-ing and things around the assessment and stuff around the analysis and reflection writing and how they analyse the assessments and writing in a more sort of critical analysis way because that was an area of maybe improvement and an area that maybe youth workers weren't that experienced in. So, we've got like a training day… a workshop morning that we've put together around improving that. (Pilot, DL)

Beyond the standard inductions, the local authority also offered training relevant to the delivery of the Reach Programme, including trauma-informed practice, which was offered to all staff. Mandatory CPD included safeguarding and Prevent training, whilst other development opportunities, such as mental health first aid and neurodiversity training, were provided on a case-by-case basis.

> *There's the trauma-informed practice that all our staff have done, and then there's various ones that they can choose out of interest. I keep a log of all their training, and so we've done race and equality, the impact of parental imprisonment, Prevent training… We've got a Bystander one coming up as well, Young Carers [and] Obviously safeguarding. Mandatory is the core awareness of the safeguarding [of] children. We have had two youth workers trained as mental health first aiders [and] some neurodiversity training… There has been external training that the VRN have put on that we always get emails saying there is training events by certain external partners and spaces if your team want to go, so there has been all manner of training, and internally, we've done quite a lot as well. (Pilot, DL)*

YWs in their interviews reflected that there was a lot of training available and some of it was very useful, but there were also perceptions that some of the training was provided for the sake of it. Generally, though, YWs had positive responses to the training provided and the ways in which DLs supported their development needs, allowing them scope to make informed choices. Many of the YWs interviewed were especially enthusiastic about the opt in courses that supported their work with particular YPs.

> *I've done a lot of training. I'm also mental health first aid trained. That was something that… I booked onto, which was a two-day thing. There are a lot of training opportunities, and any time there are any that come up, she'll forward them to us straightaway. (Pilot, YW 3, city)*

Training for schools

Whilst schools did not get formal training in the way that the Reach YWs had training to support implementation, they did receive briefings from the delivery team to inform them about the programme. As reported above, SLs reflected positively on the onboarding process and information sharing, particularly from the DLs, and talked about being well supported throughout. This amounts to a type of informal training for schools to prepare them for their involvement in the Reach Programme.

Most SLs expressed very few training needs and generally felt confident about taking part in the programme. Beyond the end of the initial information sharing, SLs said they were able to reach out to the delivery team for further information or support at any time.

Fidelity/adherence and dosage

- *To what extent do implementers adhere to the intended delivery model?*
- *How much of the intended intervention has been delivered?*

The delivery model for Reach was intended to be flexible according to the needs of YPs. The number and frequency of sessions were tailored by the YWs to the individual YP's needs – for example, if an issue arose in the YP's life, then more time would be spent on support for that particular issue. Equally, if the YW felt that the YP did not need the prescribed number of sessions on a particular component, then the number/time of sessions was reduced accordingly. As described below, although there was an intended level of flexibility in terms of delivery, a set of six core components was expected to be covered, and YPs were expected to attend at least 32 sessions to be fully compliant with the intervention (compliance is

discussed in further detail below). The monitoring data included the total number of sessions offered to each YP and the total number of sessions that they attended. Overall attendance at Reach sessions was calculated by dividing the number of sessions attended by the number of sessions offered for each YP receiving the programme. Average attendance was found to be high, at 78.0%, indicating a good level of engagement overall from the YPs.

Detailed data on the YWs' activity with YPs was captured by the Reach delivery team during the trial and recorded in trackers files for each YP, as introduced in the section above on the implementation support system. This data detailed the core components received by each YP and how much time was spent on each of the core components. The DLs commented on how useful the tracker data was in terms of oversight during the course of delivery, providing a catalyst for discussion in supervision sessions with YWs and a detailed and reliable system of monitoring YPs' engagement and fidelity with the core components of the Reach Programme. Furthermore, the tracker system allowed for early detection of YPs who were becoming disengaged, absent or missing sessions on a more regular basis so that these issues could be addressed.

The six core components of the Reach Programme are:

- Relationship building
- Understanding behaviours
- Social skills training
- Confidence, wellbeing and resilience
- Positive relationships
- Aspirations

Whilst these core components formed the backbone of the programme delivery and the fidelity of the YWs' delivery of the core components was monitored by the DLs, in some cases, there was flexibility in what was covered, going beyond the core components in order to leverage teachable moments. For example, sexual health awareness and support fell outside the components, but this topic was still addressed by at least one YW to ensure that YPs were supported appropriately in teachable moments as they arose. Such instances were recorded as additional support in the trackers data, as described by the DL:

> *So, it's not necessarily something that's covered in those core components, but it can be worked into one of the core components, and they've just called it additional support. We've got one young person who is currently… stepped up to social care, and a lot of his needs are around neglect, so his youth worker offers a lot of additional support which isn't covered in those core components necessarily. (Pilot, DL)*

As can be seen from Table 28 below, on average, YWs spent the most time on the relationship-building phase, as set out in the LM, with each YW spending an average of 312 minutes on this component for each YP. YWs used an average of 200 minutes on understanding behaviours. Similar amounts of time were given to social skills training; confidence, wellbeing and resilience; and positive relationships, an average of 150 minutes spent on each of these components. Overall, there was slightly less time spent on aspirations with an average of 118 minutes. The wide variation in how much time was given to each core component can be seen below from the high standard deviations, demonstrating the variability for each YP (Table 28).

Table 28: Average time per core component

Component	Average time spent in minutes mean (standard deviation)
Relationship-building	312 (183)
Understanding behaviours	200 (132)
Social skills training	152 (140)
Confidence, wellbeing and resilience	153 (140)
Positive relationships	150 (118)
Aspirations	118 (105)

Turning to the qualitative data, the key message from the DLs was that the Reach Programme's flexibility, and being YP-led in the way it was delivered by YWs, are crucial for YPs'engagement with the programme and the relationship-building between YPs and YWs:

> *Because if we were sticking to that programme so rigidly, we wouldn't have the engagement because sometimes that child doesn't want to talk about his anger and, actually, there is something way more pressing and way more concerning around vulnerability and what's going on at home. And I know that, obviously, there [have] been cases where, like, staff have rung up and said, 'This YP has turned up with a black eye, and it's like that needs to be the focus; that needs to be like what's going on there, and the core components need to just be put to one side. We manage that and support that and then pick it back up, so there needs to be that level of, like, flexibility, which has really helped, I think, with the young people and youth workers getting that really good relationship. (Pilot, DL)*

The interviews revealed that YWs took into account the individualised needs of the YPs, and they treated the programme's core components as a flexible framework in which to work, allowing responsiveness to teachable moments as they arose. The notion of a teachable moment is one that guides fidelity and how closely YWs stick to the delivery model. By its very nature, youth work is individualised, flexible and adaptive in order to meet the needs of YPs; for youth work to be authentic and impactful, it should be dynamic in its delivery.

One YW talked in their interview about how youth work, and by extension the Reach Programme, is not school and how YWs are not teachers. The YPs talked extensively about issues they face at school, the rigidity and rules of school, and the authoritarian and rule-bound approach that teachers take. So, it is important for YWs to work in a different way that is more dynamic and flexible for engaging YPs in these teachable moments. Conversely, an obligation to stick rigidly to planned provision during teachable moments would be a barrier to learning from these moments.

Interviews with YPs included their reflections on the flexible, YP-led approach to delivery. They talked about how the YWs consulted with YPs as to what they wished to do and how they wished to use the sessions whilst also tackling issues and delivering the core content in line with the broader Reach framework:

> *We just go by the days, see what we want to do. She asks me if I want to do anything. I just ask for stuff. We ask to do cooking, we do cooking. We're going to make a lasagne. (Pilot, YP 1, city)*

> *We made this little chart board. I had my education, my behaviour and my life at home, and I think that little chart board generally helped me understand why I felt like certain things. If I*

felt sad, it would be stemming from this or this, and she generally helped me understand what I was feeling and why I was feeling it because I was really confused about everything, and she just helped me understand a lot. (Pilot, YP 3, county)

Mode of delivery

Flexibility is also key in the mode of delivery. Much of the Reach Programme's core content is conducive to discussion-based activity delivered in ways that are more engaging for YPs than purely paper-based exercises. For example, one YW talked about using TikTok videos as a catalyst for discussion. YWs were also flexible in their use of more interactive modes, including games, practical tasks and hands-on creative activities, to help YPs engage in the core content (the resources section provides more information). The DLs emphasised that the intended content still got across to the YPs but in ways that were more accessible, enjoyable and YP-led. Often sessions were adapted at the last minute based on the needs of the YP when teachable moments arose.

I mean, the youth workers will tell you themselves that they won't sit and go through worksheets verbatim because it's not conducive to the learning standard of that young person, so they will adapt those sessions and those booklets that we have to best engage that young person. So it might be that they deliver a session just doing Kerplunk or using Play-Doh rather than actually worksheet-based to still get the same message across. So, a lot of it is talking. A lot of it is just them sharing, and then at times, the youth worker may have planned sessions, but depending on what's going on in that young person's life, that may not go ahead. (Pilot, DL)

Innovation in delivery was also noted by the evaluator in their observations of YW sessions. The YWs' skills in finding innovative or creative techniques were apparent in how they engaged YPs in difficult topics of conversation, for example, when they were asked to reflect on their own behaviours or feelings. In the extract below, the YW designed and implemented a task where the YP threw a ping-pong ball into various cups, and once successful in landing the ping-pong ball, a question scenario is presented.

[Young person] gets a ping-pong ball in a cup – it says, 'When does my hand shake' – [young person] talks about how he can get anxious in crowds, and [youth worker] talks about what helps when he gets anxious – music helps, and this is why they have music on in the sessions. (Pilot, YP 8 [Observation], city)

Some YPs may not always have been aware that sessions with their YWs were guided by the Reach Programme's core components. For example, YWs reported that some YPs did not like the core components and, instead, expressed their preference for more general guidance and advice from their YW:

Like one young person, the boy that I was talking about whose dad is a police officer, he was telling me – so I asked him, 'What do you find beneficial in our sessions?' and he was like, 'The most beneficial thing that I find is the advice that you give'. Like, he doesn't really like talking about, 'Why did you do this at school?' or things like that, but he appreciates the life advice that I give. Just general advice of how can you have better relationships with your peers or your parents or things like that. He really appreciates that advice. So yeah, sometimes the content is obviously important. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)

In these cases, the advice that was so highly valued by the YPs was still stemming from the YWs' use of the core components of Reach. Such was the responsiveness in the YWs' delivery that the YPs perceived the individual guidance to be separate from the programme's main structure.

Length and frequency of sessions

There was also a degree of flexibility in the length and frequency of sessions delivered, given the need to adapt to YPs' needs during sessions. The aim was for sessions to be 45 to 60 minutes long and to occur once or twice a week, but the DLs noted that this was not always possible or suitable for all YPs:

> *So, there are some young people where doing a 45-minute session just isn't feasible, so it's broken down into shorter 10-minute chunks or a lot more of the hands-on learning, and they all adapt. (Pilot, DL)*

YW interviews also revealed that session length was variable. Sometimes it ran longer than an hour if the YP started to open up about certain things, for example, their struggles and frustrations. YWs highlighted here that if a teachable moment occurred, then this might demand more of the YW's time to address some of these issues, and this was a trade-off with times when the YP might have less availability. The following account by a YW gives an example of fluid timing in service of a teachable moment (and relevant core component) for the YP:

> *I can think of an example of a young person who, when we started talking, initially I thought it was going to be a shorter session, but then they opened up, and they were talking about, 'This makes me angry. This makes me upset. My mum does this, that and the other, then I struggle with that because then she's mardy, and she leaves me to natter on, frustrate me and then leaves me in a state of frustration', and then we went through the core component that is aimed at understanding. I think it's called the five Ws or something like that. What made me angry today? Then it's who made me angry, what made me angry, what happened, what did I do and she kept on talking and opening up very naturally, and the time went over, but we were focusing on the work. (Pilot, YW2, county)*

Overall, the programme was delivered with this flexible approach to session length and frequency; it sought to fulfil the required number of hours, but the session schedule was not rigid, much like other aspects of the programme.

Dosage

To inform the CACE analysis (see the impact evaluation section), a variable was created which denoted whether or not a YP had received all six core components. In total, 77% of YPs received all six core components. To be considered fully compliant with the Reach Programme as set out in the SAP, a YP needed to have covered all six core components and received a minimum of 32 sessions. Taken from the monitoring data, 64% of YPs received a minimum of 32 sessions with their YWs. Combining these two factors to create a compliant variable gives a total of 56% of YPs who were fully compliant with the intervention. Of those deemed not fully compliant, 10 YPs did not start the intervention, and 19 YPs withdrew early on in the intervention. It is worth noting here that the proportion of those who declined support or withdrew early increased slightly between the pilot and efficacy phases, from 5.5% in the pilot to 12.0% in the efficacy phase.

As part of the IPE, the relationship between the primary outcome and the elements of the CACE variables was explored whilst also looking at the 29 YPs who did not start or withdrew early. Table 29 below firstly presents the mean teacher SDQ externalising scores (baseline and follow-up) for those who withdrew/declined support compared with those who went on to receive the Reach Programme. Mean scores are then presented for those who did not receive all six core components compared with those who

did, and finally, mean scores are presented for those who received a minimum of 32 sessions compared with those who received fewer than 32 sessions. Whilst the baseline scores are relatively balanced for those who declined support/withdrew compared with those who completed Reach (regardless of compliance), the follow-up scores reveal a lower mean score (a lower score represents fewer behavioural difficulties) for those who completed Reach compared with those who declined support/withdrew (10.8 compared with 12.3). The mean score for those who did receive all six core components is lower than for those who did not (10.8 compared with 11.3). This should be taken into consideration alongside the baseline scores, which also reveal a lower score for those who did receive six core components than those who did not (12.8 and 13.6, respectively). In terms of whether the YP received a minimum of 32 sessions, the baseline score is balanced, with a slightly lower score at follow-up for those who did receive at least 32 sessions, although this difference is small (10.8 compared with 11.1).

In conclusion, those who declined support/withdrew early on experienced fewer positive outcomes compared with those who completed the Reach Programme. However, with regard to whether the six core components were received, there was no clear relationship between this and the primary outcome when taking into account the baseline scores. A small difference in mean scores could be seen in terms of whether the YP received a minimum of 32 sessions or not, but this was relatively negligible. This was reflected in the CACE analysis (see the impact section), where a small increase in effect size was seen for those deemed fully compliant; however, this did not reach statistical significance. These findings perhaps reflect the difficulty in defining compliance for interventions such as these, which are intended to be flexible in nature. As indicated by the qualitative data, flexibility of delivery was key to the successful delivery of Reach, and with regard to the primary outcome, perhaps this need for flexibility and responsiveness in the programme was more important than YPs receiving all of the defined core components. This was further reflected in the SDQ impact supplement question (please see the quality section), where again, receipt of six core components showed no difference in outcomes, although there, receipt of the 32 sessions did show some difference in outcomes. These findings are descriptive only and should be treated with caution.

Table 29: Measures of dosage compared with mean follow-up teacher-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) externalising score

	Teacher SDQ baseline externalising score, mean (CI low; CI high)	Teacher SDQ follow-up externalising score, mean (CI low; CI high)	Total n (follow-up)
Declined support/withdrew	12.9 (11.2; 14.7)	12.3 (11.0; 13.6)	25
Completed	12.9 (12.4; 13.3)	10.8 (10.2; 11.4)	247
*Received six core components	12.7 (12.2; 13.2)	10.8 (10.2; 11.5)	208
Did not receive six core components	13.5 (12.6; 14.3)	11.3 (10.2; 12.4)	64
Received a minimum of 32 sessions	12.9 (12.3; 13.4)	10.9 (10.2; 11.5)	178
*Received fewer than 32 sessions	12.8 (12.0; 13.6)	11.1 (10.2; 12.0)	94

*Note that these figures include the 29 cases where support was declined or the yp withdrew.
Note: CI = confidence interval

Turning to the qualitative data on matters related to dosage, parent/carer interviews revealed that parents/carers had positive perceptions of YWs' availability and responsiveness. YWs would see YPs for in-

person sessions but also had frequent additional contact with YPs over the phone and via text check-ins between sessions, as well as keeping in regular contact with parents:

> *Oh, I can have contact with [youth worker] either via text, call [or] visit. Anything. Any of my concerns I can just whip her a text, and she'll say, 'Right, I'll sort it out' or 'I'll speak to you next time I see you', and then she will give me a date when she's coming to see me. (Efficacy, P/C 09, county)*

Given how embedded the YWs were in school, they were often present for teachable moments outside of youth work sessions. Often, this would lead to an impromptu session, in addition to the prescribed session delivery, or involvement with the YP to capitalise on these moments. The embedded nature of YWs in schools speaks to a dynamic and responsive approach to youth work which has the potential for greater impact.

Crucially, whilst the dosage of sessions adhered to the Reach guidelines and intended delivery model, the dosage may have depended on YPs' availability and willingness to engage:

> *And like one young person that I'm working with has missed a lot, and that's because he just never turns up to school, and then visiting him at home as well, it's like he's always out. So, I feel like there [are] a few young people who have been a lot more absent than others, but there [have] been some which they're here unless they're ill. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)*

These individual differences in engagement may have affected the YWs' ability to deliver the intended dosage. In some cases, YWs also had to understand and accommodate certain complexities in a YP's life, for example, arranging sessions across two homes if parents were separated:

> *What she kind of arranges with him. Like I say, in the holidays it's been a bit different, and he has – me and his dad aren't together – so he has one week with me and one week with his dad, and so I think that he's been seeing her at like the youth centre in the week with dad, and then she arranged to see him here with me, and then takes him out after. (Efficacy, P/C 10, city)*

In addition, given the YP-led approach adopted by YWs, some YPs had put restrictions on when and where they wanted to be seen for sessions.

> *So, one Year 11, he didn't actually drop out of the programme. We ended him early because he had covered like all of the main components, and, also, he had finished school, and he was the young person [who] wanted to just be seen in school, so it wouldn't make sense for us to carry him on because we wouldn't see him. So, we closed him slightly early, which didn't actually impact [what] he had covered. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)*

In the example above, the YP only wanted to be seen by the YW in school, and, given their age and position as a school leaver, the YP did not complete the programme. The restriction on locations in this case was a barrier to the continuation and completion of the programme.

Additional barriers to the delivery of the intended dosage emerged in some cases, linked to the reasons for referral. One YW, quoted below, talked about a YP whose recent experience of police arrest had affected the YW's ability to see the YP for an extended period, with impacts on programme delivery. YPs' lives are complex, and YWs are required to account for these complexities when considering delivery and adherence to the programme.

One of the young people, he was arrested, and then his engagement kind of dropped for like a month, where I couldn't see him. I was trying to call mum, and mum was just like, 'He doesn't want to see you' and things like that, and then one of the – I think it was a few weeks ago, I just did an unannounced home visit. So, I went to his house and turned up, and he was so happy to see me… And I realised that it wasn't really because he didn't want to see me; it was because he didn't want to go out… Because he had been arrested and things like that, I think that probably played a role in his anxiety and things like that. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)

School exclusion was described as a barrier to consistent contact with YWs and therefore operated as a barrier to the delivery of the intended dosage.

But it's been on and off because [YP] has been either excluded or there has been something going on in the school… It was not consistent, but it was here and there. (Efficacy, P/C 11, city)

In some cases, where YPs had additional needs, the typical dosage was extended as part of the YWs' flexible and tailored delivery. One parent/carer gave her perspective on this support:

I think they spent a bit more time with [#child2] because she needed it a lot more because, obviously, [#child2] has got her ADHD and her anxiety, and she was having issues with getting suspended from school, so I needed the youth worker a lot more. With [#child1], because he is more, he gets easily led at school, she does spend a lot of time with them both, but [#child2] had a bit more time. (Pilot, P/C , city)

Another issue linked to dosage emerged in reports by some YPs that their involvement with their YW had continued beyond the end of the programme, often because the YWs were so embedded in schools. This support was valued by the YPs, as illustrated in the following quote, and can be understood as a sign of positive relationship-building with the YWs:

I still see her now. When my mates are having a session with her, I join in with them if they invite me or something. So, I can still see her. I can still talk to her, and she was like, 'You can still talk to me.' Even if I'm not on the programme, I can still speak to her if I'm struggling with something. She'll still help me, or she'll give me websites that can help me or stuff like that. She's still helping me, whether I'm on the programme or not. (Pilot, YP 3, county)

To sum up, youth work involves working with YPs in a flexible and responsive way. Accordingly, whilst the Reach Programme carries expectations that its core components are delivered, the modes of delivery, order of delivery and intensity of delivery were flexible and YP-led in order to get the most from teachable moments and achieve the greatest impact for the YPs.

Quality

- *How well are the different components of the intervention being delivered?*

Across the interview data, there were generally positive appraisals of the quality of the programme delivered, as experienced by the SLs, YWs, parents/carers and the YPs themselves.

In general terms, SLs praised Reach as a high-quality programme where there was a close relationship and communication between schools and the Reach delivery teams. They particularly valued the calibre and timing of feedback from Reach staff about the YPs' progress, including any emerging issues, which schools used to inform their own day-to-day work with students.

Oh, they're all over that as well, and they're like, we do speak very closely with the Reach workers, and we converse regularly, and their feedback is amazing. It's the best intervention I've ever known for feedback; it's crazy. It's timely; it's detailed, so we can work with it in school as well. And we can have a chat with the kids about it in school as well, which is helpful. I know I said before that we kind of make it [sound] like we leave them to it, but we communicate intensely, and that helps us in school as well [as] deal with the children as well. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)

There were comments and reflections by some YWs on the quality of the core components of the Reach Programme. YWs felt that the components were valuable and demonstrated good validity and applicability to the YPs' real-world experiences outside the sessions, as this YW explained:

I really, really value the core components, and I know the young people who I work with, most of them really do value the core components as well because they can reflect and then react in accordance with the things that we were talking about and experiencing… Without the specific core components, it would be difficult to almost measure or interact with the young person… I love how they focus what your session is going to be about… that means, for me, that you're targeting or you're talking about or you're doing something very specific to that young person that you feel they need in that moment, and they remember that because when we talk about other things later on, they often use different experiences of what happened and then they'll tell me, 'Yeh, but then I remembered what you said when you said blah, blah, blah'. (Pilot, YW 2, county)

One YW said that as a team they were regularly reflecting and reviewing the core components in order to finesse the delivery – a process that is an indicator of quality:

I think the level they're at, as well, these key components work really well. There's nothing too out there, nothing too much that they won't understand. We are having a look over them at the minute because I think it's always good to keep pushing, keep changing, [keep] making things better. (Pilot, YW 4, city)

However, not all YWs felt that the materials for the core components were well pitched for everyone without substantial adaptation. For example, the YW quoted below felt that some materials were better suited to younger children and that it might be more helpful to have pick-up-and-go resources which were already differentiated by age group.

The work, the resources that are there are fantastic, but for children of a younger age. So, when I've got my 14/15-year-olds that are a bit more streetwise, they do not want to sit and do worksheets about how their family make them feel, and to them, it's quite childish, and they would be like, 'Absolutely not, like why are you even asking me these questions?' And so that can be quite difficult… So instead of going in with the worksheet, I will go in prepared with a different activity to cover those sorts of questions to suit their needs, but it would be better if I could just go on and there is something that I could say, 'Right, I could take that worksheet today because that'd suit their age'. (Efficacy, YW 6, county)

The YWs also pointed to some challenges to engagement with the components. For a component to be effective, the YP needed to be ready to engage with the component at that stage. For example, the YW below refers to sessions where YPs did not yet have the capacity to reflect more critically on their behaviours:

Understanding behaviours works well, to a degree, if the engagement is there because young people don't like to talk about their behaviour, and, usually, they're very argumentative, and they don't need to be on the programme as it is. So, they're not going to sit there and say, 'I've got this problem. I do this wrong'. So, it's very positive to have it in there; it's very good to have, but it can be challenging to deliver it, depending [on] where they are at the relationship-building phase and their engagement. (Pilot, YW 3, city)

Turning to perceptions of session quality, the DLs and YWs emphasised that a high-quality session is one where the content is personalised and differentiated for the YP. YWs put in considerable effort to ensure that YPs' individual wants and needs were catered for:

We know going into this that it's individualised cases, but when you get allocated a few more, you start to learn the differentiation and the amount of work that you actually have to put in to making sure that it is individualised to them. (Pilot, YW 1, county)

It varies, doesn't it, upon the young person. So, like, we've had young people where there has been a massive focus on social skills and a lot of work has been put into that and then maybe one little bit around relationships or something. But then there have been cases where they don't need as much support around social skills, and it is more around confidence and wellbeing, and it's been like this… interventions around that. So, it really does; it's a case-by-case. (Pilot, DL)

Good-quality sessions were also YP-led and differentiated in the mode of delivery, as detailed earlier in the report. An approach that worked well for one YP may not work for others:

The interventions are really good to run and they, obviously, are individualised to each young person. You might run something, and it [could] be going well for that young person, but you run the exact same session with another young person, and you're like, 'That was a bit of a flop', but you gain that relationship-building stage, and then you know, 'Is this person a writing person, or are they more practical?' (Pilot, YW 1, county)

Similarly, reiterating the central importance of teachable moments, YWs described high-quality delivery of sessions where they had adapted the session sensitively to the YP's changing circumstances:

If you have a teachable moment, such as something has happened at school or at home, you can always change it up on that day. You don't have to follow a system. Again, [with] [#young person], something happened at school, and we just decided to do another worksheet about resilience, whereas that had probably been in a couple of weeks ahead, but it doesn't matter because it makes sense because of the way it's set up. (Pilot, YW 4, city)

Young people's perspectives on programme quality

In the YPs' broad-brush appraisals of how well the Reach Programme had gone, they tended to rate the programme very highly, for example, compared to their experience of schools:

Well, Reach is 10 and [school] is −10. (Efficacy, YP 15, county)

During the YP interviews, when asked explicitly about the quality of the sessions on the Reach Programme, most YPs reported good experiences of the programme. Indeed, when asked if there was any aspect they thought could be better, all YPs responded that they thought there was nothing that could be improved. For some, the programme exceeded their expectations:

I just think it's all good. I don't think there's a lot to be improved… I'm satisfied with it. It's more than I expected anyway. (Pilot, YP 4, county)

The interview data also showed that YPs perceived distinct improvements in their lives, which they attributed to their Reach journey. These perceptions speak to the quality of the programme, albeit indirectly. Some YPs emphasised the positive impacts of Reach on their behaviour, with a common theme in interviews being that their school behaviour had improved to the extent that it had prompted comments or praise from staff:

I have changed a lot. My behaviour, before I started Reach, was really bad, and then when I had Reach, I think it got better, and my head of year said that as well. (Pilot, YP 2, city)

Many YPs said that interpersonal relationships were more positive at home with parents, carers and siblings; at school with teachers and other authority figures, where relationships had broken down or had been challenging; and with peers. Often, the improvement in relationships was linked to the YP's better regulation of their temper and difficult emotions:

My brother said I'm not as angry anymore. Every day I used to wake up, go downstairs angry all the time, kicking off. I just didn't talk to anyone at home, but now I've started talking to my family more. (Pilot, YP 1, city)

Many YPs reported a more positive outlook on returning to school after school holidays following their involvement with the Reach Programme:

I feel like when I go back to school, I'll be a lot better, a lot more on track. (Pilot, YP 1, city)

Similarly, YPs conveyed a positive attitude when talking about trying harder with their studies. In the example below, the YP draws a parallel between their academic efforts and their better behaviour and relationships at school:

I'm starting to knuckle down in my subjects that I really need for my GCSEs because I've got my mocks coming up soon at the end of this year. No detentions. A lot nicer to some teachers who I like. I'm just really good. I've not had a fight for ages. I've been good. (Pilot, YP 3, county)

Reflecting on how the YWs had supported them in navigating the challenges of adolescence, some YPs talked about gaining maturity and developing their character. In the example below, the YP also spoke powerfully about understanding right from wrong and turning their life around:

I would say it's helped me develop my character. Before, I wasn't really as mature. I don't know how to explain it, but they helped me with this… It's just helped me change my whole life around, like go down a different path. Others my age are going on a bad path, and me realising what's wrong is wrong and going down the right path. (Pilot, YP 6, city)

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the Reach Programme is not a quick fix for YPs. Many of them saw improvements in themselves whilst also acknowledging that there was space to continue developing:

I was still getting into trouble, but I wasn't getting as much into trouble. Before, I guess I was running around school and then, working with [youth worker], I stopped all that. I'd do the odd bit now, but it wasn't as much as I used to. (Pilot, YP 5, city)

Overall, the generally very positive feedback from YPs can be understood as a marker of the quality of the programme content and delivery. Most YPs talked about specific positive outcomes – whether in academic achievements/efforts, behaviour, emotion regulation and/or interpersonal relationships – whilst some were able to articulate profound shifts stemming from Reach, such as avoiding anti-social behaviour, that would change their life trajectory.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire impact supplement

In the follow-up data collection phase, the SDQ impact supplement was included following completion of the main questionnaire. These questions were relevant to the intervention group only: in total, 266 responses were received to these questions out of a possible 301 (88%). Responses to these questions are presented below. It should be noted here that responses to these questions include the 29 cases in which YPs had either declined support or withdrawn early on in the intervention; see Table 34 for a breakdown of mean scores for the first impact question excluding these cases. Table 30 shows that overall, 46% of teachers indicated that the child's problems were a bit better or much better since receiving the Reach Programme, with 29% indicating that problems were about the same. A total of 25% of teachers indicated that the child's problems were a bit worse or much worse. In terms of whether the Reach Programme had been helpful in other ways, 57% of respondents indicated quite a lot or a great deal, with 28% indicating only a little and 15% indicating not at all. In terms of difficulties with emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people, 52% of YPs were reported to have definite or severe difficulties, whilst 47.6% were reported to have no difficulties or minor difficulties. In terms of whether the child's problems put a burden on the teacher or the class as a whole, 49.2% of respondents indicated that this was quite a lot or a great deal, with 50.8% indicating not at all or only a little (Tables 30 to 33).

Table 30: Since receiving the Reach Programme, are the child's problems:

	n	%
Much worse	29	10.9
A bit worse	36	13.5
About the same	77	28.9
A bit better	67	25.2
Much better	57	21.4
Total	**266**	100.0

Table 31: Has receiving the Reach Programme been helpful in other ways, e.g. providing information or making the problems more bearable?

	n	%
Not at all	40	15.0
Only a little	75	28.1
Quite a lot	88	33.0
A great deal	64	24.0
Total	**267**	**100.0**

Table 32: Over the last month, has the child had difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

	n	%
No	53	19.4
Yes – minor difficulties	77	28.2
Yes – definite difficulties	93	34.1
Yes – severe difficulties	50	18.3
Total	**273**	**100.0**

Table 33: Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the class as a whole?

	n	%
Not at all	41	17.2
Only a little	80	33.6
Quite a lot	54	22.7
A great deal	63	26.5
Total	**238**	**100.0**

An impact score was created from three of the questions, namely: 'Do the difficulties upset or distress the child?', 'Do the difficulties interfere with the child's everyday life in peer relationships?' and 'Do the difficulties interfere with the child's everyday life in classroom learning?' This gave an impact score ranging from 0 to 6, with 6 being a great deal across all of these questions and 0 being not at all or only a little. The mean impact score was found to be 2.1.

To supplement the findings from the impact evaluation, subgroup analysis and additional analysis in the impact evaluation, the first question from the SDQ impact supplement was analysed according to ethnic group, phase of the intervention (pilot/efficacy) and area (city/county). Further, findings are presented for those who declined/withdrew compared with those who completed the programme. The mean score was calculated and broken down by the factors below (where 1 = problems are much worse and 5 = problems are much better). It should be noted here that these findings are descriptive, and caution should be taken when interpreting them. The findings here substantiate the findings from the subgroup analyses in terms of more positive outcomes for Asian YPs, more positive outcomes at the pilot phase and more positive outcomes observed for schools in the city. Further to this, excluding the cases that either declined support or withdrew early on, the mean score was also broken down by whether the YP received six core components and whether they received a minimum of 32 sessions. This echoes the findings from the fidelity section that whether or not the YP received all six core components does not have an effect on outcomes. In terms of whether the YP received a minimum of 32 sessions, a higher mean score was observed for those who received a minimum of 32 sessions compared with those who did not. A more notable difference is observed with regard to whether the YP declined support or withdrew early on: more positive impacts are observed for those who completed the Reach Programme compared with withdrawals at the start of the programme (Table 34).

Table 34: Since receiving the Reach Programme, are the child's problems (mean score)

	Mean score (CI low; CI high)* (1 = problems are much worse, 5 = problems are much better)	Total n
Overall	3.3 (3.2; 3.5)	266
Asian	4.1 (3.7; 4.6)	26
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	3.0 (2.4; 3.6)	22
Other ethnic groups	3.7 (3.2; 4.3)	21
White	3.2 (3.0; 3.4)	181
Pilot phase	3.6 (3.3; 3.8)	95
Efficacy phase	3.2 (3.0; 3.4)	171
City	3.6 (3.4; 3.8)	153
County	3.0 (2.8; 3.2)	112
Received six core components	3.4 (3.3; 3.6)	202
**Did not receive six core components	3.4 (2.9; 3.8)	39
Received a minimum of 32 sessions	3.5 (3.4; 3.7)	172
**Received fewer than 32 sessions	3.2 (2.9; 3.5)	69
Completed	3.4 (3.3; 3.6)	240
Declined support/withdrew	2.4 (1.9; 2.8)	25

* Note that Gypsy/Traveller YP and Black YP figures are excluded due to low cell counts

** Figures here **exclude** the 29 cases where the YP declined support or withdrew early on

Note: CI = confidence interval

Responsiveness

- *To what extent do the participants and their parents/carers engage with the intervention?*
- *Are families from Black, Asian and other minority backgrounds more hesitant in terms of developing a trusting relationship with the YP's YW?*

Engagement with the intervention

Engaging YPs and their parents/carers in any intervention can present challenges. SLs and YWs shared some of these challenges, such as gaining consent and buy-in from some parents and carers. Parental reluctance was largely viewed to be due to previous negative experiences of professionals, the stigma of working with professionals and misperceptions about their role. This is not uncommon where relationship dynamics involve authority and perceived positions of power, such as in a school, and where YPs have experienced periods of suspension and/or exclusion and statutory involvement of the local authority. These two SLs illustrate the sticking point of engaging some parents:

> *Communicating with parents to get the consent, which probably was a sticking point. There's a couple of kids that absolutely will be totally [benefited] from this. Parents just were not interested. (Efficacy, SL 6, county)*

I only had one problem…. They thought I was trying to dupe them into getting social services involved... It is never a good... social services, is it, as a parent. (Efficacy, SL 7, city)

In one family, a barrier to engagement with the YP was the parent's perception that the Reach Programme was too short in length:

I think with certain kids they need more time, and sometimes you can't just come into someone's house and expect that child to click with you. Even six months won't do it. It's just the way that [young person] is... she already knows it's six months; she already knows that it's going to end, so what's the point? (Efficacy, P/C 11, city)

Other participants' views that the programme was too short or that a longer intervention would be welcome are addressed in the Barriers section. Such views are also relevant to reflections on the disparity between the findings of the impact evaluation and the IPE. The qualitative data pointed to positive emotional and relational outcomes for YPs by the end of the programme, but there were no stark positive outcomes for attendance, suspension or offending outcomes in the impact evaluation. As discussed earlier, YPs' behavioural shifts can lag behind their emotional development. The Reach Programme may not have been long enough for YPs' social–emotional changes to translate into behavioural shifts that could be captured by administrative data. In future studies, the LM would benefit from exploring and accounting for this lag in YPs' outcomes.

For some parents and carers from Black, Asian and other minority backgrounds, perceived additional scrutiny was a concern:

I feel like, especially with people who are from different ethnic backgrounds, sometimes they see local authority and police in a more negative way. It's more of a – like, when they hear social services, it means you're going to take my kids away. That is how some people perceive it. I feel like they're a bit more suspicious or a bit more reluctant for their child to be on the programme. But as soon as I have that first meeting with them and explain to them what it's about, and it's a face that they might trust, that is when they're like, 'Okay'. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)

Once they understood what the Reach Programme entailed, parents and carers shared how they could see the potential benefits and were keen to be involved:

At first, I was like, 'Nobody can find out about this. It's so embarrassing'. Now, actually, I'm like, 'It's done nothing but benefit our lives', and I'll sing and shout about it if I have to. Nothing but positives from me. (Pilot, P/C 2, city)

I think sometimes you hear, like, a youth worker, you think 'Oh god, have I done something wrong?' or anything like that, but no – once they came around and did the house visit and explained it all, it was really good. (Efficacy, P/C 10, city)

Where parents were engaging with the programme, this often led to better engagement by the YPs also.

The relationship between YPs and their YWs was viewed as important for sustained engagement with the intervention and, therefore, the likelihood of positive outcomes. This is consistent with the centrality of the relationship-building phase in the programme design and delivery, as detailed earlier in this report. Both YWs and parents expressed that this relationship was pivotal:

A lot of the young people, when we're doing initial assessments, they all say that they feel targeted and [that] assumptions are made about them because they've got a reputation, and I think they've not had somebody say to them that they're capable of doing this: 'You've got potential'. I don't feel like they've had that, and I think it's refreshing for them to hear that from somebody who they've got a relationship with. (Pilot, YW 3, city)

I didn't think he'd speak much, but as soon as [youth worker] came in and he saw her, I think it's just the way she is, to be fair, as a person. He was happy for me to leave the room... he loved it. He was, 'When am I seeing her again?' (Pilot, P/C 8, county)

Trust between the YW and YP was seen as crucial in building and sustaining their relationship, but could sometimes be delicate to navigate, as one YW described:

Hopefully, [young person] will be able to see that I'm there to kind of support them, help them and improve this relationship. But it has been hard because there are certain things that they don't want their parents knowing, which I completely understand. But sometimes I need to do my job as well, and my job is to kind of help. I need their consent to do it because otherwise I'm going to damage our relationship. (Efficacy, YW 9, city)

For families from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds, having a YW who understood their culture was important from the perspective of the parents as well as the YPs themselves:

Because we are part of the same community, my mum thinks [youth worker] understands… same situation, same problems in family life. Not problems, but she understands, like, where my parents come from and where I'm coming from. (Efficacy, YP 14, city)

Sometimes you have to understand that that child comes from a certain background, a certain religion. They've been brought up in a different manner, and what you may have done in your life, this child may not be allowed to do for reasons because of culture, religion, whatever you want to call it. (Efficacy, P/C 11, city)

This view was also shared by the YWs concerned, who expressed that being from similar ethnic backgrounds to the family was integral to engagement and perceptions of legitimacy:

When I went for that first initial meeting, [the parents] both attended, which right away tells me that they care about their child's future... Again, the mum's first language was Punjabi... I could speak to her in Punjabi, so I think that made her feel at ease because she could just be more of herself around me… I think it definitely helped that when she looked at me, she probably saw someone that looked similar to her, so I think that it helped that I understood a lot of cultural issues that were happening at home [and] religious issues that were happening at home, and so I think that she really valued it, and so, for me, engagement was not an issue. (Efficacy, YW 9, city)

Along these lines, some parents/carers referred to the need for visiting professionals to have sensitivity and respect for cultural norms in their engagement with their children:

It's important so that people can understand that how we live our lives is not how everyone lives their lives. When you walk into our household, we're not the clubbing type; we don't drink, and I'm not degrading anyone here. I am just saying that's not my lifestyle, and neither is it my daughter's, so if you come from that lifestyle and you have opinions about that lifestyle, just be

mindful that this particular child is being brought up in a certain way where we may not do these things… The very main thing was the person themselves coming into my house and not understanding our background. (Efficacy, P/C 11, city)

In some families where English was not their first spoken language, YWs managed the language barrier by drawing on technology to translate language and, in some instances, by relying on the YP who was fluent in English, whereas their parents/carers were not.

In numerous parent/carer interviews, it became evident that the YWs were not only supporting their YPs, but also the parents/carers, for example, to navigate school processes and general parenting concerns:

As a parent, when you go into these schools, it's like they're firing everything away at you and you're like, 'Wow', and you speak to [youth worker], and she guides you as a parent because sometimes you just feel like you are [standing] literally alone, and you don't know what to do. You don't know where to turn. So, yes, she's been absolutely amazing. (Pilot, P/C 6, county)

Where parents/carers were engaging with the YW, concerns raised by parents/carers could be integrated into sessions with YPs:

She's brilliant. She's absolutely amazing. If we've had problems with [#child], we've let her know... If we've brought up a concern, she'll use that in her session with [#child] and [bring] it up. (Pilot, P/C 4, city)

Overall, YWs reported generally positive engagement from the YPs they were working with. Parents/carers also cited a positive level of engagement from their child:

Yeah, they are all very much engaged. I very rarely get any unauthorised absences from them. (Efficacy, YW 6, county)

She was actually looking forward to it because she knows her behaviour is a big issue, and she knows that we're trying to help her in any and every way possible. So, she was, 'Yeh. I will give it a go', and she's been quite alright with it. Every week she's been. (Pilot, P/C 5, city)

Ongoing support from the YW throughout periods of school closure and holidays was viewed as beneficial for sustained engagement with the intervention:

We find a lot of interventions break down then because you've got two weeks' holiday, but these Reach workers go out... they're still seeing these kids outside of school during those holidays, which I think makes a massive difference because the kid knows that they're still there for them. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)

Peer relationships

- *Has peer engagement work been undertaken as expected?*
- *Have YPs received and engaged with appropriate activities to develop social awareness and skills?*

Multiple participants, including YWs, SLs, parents/carers and YPs, shared examples of positive outcomes in relation to social and communication skills, identity development, support networks, wellbeing and emotional management, with increased confidence as a significant recurring theme. In the words of some of the YPs themselves:

I'm able to talk to people a lot more. If I'm going to the shop, even if I was going to get a bottle of juice or something, I would never be able to go up to the counter and say, 'Can I have this please?' I would not be able to do it, but it's just boosted my confidence a lot. (Pilot, YP 3, county)

It's not really what I've learnt about myself; it's about my behaviour. She's taught me that people are there to help me, and I'm throwing it back in their faces. So, I'm starting to appreciate that a bit more. She's helped me get a job, did all my CV and, doing that, I've brought my grandma and granddad some presents as a thank you… She's just helped me to mature. She's helped me to keep away from bad people. She's told me the rights and wrongs in the way I'd understand and listen. (Pilot, YP 4, county)

It really helped me with fake friends and that because I do struggle with friendships. (Pilot, YP 2, city)

Some YPs were able to give specific examples of how, following guidance from their YW, they had been able to adapt their behavioural responses in stressful situations involving other people:

She is just giving me so much advice and just, like, to be a chilled-out person and not sit there screaming and shouting because someone has annoyed me. Like at the start of the year, I would sit there and scream at anyone. Like, I wouldn't care. I would scream at like my principal, my head of year… and now it's like, I go to my mentor's office and rant about it, and I'll be done. I won't be screaming up and down corridors. (Efficacy, YP 13, city)

Yes. I feel like when I'm arguing with someone, I don't really retaliate anymore. I just listen to what they're saying, and if they're still going to argue, I just walk away from the situation and say, 'I'm not going to argue with you'. (Pilot, YP 3, county)

Just how to control my anger. Most of it is anger. (Pilot, YP 7, county).

Some talked about instances of having friends come along to their Reach sessions, and they viewed this as significant in maintaining peer relationships and creating positive experiences which they could reflect back on:

I get to bring my mates along with me, which is like a hundred times better because I get to hang out with my mates more, who I can't really hang out with because we live far away. (Efficacy, YP 17, county)

Me and [young person] always talk about Reach because we had the same person. We just always talk about how nice they were and what we did, and we once went to bowling together. So, you can have joint sessions together, which I found very good… it was really fun. (Pilot, YP 3, county)

Involvement with the Reach Programme gave some YPs the opportunity to engage in fun social activities that they had never experienced before, for example, ten-pin bowling:

I remember one girl I had… a Y7 girl who is from a very deprived background, and she went bowling for the first time with her Reach worker, and you're thinking, 'My god, Y7, you've gone bowling for the first ever time in your life, that's just insane'. So it's those little things that they do as well with them that they're maybe not doing outside of school with their own families that they're getting to do here, which is fantastic. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)

In some cases, the YPs' development of new skills and insights through Reach had led to situations where they were supporting other YPs:

> *She wants to be a youth worker. When I went into [school] to see another girl, I saw her telling off a Year 7, and she was like, 'You need to stop pratting around, you know'. She was telling them what to do. I was like, 'You sound like me when I was telling you what to do', and she was like, 'Yeh. Well, you kind of rubbed off on me'. So now she's advocating for other young people. It's nice. (Pilot, YW 3, city)*

> *All the things he taught me, I've taken them in, and now that I'm older, [in] my last year of school, they've helped me realise what I've done in the past is wrong. So, when I see a young person going through the same thing that I went through, I then can advise them and tell them, 'Don't do this. Don't do that because you're going to end up how I am'. I don't want to see anybody go through that. If I knew what I know now, I wouldn't have done what I did when I was younger. (Pilot, YP 6, city)*

Intervention differentiation

- *To what extent are the intervention activities sufficiently different from existing practices?*
- *What BAU support are the YPs allocated to the control group experiencing?*

As was referenced above, most SLs explained that their schools needed to respond to heightened challenges, including declining attendance, burgeoning suspensions and exclusions (often due to the presentation of more extreme behaviours) and greater socio-emotional difficulties among pupils. Such school-based challenges were occurring in the context of adverse community-level factors, including increasing crime rates (e.g. knife crime/possession and exploitation of YPs involved in county lines), low employment and general cost-of-living pressures. Put bluntly, there was a sense that the resources available to most schools fell well short of what was needed to adequately respond to such challenges, particularly with regard to the YPs with the greatest needs.

That is not to suggest, of course, that schools were not highly committed and proactive in tackling the challenges. An array of interventions and provision were found to be embedded in schools, which sought to engage YPs as effectively as possible in relation to a wide variety of needs. Provision was not uniform across schools but instead was context-specific. Some provision was whole-school, and other programmes were targeted. Some were delivered internally and others by external services. Examples of provision included:

- **Pedagogical** and **whole-school teaching approaches,** such as Quality First Teaching and/or trauma-informed teaching
- **Whole-school CPD,** for example, training focused on restorative approaches
- **Pastoral support infrastructure and defined wellbeing roles** across the school, including heads of house, student welfare officers, mental health first aiders, behaviour mentors, school counsellors and assistant heads with specific responsibilities for wellbeing and behaviour issues
- **In-school mentoring,** such as pastoral mentors assigned to YPs. There was evidence that such schemes continued concurrently with Reach, although often at a reduced dosage. The justification was that there would be relational continuity with an existing school staff member, something that might be beneficial once the YP's involvement with the Reach mentor came to an end.
- **Therapeutic provision/interventions**, including pet therapy, art therapy, boxing, anger management classes and stress reduction interventions around the time of exams

- **Integrated resource/on-site alternative provision** delivered on the wider school site, sometimes focused on YPs with SEND and/or those on the cusp of permanent exclusion
- **Specialist external referrals,** such as **Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST),** which is an intervention for those at the '*highest risk… very intense and bespoke arrangements and even the Reach can't be involved if MST are involved, my understanding is'.* (Efficacy, SL 5, city)

The existing provision available to YPs often lacked several of the features of the Reach Programme which were cited as core strengths, one of the most powerful being the perceived neutrality of mentors brought in from outside the school. This was sometimes seen as symbolic of a fresh start (both for the YPs and the staff connected to them) and a potentially powerful mechanism for change.

> *The biggest thing that we've found that's beneficial from Reach is [one, that] they can be more relaxed because in the nicest way; I could be as nice as you want, but I'm still wearing the lanyard for school, and I still wear a shirt, but they still see me as a member of staff from school and caring about the school. You can tell them how much you want that you care about them, but they think you only care about the school. Whereas the Reach worker can turn up in their nice trainers and jeans… tattoos, and they can go around to their [YP's] house, and they can take them [to] McDonald's, and that is obviously not just the Reach, but that's the first step that they will make. (Efficacy, SL 7, city)*

A connected advantage was how Reach was interpreted as substantially distinct from other similar but school-based or school-run mentoring interventions. For YPs (and sometimes family members) who were often disengaged with school, this was a powerful feature.

> *I've also been doing [a school-based mentoring intervention], but this is like a lesson… been doing this for 1.5 years. (Pilot, YP 9, school A, control)*

However, the feature of the Reach Programme that arguably made it most distinguishable from existing interventions was the intensity of having ringfenced one-to-one support from the mentoring professional over a comparatively long time frame. There was frequent acknowledgement by SLs that support services for at-risk YPs were often chronically stretched and delayed, especially in the current post-COVID context. SLs therefore welcomed how Reach was able to help address that deficit, at least for those YPs randomised to the Reach intervention:

> *Schools are really struggling with mental health, and the CAMHS* [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] *waiting list is huge. It's just that extra bit of support that we're getting is absolutely brilliant, and we really do appreciate it. (Pilot, SL 2, city)*

Business-as-usual support for the control group

Unease was expressed by several school staff about the reality of running a trial because it meant there were often occasions where YPs who were felt to be in greatest need of the Reach intervention were randomised to the control group.

However, the IPE data (qualitative and survey-based[20]) overwhelmingly revealed that the control money was extremely well received and used to fund a full range of different activities to help continue support for

[20] Email survey of all SLs; 10 out of 16 schools responded.

YPs allocated to the control group through in-house provision as well as supplementary interventions sometimes provided by external organisations.

> *I've got [control funding] in a pot… we've got that ring-fenced, and we've tried to use it where we can. And as I say, it's just our money there to use as and when for those young people we need to. (Efficacy, SL 5, city)*

> *Oh that's helped us massively… without a doubt. The Regul8 stuff that we do comes from the Reach money that we get… if we didn't have that, we wouldn't be able to run that; we just wouldn't be able to afford it, as I'm sure you can imagine with our financial situation in schools and stuff like that. So that's helped massively. Again, another added bonus of the programme, knowing that we're going to get that money that we can then fund some sort of intervention for those [control] students. (Efficacy, SL 8, County)*

Examples of some of the control group activities offered are listed below:

- Netball club
- Targeted youth work
- Pastoral and alternative provision
- Volunteering at a local farm
- One-off activities such as a meal out to Zizzi's or a trip to the cinema
- Forest school
- Enstruct (environmental studies qualifications)
- Pet therapy

In addition, four schools indicated through the survey that they had brought in external providers to deliver interventions to the control group, with varying proportions of mentoring, including:

- **Commando Joe's:** Character education provider involving group and more targeted one-to-one work
- **Leicester City Football Club in the community:** Involving a community engagement worker
- **Regul8:** Community interest company focused on promoting emotional intelligence and mental health support for students, including group and personalised provision
- **Knowledge is Power:** A youth education provider focused on wellbeing, safety and life skills delivered through one-to-one and/or group-based school sessions

Although the IPE qualitative data suggested that mentoring-based programmes used in the control group were less intensive than Reach (in terms of both duration and intensity) and not all the YPs in the control group would have accessed the mentoring, it did have implications for the trial design and should be considered when interpreting the results of the impact evaluation. Specifically, potential access to mentoring-based programmes should be taken into account in relation to improvements according to the mean scores of the primary outcome that can be observed across both the intervention and control groups (Appendix A).

A key learning point from the trial management overall was that despite initial attempts to implement a uniform control condition, flexibility was needed. The rolling nature of referrals and the tailoring of the support needed for the YPs made it very difficult practically to implement a uniform control condition.

As has been noted before, there was also some evidence to suggest that senior leads may have felt a sense of duty to the control group over and above what could be considered BAU, owing to how much they felt

certain YPs would benefit from the Reach Programme but who were then allocated to the control. In terms of future design, a cluster randomised trial could be considered, which would allow a truer BAU control group, or a Quasi-Experimental Design (QED) could be employed to avoid these issues arising from individual randomisation.

Resources

- *Feasibility and appropriateness of the resources required to deliver the intervention*

The core components of the programme were generally felt to be well put together and to provide a good overarching structure, inclusive of relevant topics, as outlined in the fidelity and dosage and quality sections.

However, a rigid, linear approach to the core components was not expected or feasible due to the varied and sometimes unpredictable needs of the YPs involved. Nor was it appropriate to require the YPs to work independently through worksheet/paper-based resources only. There were examples of YPs attending sessions in a dysregulated state for a variety of reasons, including friendship fallouts or having been sent out of a lesson earlier for misbehaviour. These scenarios required a response, giving rise to useful teachable moments in which the YW could adapt core content and adjust the session order to address the immediate issues affecting the YP. The programme leads encouraged the YWs to be flexible in this way and to use or create additional materials/resources to help each YP access the session content.

The range of resources and activities used flexibly by YWs is illustrated in the following quotes:

> *And it's good because we do cover a lot more, but it is quite intense. And I will break it up, so I will do some work with them. I'll sit down and do some worksheets with them, or then we'll go for a walk afterwards and get a drink, or, I don't know, do some baking at home with them just to break it up so they're actually seeing a professional and enjoying that time, but also we are getting the work done at the same time. (Efficacy, YW 6, county)*

> *We made this little chart board. I had my education, my behaviour and my life at home, and I think that little chart board generally helped me understand why I felt like certain things. If I felt sad, it would be stemming from this or this, and she generally helped me understand what I was feeling and why I was feeling it because I was really confused about everything, and she just helped me understand a lot. (Pilot, YP 3, county)*

> *She'd show me videos, and we'd go through a sheet together, and she'd say, 'What looks like you? What are you like?' And I had to write it all down, and she was helping me and saying, 'Oh yes. You are like this. Stop putting yourself down' and all of that. It was alright. (Pilot, YP 4, county)*

> *So, these are like the actual resources that we normally use, but then some young people just don't like doing any paperwork at all. So we will try and cover these sessions by conversation. (Efficacy, YW 5, city)*

To further support relationship-building with the YPs, each YW was allocated £50 (per YP) to spend on appropriate recreational activities with them. YWs chose activities and settings based on the YP's interests and preferences but also local accessibility. Examples of how this resource was used included:

- Laser quest
- McDonalds/Burger King
- Rock climbing

- Boxing/Kickboxing
- Basketball
- Ten-pin bowling
- Mini golf
- Flying a drone
- Cooking
- Gym induction
- Leicester City in the Community Kicks
- Riding pit bikes
- Swimming
- Bracelet making
- Art/craft supplies
- Football equipment, including boots, cones, football, shin pads and socks

The DL made the observation that the city area offered more than the county in terms of suitable recreational activities that YPs could access:

> *It always feels like in the county there isn't as much as there is in the city around some of those kinds of resources and accessible places that young people can go. (Pilot, DL)*

For YPs in the more rural areas, it was not usually possible to get to the city for events or activities. The DL said that they were focused on this issue and that it was improving as their knowledge of the area and available activities increased, but it was still more of a challenge to support the core components in this way for the county-based participants.

This challenge was reiterated by the YWs in the county who discussed having struggled to find suitable activities, especially those tailored to the interests of the YPs:

> *What I've found is, if you're not into football and you're not into riding pit bikes, all of a sudden they are, 'What are we going to do?' And then there are no resources. Football is easy. (Pilot, YW 2, county)*

This YW went on to explain that there were more opportunities for YPs if they were prepared to venture out a little further. Although this had been put into practice, the YW mentioned difficulties related to cost and being over budget. Some YWs were covering some of the cost themselves to ensure varied experiences for the YPs.

Barriers

- *Exploring the barriers to the implementation of the Reach Programme*

School culture and organisational factors

At the pilot stage, the DLs spoke of the hard-line stance that some schools were taking in respect of permanent exclusions for political reasons. This meant that some referred YPs had been permanently excluded within a few weeks of starting Reach. This kind of school culture, with the proclivity to suspend or exclude pupils without allowing time for the Reach Programme to work, was said by a DL to be soul-destroying.

Another barrier cited by the DLs related to coordination and communication between some schools and the YWs. Most schools were accommodating, and after streamlining communications, they were able to coordinate logistics related to timing and space for the YWs to work one-on-one with pupils. There had been some difficulties mentioned from the feasibility phase, where schools had struggled to supply appropriate meeting rooms, either through lack of availability or, in the case of one school, a lack of trust in Reach initially. This school was said to have done a complete 180 by the pilot phase and was fully accommodating a number of YPs and YWs who needed space on any given day. At the efficacy phase, YWs described mixed levels and quality of communication with schools; where this was poor, it had an impact on their ability to work effectively, for example:

- One YW mentioned arriving at a school and having to wait for 15 minutes for a teacher to bring the YP down to see them.
- Strikes and snow days occurring at the pilot phase were cited as issues which had caused delays for YWs meeting with YPs and had delayed schools making referrals, meaning that Reach team members were having to chase schools.
- Across both the pilot and efficacy phases, there was some discussion among the DLs and YWs about managing referrals of Year 11s due to their focus on exams, with periods of study leave meaning that finding time for meeting mentors was trickier.

Engaging pupils and parents

As explored in more detail under the responsiveness of participants, a minority of parents had reservations about the Reach Programme, fearing it was related to social services. Some YPs were also reluctant to engage at first, mentioning concerns about having a new person in their home or that the programme would involve work on their part. Once the programme had started, however, these fears were soon allayed.

Evaluation-specific concerns

Although the DLs conveyed some apprehensions about questionnaire completion at the pilot phase, there was an admission that completion rates had been easier to achieve and higher than anticipated. This was said to be due in part to having chased them up multiple times and creating a rule that no new referrals could be put through until SDQs had been completed at follow-up. One SL described some difficulty in getting YPs to complete questionnaires and that they found some of the content confusing:

> *The next challenge was when we started doing the student questionnaire. Some of the questions the students found difficult [to respond to] or didn't really understand properly, I would say. (Pilot, SL 1, city)*

Some SLs described their disappointment at not being able to ensure that every child they referred would actually receive a mentor, as well as difficulties in communicating this to their team. The randomisation process had to be reiterated to staff to ensure they understood that not all YPs would receive the Reach Programme, and, therefore, staff should refrain from making such promises to parents or YPs.

Youth worker role-specific barriers

One YW said that having a full caseload could be challenging and also expressed some surprise at having to create their own resources. Other issues described were difficulties in contacting YPs who did not have a

mobile phone, meaning they had to make contact through parents, and sometimes parents would forget the YW had arranged a session.

Being reliant on funding was also difficult for YWs who knew their contracts were coming to an end and had to look for jobs elsewhere whilst continuing to work as YWs. As reported in the section on the recruitment and retention of YWs, the precarity caused a level of anxiety, and ultimately, some YWs left their roles with Reach for permanent posts elsewhere.

YWs leaving before the end of the programme, although uncommon, had an obvious knock-on effect for the families they were supporting:

> *We just know that she's changing jobs. But to try and explain that to a 13-year-old, he's like, 'Why does everybody stop working with me and leave me?' (Efficacy, P/C 9, county)*

Barriers related to the time-limited nature of the programme

Parents had almost no complaints about the Reach Programme. However, the majority of parents said they would like the mentor relationship to have lasted longer and were unhappy that it was coming to an end:

> *She's gone back to how she used to be because her worker could only be with her for so long. So, I think it's sad that it's not long enough. (Pilot, P/C 7, county)*

Many of the YPs expressed similar disappointment:

> *It makes me sad. I feel like I would probably just fall back into being depressed and lonely again. (Efficacy, YP 16, county)*

This was despite the attempts undertaken within the programme to identify a trusted adult to hand over to. The reality for many YPs was that such a person did not exist, and even where they did, the time-pressurised nature of school timetables seldom allowed scope for that connection to be developed and supported to the same extent as within the Reach Programme. Therefore, as the quotations above suggest, there was a risk after the Reach Programme had ceased that the YP's behaviour would revert to what it was like pre-intervention.

Impact evaluation processes and procedures

- *Is individual-level randomisation practicable and acceptable in this context?*
- *Are there any issues regarding spillover, e.g. resentful demoralisation or a YP allocated to the control group coming into contact with youth workers?*
- *Are consent procedures/baseline and outcome measurement procedures practicable and appropriate?*

Strategic leads at Reach had initial concerns about how the randomisation process would be received by schools but felt that it was accepted fairly well by school staff and YPs. As part of the trial design, schools were given reassurances about other local support available for those in the control group and were also given a financial resource to support this if needed. DLs confirmed that they communicated reassurances to school staff and parents that YPs in control conditions would still be offered support in other ways:

It was about making sure that they are going to get something, whether it be like a youth work offer or something that was mainstream within the council [or] another service that we can refer them to for support. It's just that it wasn't Reach. (Efficacy, DL)

There was some discomfort voiced among school staff and YWs regarding the trial and the need for YPs to be allocated to control:

I would have liked everyone who I put forward to get on it because I put them all forward for a reason. So, that's been the frustrating thing. Even with my own team, it's that explaining. In a post-exclusion meeting, they'll offer the parents the Reach project, and I'm like, 'No. You can't do that because it's not guaranteed'. (Pilot, SL 4, city)

The frustrations were around the ethical and moral implications of vulnerable YPs not getting the support available from Reach, as well as around the struggle to communicate the nature of a trial to other school staff, YPs and parents. Furthermore, open comments from the survey revealed that many staff members felt that pupils allocated to the control would have very much benefited from a Reach worker.

Spillover

Spillover appeared to be an issue across both the pilot and efficacy stages, relating to low-level involvement of YWs with YPs in the control:

Our Reach workers here are just like an added member of staff… [the Reach YW] seemed to know everyone in the school. So yes, the kids just know who they are. (Efficacy, SL 8, county)

Further, there was an indication that some YPs allocated to the control group had ended up attending Reach sessions as part of working with peers, and there were a couple of scenarios where siblings were split between the intervention and control groups:

If the name came up in the control group, you could see that, actually, they'd joined in a couple of sessions with the child that received intervention, for example, because obviously we're working with peers and bringing about change, positive change, for their group of friends, for example, and that some of them did fall into the control group. (Efficacy, DL)

I know you've had it in the county; we have had it in the city where they've referred siblings and one has received intervention, and one has received control, so that's been interesting. (Pilot, DL)

This issue with siblings was also alluded to by some SLs, who discussed some of their control pupils getting to know the Reach YWs outside of school through being friends with referred pupils.

SLs described some of the control pupils as being deflated about not getting a YW. This was corroborated by YWs who came into contact with control pupils but were not in a position to help them:

I then end up having young people going to school, and they say, 'Ah. You were supposed to be my youth worker'. You can sense the disappointment. You know that they need the help, but they didn't get it. I don't think it's nice for them to know that they were referred but then were almost rejected, and now they see me coming in to see another young person, and they're thinking, 'That could have been me. What help are they getting that I don't get?' kind of thing. It just adds, for them, to the frustrations of school and work and life, and they feel rejected again. (Pilot, YW 2, county)

As the above quotation illustrates, there was clear disappointment among some control pupils across the trial.

Consent procedures and baseline and outcome measures

At the outset, detailed information was provided to schools about the consent process and collection of baseline and outcome measures. This included a parent/carer reader-friendly information sheet and privacy notice (Appendix E) that reassured parents/carers that if allocated to the control group, their YP would still get the usual support and also vouchers for questionnaire completion. Parents/carers were asked to discuss this with their YP and then return the slip to indicate that they consented for their YP to take part in the trial.

During the trial, it was evident that many schools had telephone conversations with parents/carers to explain participation, and parents/carers were asked to read through the information sheet with their YP. However, upon visits made by the research team to a group of control pupils, it became apparent that many YPs were not aware of the Reach Programme. Researchers had to explain what Reach was, including its purpose and how YPs were selected. There were no overt concerns raised by participants who had not been selected; however, this should be considered in the context that they did not know what the programme was about. It is possible and perhaps likely, given the evidence above, that if they had known what the programme was about, they may have felt differently. One YP, once they were informed by the researcher about the purpose of the Reach Programme, shared that not being selected did not impact them, as they were already receiving similar support:

> *[I'm] not bothered I didn't receive mentoring, as I am already receiving support and have been for a while. (Pilot, YP 10, school A, control)*

Overall, there appears to have been a lack of understanding with some control pupils in terms of the trial design, despite the evaluator having designed communications that were readable and accessible to YPs (Appendix E). This reflects the difficulty of effectively communicating the nature of participation in trials to vulnerable YPs. Further consideration should be given to this for future research. The YP focus group data strongly suggests a lack of understanding of the Reach Programme and a lack of insight into the process of randomisation, which raises some concerns about the level of assent of the YPs involved. In addition, for those YPs who were aware of Reach, there was the issue of further erosion of their trust in school staff, having had expectations of support which were not met:

> *I know I was meant to go to it and then never ended up having it. (Pilot, YP 11, school B, control)*

When asked for any concluding thoughts, the YPs' responses suggested that they felt they had not been fully informed about the research study and the interventions involved. There was, therefore, a sense of a wasted opportunity and confusion as to what they had taken part in and why.

> *We never got told which condition they had been randomised to. It just got forgotten. (Pilot, YP 11, school B, control)*

> *I just feel it was a bit of a waste of time. (Pilot, YP 12, school B, control)*

For school staff, the consent process and outcome measure processes were also described as being somewhat difficult:

It can be quite intense doing that and explaining, 'Oh, you may get it, and you may not get it, but you may be eligible; you may not be eligible, but we'll ring your mum anyway and get permission, then we'll get permission from you, then you will do a survey'. I don't like that part; I must admit. (Pilot, SL 2, city)

Regarding the SDQ outcome measure specifically, SLs felt that this was not a problem for teachers and was manageable with their YPs, with some having used the measure previously. The Amazon voucher incentives were said to be helpful in achieving completion rates with the YPs. There were caveats, however, for example, about some YPs not understanding some of the questions and concerns about the anonymity of their answers, which led to some YPs choosing not to answer questions with honesty:

There have been two or three that I've worked with saying, 'I wasn't honest…' And they will have told their youth worker, 'I didn't put it all there'. (Efficacy, SL 7, city)

Some YPs were not aware that the measure was related to the Reach Programme; for example, one YP thought it was related to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and admitted to not answering fully truthfully due to their dislike of that service. The measure was also said to be odd by some YPs:

I remember one being something like, 'Have I set a bin on fire?' and I looked… I was like, 'What?' (Efficacy, YP 13, city)

With regard to the SRDS, mean scores reported in the impact evaluation were low on the scale at baseline, suggesting that this measure was not suitable for this cohort of YPs. Given the preventative nature of the intervention, a higher level of delinquent behaviour may not be expected at baseline. Taking this into account alongside evidence from the IPE that some YPs found the SRDS challenging to complete, use of this measure in future studies for this type of cohort would not be recommended.

Cost information

This section details the estimated cost of delivering the Reach programme by the local authority from January 2023 to June 2025. Costs are reported at 2022/23 prices (when project delivery began), with a GDP deflator applied to costs from April 2023 onwards. Table 35 provides headline figures for the one-off set-up costs and recurring delivery costs, shown as total amounts and per-participant costs. Per-participant costs are calculated based on 301 total participants. Staffing accounted for the vast majority of costs, predominantly YW time. Table 36 provides full cost category descriptions, and a cost breakdown can be found in Table 37.

Table 35: Set up and recurring costs of Reach, in total and per pupil

	Total costs	Cost per participant (301)
Set-up	£31,956	£106
Recurring	£1,433,472	£4,762
Total	£1,465,428	£4,869

Table 36: Cost categories and descriptions for Reach

Category	Description
Staff	
Youth worker (YW)	Salary calculations were based on a 37-hour working week and included national insurance and pension contributions. At full capacity, the project employed 10 1FTE YWs. The Leicester City team started with four YWs, increasing to six. The Leicestershire County team started with two YWs, increasing to four. YWs delivered direct support to young people (YPs) through planning and facilitating one-to-one sessions, conducting initial assessments and making home visits when needed. As part of set-up, they spent time building relationships with partner schools. They attended school meetings to coordinate support and maintained detailed case recordings, alongside general administrative tasks. The YWs participated in training opportunities and engaged in team meetings and case supervisions.
Team manager	Salary calculations were based on a 37-hour working week and included national insurance and pension contributions. The project employed two team managers at 1FTE and 0.68FTE. Team managers were responsible for oversight of both staff development and operational delivery. This included recruiting and onboarding new team members and providing ongoing support through weekly group supervisions, individual case supervisions and YW training. They maintained quality standards through performance management and QA processes whilst also handling school liaison and responding to day-to-day queries. The role encompassed strategic responsibilities including chairing meetings, data management and analysis, and marketing and promotion activities, alongside general administrative duties.
Operations officers	Salary calculations were based on a 37-hour working week and included national insurance and pension contributions. The project employed two operations officers at 1FTE and 0.5FTE. Operations officers managed the operational flow of the programme, triaging referrals and capturing data whilst maintaining monitoring spreadsheets to track progress. They supported programme development and contributed to data analysis activities that informed delivery. The officers facilitated communication through school liaison work and attended team meetings and group supervisions.
Equipment and materials	
Supplies	A range of supplies was purchased to facilitate sessions, including arts and craft materials (e.g. paper, exercise books, felt pens, pencil crayons, acrylic paints, paintbrushes and canvases), toys and games (e.g. card games for icebreakers, footballs, playdough and fidget toys). This category also included some programme stationery costs (e.g. folders and files).
Printing	This included printing of the core component booklets. Each YW had a set of booklets (seven in total) as part of their intervention library. The total cost for external printing was £4,000.
Travel	Staff were paid 45p per mile (after their travel from home to base) for travelling between schools, homes, community sites, etc. Staff submitted mileage claims monthly; these were checked by the team manager and authorised accordingly. Fuel receipts were attached to

	claims. Parking expense receipts had to also be attached to claims to be authorised. The exact mileage and travel expenses varied by quarter, depending on the number of YWs employed and the status of the project in terms of cohorts and closures.
Buildings and facilities	
None	Reach sessions took place in a variety of locations which incurred no cost to the local authorities, including schools, participant homes, youth centres and public spaces within the community (e.g. coffee shops). No costs were incurred for youth centres due to these sites being owned by each local authority.
Other inputs	
Participant budget	A budget of £50 per participant was made available to YWs to support a sustainable activity that the YPs had been encouraged to take part in. For example, purchasing football boots for a participant who had started with a football team or any such items that built on the YP's interests or strengths.
Training	Most training provided to the YWs was at no additional cost. This training was delivered either in-house or by the Violence Reduction Network at no charge to the local authority. In addition, as the Leicester City team sat with the Leicester City Children & Young People's Justice Service, the city YWs were offered the opportunity to undertake the *Youth Justice Certificate in Effective Practice* as part of their professional development. This was delivered by an external service and had a cost attached.

Note: FTE = full-time equivalent

Table 37: Cost calculations

Price year 2022/23	Delivery partner: local authority		
Cost items	Set up costs	Recurring costs[21]	Total
Staff time			
Youth workers	£16,497[22]	£1,034,111	£1,050,608
Team managers	£7,656	£235,974	£243,630
Operations officers	£0[23]	£140,149	£140,149
Equipment and materials			
Supplies	£202	£1,822	£2,025
Printing	£4,000		£4,000
Other inputs			
Participant budget		£13,631	£13,631
Training	£3,600		£3,600
Travel		£7,785	£7,785
Total cost	£31,956	£1,433,472	£1,465,428
Total cost per participant	£106	£4,762	£4,869

[21] GDP deflator applied from April 2023. At the time of preparing this report, a deflator was not yet available for the 2025/26 financial year, therefore the 2024/25 deflator has been applied from April to July 2025.

[22] YW time for developing programme resources (estimated at 15 days per YW, 6FTE YWs) was incurred during an earlier feasibility study and is therefore not included in the costs reported here. However, this one-off set-up activity would have been necessary for initial programme delivery had it not already taken place.

[23] Operations officer time for setting up programme systems (estimated at 15 days per 1FTE operations officer) was incurred during an earlier feasibility study and is therefore not included in the costs reported here. However, this one-off set-up activity would have been necessary for initial programme delivery had it not already taken place.

Conclusion

Table 38: Key conclusions

Key conclusions
REACH demonstrated a **small positive impact** on children's behavioural difficulties. Children who received REACH showed fewer behavioural difficulties than children who did not receive the programme. This result has a **high security rating**.
REACH showed mostly positive impacts on the secondary outcomes: it had a small positive impact on emotional regulation and peer relationships, and a moderate positive impact on prosocial behaviour, as measured by teachers. The programme also showed a moderate positive impact on self-reported measures of behavioural difficulties, emotional regulation, peer relationships and prosocial behaviour. The programme had a small positive impact on anti-social behaviour and offending, a moderate positive impact on school attendance and a small negative impact on school suspensions. These are secondary outcomes and should be treated with caution.
Engagement with the programme and attendance were good, with participants attending 78% of the sessions offered. A low proportion (7%) of children dropped-out of the intervention.
Children reported highly positive experiences, describing youth workers as trusted, non-judgemental adults who provided emotional support, guidance and stability. Children valued the flexible and child-led approach and highlighted improvements in confidence, emotional wellbeing, maturity and motivation at school. Parents and carers valued the programme, in particular the consistent communication, practical support and reassurance provided.
Across all stakeholder groups, the programme's relational approach, flexibility, consistency of support and the lived experience and relatability of youth workers were highlighted as the programme's strengths.

Outcomes on young people

The Reach Programme had a small impact on YPs' behavioural difficulties. Subsequent to their participation in the Reach Programme, YPs were found to have slightly lower levels of behavioural difficulties compared to their counterparts in the control group. The control group was well supported and likewise experienced positive outcomes, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings from the impact evaluation.

Whilst the impact evaluation did not reveal any stark positive outcomes for YPs participating in the Reach Programme, qualitative findings from the IPE were generally very positive, with a range of improvements observed in YPs, including:

- Anger/temper control
- Communication
- Maturity
- Motivation at school
- Confidence
- Aspirations

Further positive outcomes noted were an increase in the network of positive peers and the ability to exert a positive influence on others.

This disparity between the impact evaluation and the IPE in terms of outcomes potentially suggests that the impact evaluation may be overlooking some of the positive effects observed in YPs that were not identified by the measures employed in the impact evaluation. A multi-site trial of mentoring programmes (Rowland

et al., 2024) found no impact of mentoring on self-reported behavioural and emotional problems as measured by the SDQ. However, like the Reach evaluation, when that trial turned to the SDQ subscales, it found the highest impact on prosocial behaviour and also found positive impacts on a range of secondary outcomes, including self-confidence, social skills and resilience. Whilst the multi-site trial looked at programmes shorter in length than Reach and with differing core components, it would be beneficial to explore other impacts of Reach with regard to measures such as these.

Regarding the lower impact on administrative data (i.e. suspensions and offending behaviours) in the impact evaluation, it should be noted firstly that the trial was not powered to detect an impact on these outcomes. Given the positive impacts on emotional and social/relational outcomes observed in the qualitative data, it was conjectured that not enough time had passed to allow these developments to progress into behavioural changes that would feed into administrative data. The findings could also be understood, in part, through various psychosocial and developmental theories. For example, social and emotional learning models, such as CASEL (Weissberg and Shriver**,** 1994),[24] propose that proximal outcomes, such as improvements in emotional and relational areas, often occur before behavioural manifestations, such as a reduction in suspensions. This is due to the need for sustained time to put changes in habits into practice following emotional regulation; therefore, these effects may present at a later stage, particularly when considering the complex multifaceted context of secondary schools. The transtheoretical model (Prochaska et al. 2008) similarly posits that individuals must move through six separate stages related to emotional readiness in order to progress to modifications in their behaviours. The emphasis of this model is on the process, and sustained changes may take years to occur.

Impact evaluation processes and procedures

The disparity between the impact evaluation findings and the IPE findings in terms of outcomes on YPs may also be due to the positive outcomes seen in the control group, raising methodological issues. The implementation of an RCT methodology proved challenging in relation to the control group. From an ethical perspective, support for the control group was paramount. However, given the rolling nature of referrals and varying needs of the YPs, implementing a uniform control condition was not possible; thus, a financial resource was given to schools, which they could use flexibly to support the control group and/or to act as an incentive for trial participation. Support for the control group thus varied widely across the schools in the study, with some YPs allocated to the control group receiving other forms of mentoring through external or in-house provision, although this was much less intensive than Reach mentoring and had different core components. This variability in the level of support received by members of the control group has implications for interpreting the results of the impact evaluation.

Another methodological issue arising was spillover. Where YWs were well integrated into the school, they came into contact with YPs who were allocated to the control group; thus, Reach may have had upstream effects at the school level and influenced other YPs in the school without direct intervention. Further, there was evidence that some YPs allocated to the control group had even attended a Reach session as a peer of a YP allocated to Reach. Furthermore, SLs conveyed their frustration about the trial design, where they felt that YPs allocated to the control group could have especially benefited from Reach. Thus, SLs may have felt a sense of duty to the control group over and above what could be considered to be BAU. To mitigate issues

[24] CASEL, Fundamentals of SEL https://casel.org/

such as these, the Reach Programme would benefit from being trialled using cluster-level randomisation or the QED methodology to achieve a truer control group. A waitlist design could be used to mitigate disappointment felt by the control group whilst also helping to ensure that the control group remains authentic during the trial because stakeholders (such as SLs) would be reassured that the control group would get the same support in due course.

Subgroup and additional analysis

Subgroup and additional exploratory analyses from the impact evaluation provided interesting insights into differences in outcomes experienced by different groups of YPs. Asian YPs experienced more positive outcomes than White YPs, and whilst this did not reach statistical significance, the difference in effect sizes observed is certainly notable. Following on from this subgroup finding, an additional exploratory analysis was undertaken to examine any difference in levels of suspensions for Asian YPs compared with White YPs. This analysis also revealed more positive outcomes for Asian YPs than for White YPs; again, the effect size difference was notable but fell short of statistical significance. Taken together, these two results strengthen the indication that the Reach Programme was more effective for Asian YPs than White YPs. Findings from the SDQ impact supplement further support this finding. Looking to the IPE and the literature to explain the finding, qualitative data from the IPE demonstrated that, on the whole, the Reach Programme was successful in engaging families from minority ethnic backgrounds by allocating a YW from a similar background with whom the parent/carer felt more comfortable or, if this was not possible, by ensuring that the trusting relationship was built from the outset. Having that trusting relationship between the YW and parent/carer may have contributed to the positive findings for the Asian subgroup in the impact evaluation.

Turning to the literature, research shows that although many YPs become vulnerable through poverty, housing instability and school exclusion, minority ethnic YPs also face systemic racism vulnerabilities and barriers that can affect engagement with education (Burrell et al., 2021) and prevention programmes (Emezue et al., 2023). Woods-Jaeger et al. (2022) learned from a study involving Black youths that mentoring was a valued means of providing non-racist support, particularly if the mentors were Black. Therefore, in the current study, YPs from minority backgrounds may have responded well to the Reach intervention because it is school-based and, therefore, accessible regardless of socio-economic status or demographic. Further, YPs from ethnic minorities may have benefited more from the Reach Programme if there was less ready access to mentors and trusted adults in their out-of-school environments.

As a consequence of this finding, given that the vast majority of Asian YPs in the study are based in the Leicester City area, it was deemed important to explore any differences in outcomes according to the area where the YP was based. This revealed more positive outcomes for YPs based in schools in Leicester City compared with YPs in schools in Leicestershire County, which was found to be statistically significant, and the finding is further confirmed by the analysis of the SDQ impact supplement. The difference may be explained in part by the more positive outcomes found for Asian YPs and the fact that the Leicestershire County area is predominantly White British. A further possible reason for this difference may be the greater availability of recreational activities in the Leicester City area compared with more rural areas, as identified by the IPE, indicating the importance of this element of the intervention in terms of outcomes. This is set out in the ToC in terms of increased understanding of and increased engagement in positive local activities. Whilst this difference in the availability of recreational activities between the two areas was identified by the IPE, with regard to outcomes observed on YPs, this difference between the two areas was much less evident, with positive outcomes for YPs reflected across both areas. This finding would benefit from further

research to deepen understanding of the reasons for this difference found in the impact evaluation, which would help inform key factors for successful implementation.

An important difference in outcomes was observed between the pilot and efficacy stages, with more positive outcomes observed at the pilot stage in terms of both the primary outcome and the SDQ impact supplement. Whilst the effect size found at the pilot stage did not reach statistical significance, it is notably larger than in the efficacy phase, where a null effect was observed. Turning to the IPE, reasons that potentially contributed to this difference were identified as follows:

- There was some evidence at the efficacy stage of saturation of referrals. Schools that had been in both the pilot and efficacy stages of the trial were finding it more difficult to meet the numbers required as time went on, taking into account that schools were required to fulfil numbers to be randomised to the intervention or control group; thus, perhaps the YPs who they felt would have most benefitted from the Reach Programme had already been referred at the pilot stage. The slight increase in ineligible referrals between the pilot and efficacy stage supports this point. This issue would be mitigated in future by employing a cluster RCT or QED methodology.
- In the efficacy phase, there was a slight drop in the number of YPs receiving a minimum of 32 sessions (69.0% at the pilot compared with 60.7% at the efficacy). Receipt of a minimum of 32 sessions had only a minimal effect on the primary outcome; however, this may still be a factor.
- According to the monitoring data, 95% of cases completed the Reach Programme at the pilot stage, compared with 88% at the efficacy stage, indicating a slight drop in engagement. Those in the intervention group who did not complete the Reach Programme were found to have less positive outcomes.
- Some communication issues were noted at the efficacy stage due to staffing changes and the Reach offer not being filtered down to the correct staff within the school, leading to inappropriate or delayed referrals.

The points discussed above raise important methodological considerations for future studies. There is evidence that the restrictions of the trial methodology impacted the number of referrals made by the school, particularly at the efficacy stage, with saturation points being reached in some cases, which may not have been an issue if schools did not have to fulfil referral numbers for YPs to be randomised to intervention or control. Employing a cluster-level randomisation approach or a QED design would mitigate this issue.

Fidelity/adherence and dosage

Whilst the core components of the Reach Programme provided the backbone of delivery and a guide to consistency of delivery using the highly regarded tracker system, delivery of all six of these core components was not found to impact on the primary outcome. This finding was further explored using the impact supplement data from the teacher SDQ, which showed that for YPs in the intervention group who completed the Reach Programme (excluding the cases who declined support or withdrew early), completion of all six core components did not influence outcomes. This finding aligns with the qualitative data, which demonstrated that a key factor in the success of the Reach Programme was the flexibility and responsiveness of delivery in terms of content, mode and intensity, which perhaps outweighs the need to ensure that all six core components were delivered.

In terms of time spent with the YWs, a minimum of 32 sessions was set as the threshold for compliance with the intervention. This was shown to have a marginal impact on the primary outcome, which is reflected in

the CACE analysis, where full compliance had a marginal positive impact on the effect size. Again, this was explored in relation to the SDQ impact supplement, where this factor appeared to have more of an impact on the outcome, suggesting that the number of sessions with the YW is more important than the delivery of all core components in relation to outcomes for YPs. These findings indicate the difficulties in defining compliance when the very nature of youth work is about working in a flexible and responsive way. Whilst the expectations are that all six core components are delivered, the way in which they are delivered, the order of delivery and the intensity of delivery should be flexible and YP-led in order to make the most impact and make the most of teachable moments as they emerge.

Although the numbers are relatively small in terms of drawing any certain conclusions, it is worth drawing attention to the group of YPs who declined support/withdrew early compared with the YPs who completed the Reach Programme as defined by the monitoring data (both allocated to the intervention group). It can be seen clearly here that the group of YPs who declined support/withdrew early experienced less positive outcomes in terms of both the primary outcome and the SDQ impact supplement compared with the group of YPs who completed the Reach Programme. This suggests that completion of and engagement with the Reach Programme improves outcomes for YPs.

Key factors for successful implementation

Using evidence from the IPE, a set of key factors for successful implementation was drawn up:

- The YWs appointed tended to have strong related prior work experience and/or relevant lived experience that were highly transferable to their Reach role. This was complemented by strong group and individual supervision for YWs, which were key mechanisms to help ensure that the Reach Programme was delivered in line with the expectations and that YWs were supported to ensure quality delivery.
- YWs spoke highly of DLs and their availability. The positive support YWs experienced had positive impacts on their ability to deliver the programme effectively. YWs also felt that their personal needs were supported, which also contributed to their sense of efficacy at work.
- Strong collegial peer support within the delivery team was valued by the YWs as an informal means of sharing good practice and getting ad hoc support for any issues arising with particular cases.
- Use of the tracker system helped ensure consistency of delivery and quality implementation and acted as a catalyst for discussion during internal meetings. However, the tracking was not to the detriment of personalised delivery. There was recognition of the need to be responsive to YPs' immediate needs, which sometimes meant flexibility in how the core components were delivered and in what sequence.
- School buy-in to the programme and strong communication between the delivery team and the SLs were key, although there was variation across settings. To facilitate a good relationship with schools, the delivery team made the process as easy for schools as possible, so schools had minimal costs but maximum rewards. Where communication was more difficult, this impacted successful implementation.
- Schools appreciated the YWs' ability to advocate on behalf of YPs and broker between different stakeholders, which often left a positive legacy beyond the programme.

- YWs tailored the core components to fit the lives of the YPs and delivered Reach in a flexible and responsive way in terms of mode and intensity.
- YWs built an understanding of the YPs' interests and engaged them in activities (using the allocated budget) that they enjoyed and might otherwise not have had opportunities for. This aided positive relationships. However, there was some regional variation in the accessibility of different activities.
- YWs forged strong and trusting relationships with the YPs. This was reflected in the time invested in the relationship-building component, and success was evidenced in the MYAS survey.
- YWs also formed trusting and communicative relationships with the YPs' parents/carers, with the IPE demonstrating that parents/carers valued the YWs highly. A key strength of Reach, as identified by schools, was the independent status of the YWs and their ability to connect with the YPs' families and act as a bridge between home life and school.

Evidence to support the logic model

It was clear that, on the whole, schools very much valued the Reach Programme, indicating its distinctiveness from other school-based programmes in terms of intensity, length, ability to bridge the gap between home life and school, and timely availability. Evidence from the evaluation indicates that LM outcomes were, for the most part, being met as follows:

- The Reach Programme was able to access the target group of YPs in terms of ethnicity/age/gender and schools with higher suspension rates in areas of deprivation.
- The IPE demonstrated that the YWs were highly skilled, with a diverse team recruited in terms of ethnicity and gender, allowing the YPs to be matched with a YW of an appropriate gender and a similar cultural background, where possible.
- Having schools buy in to the project was key, although there was variation across settings. To facilitate a good relationship with schools, the delivery team made the process as straightforward as possible for schools so they had minimal costs but maximum rewards.
- Reach sessions were generally well attended by the YPs, whilst delivery was flexible and responsive in terms of mode, content and intensity.
- Parental engagement, which was identified as a key driver for the success of the programme, was one of the factors distinguishing Reach from other support available. A trusting relationship being built with parents/carers often led to better engagement by the YPs.
- Engagement with YPs and an intense relationship-building phase were further key drivers of success. Responsiveness from YPs was generally found to be very positive. Strong relationships with YWs, in turn, facilitated successful outcomes for YPs.
- Participation in local activities and opportunities was found to be an important factor in delivery, with evidence suggesting that wider opportunities for activities in Leicester City potentially may have led to more positive outcomes (with regard to the primary outcome) for YPs.
- With regard to YPs' outcomes, whilst the quantitative measures revealed only small/moderate impacts in terms of the primary and secondary outcomes, the IPE identified a range of positive impacts relating to the LM, such as improved emotional regulation, improved self-esteem and improved motivation at school.

Further research would be beneficial to investigate outcomes for YPs that the impact evaluation may have overlooked, for example, increased confidence/self-esteem (which is identified as an outcome in the ToC).

With regard to reductions in suspensions, little evidence was found to support this, other than for the Asian subgroup. Further research is warranted to investigate why this is the case and to better understand the reasons for success with the Asian subgroup and how this could be expanded. A moderate positive impact was found in terms of improvement in school attendance; however, this finding would benefit from further research using NPD data, and further research is needed to examine how the Reach Programme could better facilitate greater gains in school attendance for YPs.

Limitations and lessons learned

Use of a teacher-reported measure for the primary outcome has its limitations, given that this is not from the perspective of the YPs themselves. Also, whilst SLs were able to provide an account of behaviour at school, they would not be able to pick up on any changes in behaviour outside of school. Using the equivalent YP measures as secondary outcomes helped in supporting the findings observed, but response rates proved challenging here, particularly for the control group. Further, SLs were not blind to group allocation, which introduces bias into the findings. Future research may benefit from employing a YP-completed measure as the primary outcome; however, there would need to be consideration of how to maximise response rates. For this to be successful, the research team would need to have direct contact with the YPs involved. Whilst every effort was made to maximise response rates, schools inevitably have other priorities and are not always able to access a YP if they are persistently absent.

There is some suggestion from the qualitative data that the intervention period of six months was not long enough for some YPs. As discussed above, the qualitative data points to positive emotional and relational outcomes for the YPs, but it may take them more time to manifest these shifts as behavioural changes that can be captured in suspension and offending data. Future studies would benefit from further exploration of this issue, potentially by increasing the length of the intervention and/or ensuring that YPs can sustain engagement in positive local recreational activities.

Consent to the trial also proved challenging. Despite accessible communications being distributed, evidence from focus groups with YPs allocated to the control group indicated a level of confusion and disappointment for the control group. In future, direct contact between YPs and researchers would help alleviate these challenges at the point of gaining consent.

Subscales from the SDQ do link directly to outcomes on the ToC; however, there may be some outcomes that are being overlooked with regard to the impact evaluation, and future research would benefit from employing other scales to measure outcomes such as self-confidence, improved communication, increased self-esteem and increased maturity. Further exploration of the underpinning theory in relation to the ToC would be beneficial to understanding the additional scales that could be employed in future studies.

With regard to the SRDS, it was evident there were various issues with this measure. YPs found it lengthy and challenging to complete in some instances. The baseline data showed a low level of delinquent behaviour, indicating that this measure was unsuitable for this cohort of YPs. It would not be recommended to repeat the use of this measure for similar cohorts. This was further reflected in the administrative data on offending, where 84.0% of YPs had never committed any offences at baseline. Thus, for a cohort such as this, where the intervention is intended as a preventative measure, the value of measuring the level of offending as an outcome should be given further consideration for future studies.

As discussed above, whilst individual-level randomisation was implemented successfully, it did pose various methodological challenges as outlined below:

- YPs expressed a sense of disappointment at being allocated to the control group.
- SLs expressed frustration where they felt YPs allocated to the control group could have especially benefited from the intervention.
- There were challenges in achieving a true control group, with evidence of SLs going above and beyond BAU for the control group, and in some cases SLs even buying in other mentoring programmes in an effort to alleviate disappointment for the YPs who were not receiving the Reach Programme.
- There was variability in the level of support received by members of the control group has implications for interpreting the results of the impact evaluation.
- There was evidence to suggest that some schools reached a saturation point with referrals at the efficacy stage, given the need to fulfil numbers for randomisation to intervention or control.
- Spillover issues were evident, where YPs allocated to the control group came into contact with YWs in the school and sometimes attended Reach sessions as a peer of a YP allocated to the intervention group.

The above issues point to the value of employing cluster-level randomisation or a QED design and the use of a waitlist design to mitigate these issues in future studies.

Future research and publications

Recommendations for future research are as follows:

- The employment of other quantitative measures could provide insight into outcomes that may have been overlooked in the impact evaluation, for example, improved self-confidence, improved communication, improved maturity and improved self-esteem.
- Further research is needed to explain the findings regarding more positive outcomes for Asian YPs compared with White YPs.
- Whilst the impact evaluation demonstrated a clear difference in outcomes between the city and county areas, this was far less evident in the IPE. Further research is needed to fully understand why this difference in outcomes occurred in the impact evaluation.
- Based on the positive findings from the pilot stage, a further standalone efficacy trial of Reach would be beneficial. Future designs should employ cluster-level randomisation or a QED design with a waitlist to mitigate the methodological challenges with individual-level randomisation.
- Research is needed into how the Reach Programme can improve school attendance and suspension outcomes. The apparent success in achieving a drop in suspensions for the Asian subgroup could be further researched to gain a better understanding of what lies behind this success so that it can be replicated for other groups of YPs.
- Future studies could investigate how the Reach Programme can better access YPs with low attendance at school, and, in the case of low attenders who were able to be accessed, studies could investigate how to improve their attendance at Reach sessions.

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Appendix A: Effect size estimation

Appendix A Table 1: Effect size estimation

			Intervention group		Control group		
Outcome	Unadjusted differences in means	Adjusted differences in means	n (missing)	Variance of outcome	n (missing)	Variance of outcome	Pooled variance
Teacher Externalising score	-0.40	-0.32	272 (29)	20.5	254 (39)	18.6	19.6
Teacher SDQ Internalising score	-0.39	-0.18	272 (29)	16.2	254 (39)	16.4	16.3
Teacher SDQ Prosocial score	0.30	0.19	272 (39)	6.2	254 (29)	6.1	6.2
YP SDQ externalising score	-0.33	-0.66	222 (79)	15.0	119 (174)	14.9	15.0
YP SDQ internalising score	-0.60	-0.54	220 (81)	12.6	119 (174)	13.4	12.9
YP SDQ prosocial score	0.26	0.3	220 (81)	4.1	119 (174)	4.1	4.1
YP SRDS variety of deliquency score	-0.32	-0.41	222 (79)	6.8	119 (174)	9.2	7.7
YP SRDS volume of deliquency score	0.60	-0.26	222 (79)	166.8	119 (174)	255.8	197.8
Attendance at school	-0.38	2.21	253 (54)	506.9	241 (52)	577.4	541.3
Number of suspensions	0.60	0.13	294 (7)	38.3	287 (6)	26.6	32.5
Number of offences	-0.11	-0.02	297 (4)	0.60	285 (8)	1.1	0.8
Number of times suspect of an offence	-0.22	-0.10	297 (4)	4.38	285 (8)	6.0	5.2

Appendix A Table 2: Baseline and follow up effect sizes overall to demonstrate change over time separately for each group, by phase and by area (using unadjusted means)

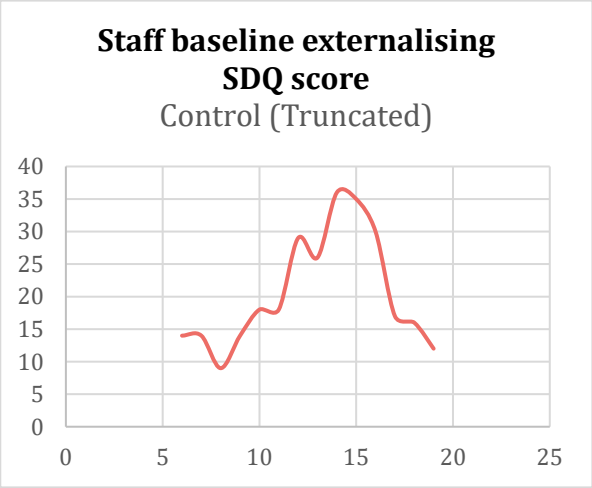
	Unadjusted difference in means	Baseline n	Baseline variance	Follow up n	Follow up variance	Pooled variance	Pooled SD	Effect size
Overall								
Control	-1.53	254	12.63	254	18.63	15.63	3.95	-0.39
Intervention	-1.91	272	13.25	272	20.49	16.87	4.11	-0.46
Pilot								
Control	-1.49	86	12.96	86	17.73	15.34	3.92	-0.38
Intervention	-2.21	96	11.24	96	15.70	13.47	3.67	-0.60
Efficacy								
Control	-1.55	168	12.49	168	19.12	15.81	3.98	-0.39
Intervention	-1.74	176	14.41	176	23.07	18.74	4.33	-0.40
City								
Control	-1.61	153	12.14	153	18.09	15.11	3.89	-0.41
Intervention	-2.91	158	12.60	158	19.39	15.99	4.00	-0.73
County								
Control	-1.41	101	13.42	101	19.61	16.52	4.06	-0.35
Intervention	-0.53	114	14.09	114	20.28	17.19	4.15	-0.13

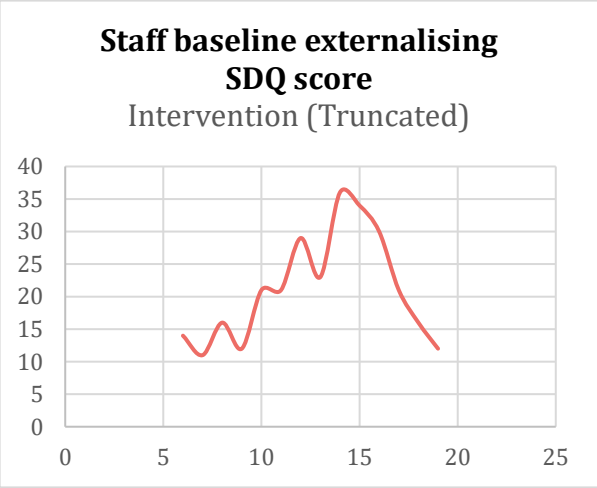
Appendix B: Density plots

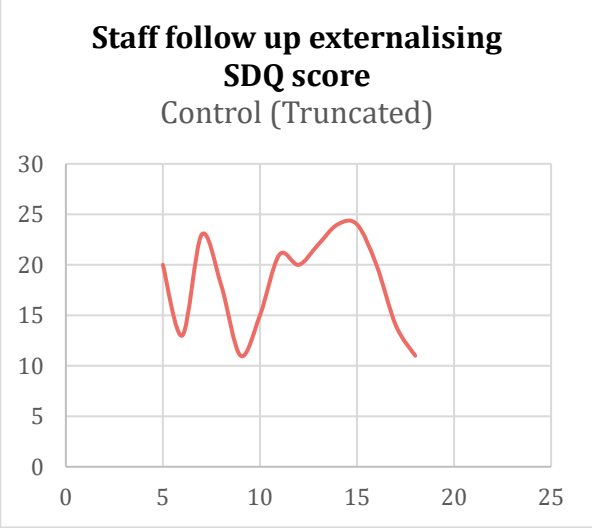
Density plots

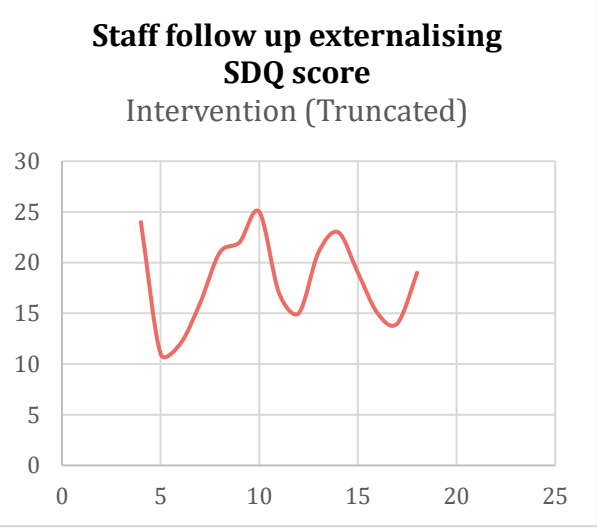
Density plots are presented for the baseline and follow up primary outcomes of staff externalising SDQ scores, and for the follow up secondary outcomes of staff internalising and prosocial SDQ scores, as well as for the number of suspensions.

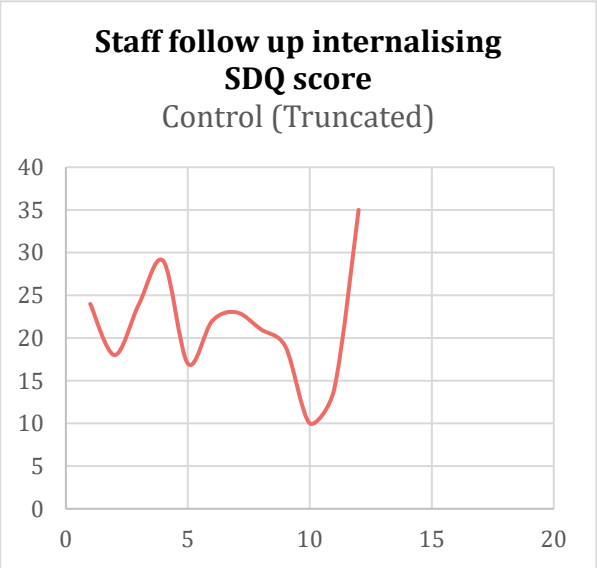
NB: Lower counts (<10) were combined at the tail of the distribution.

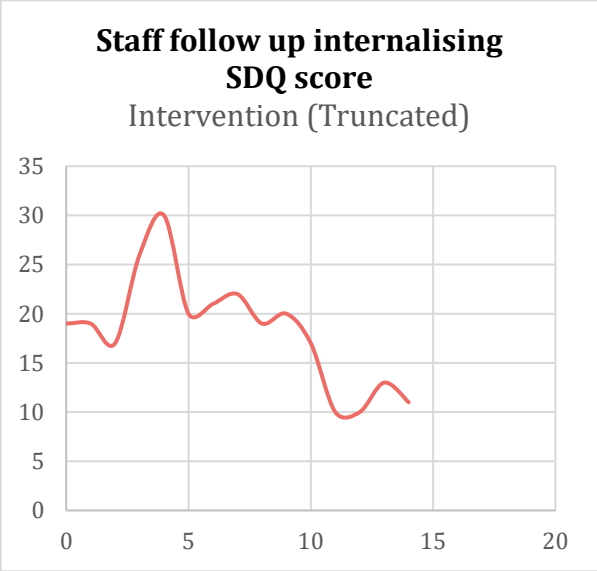


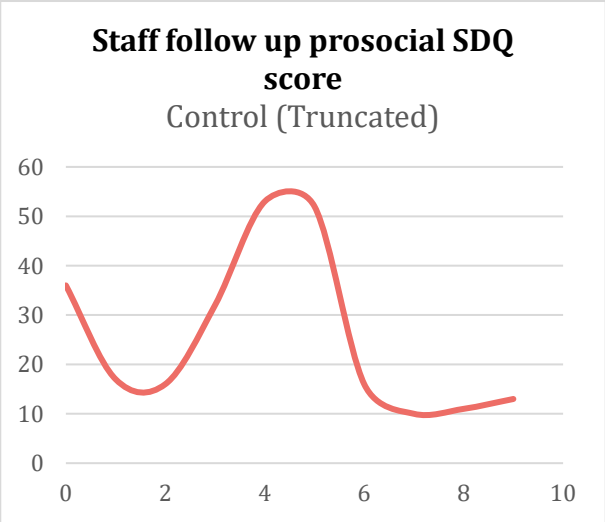


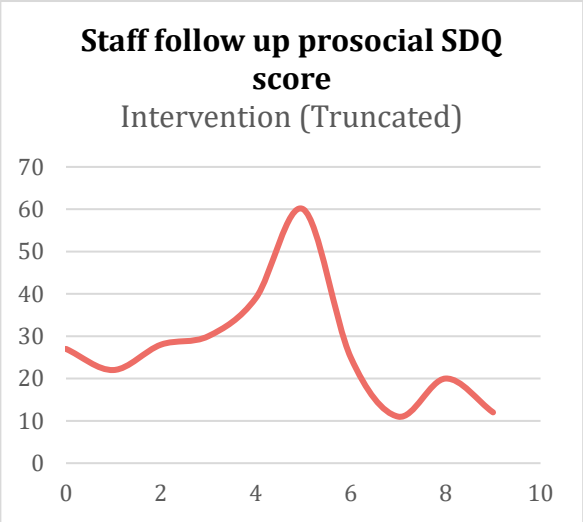


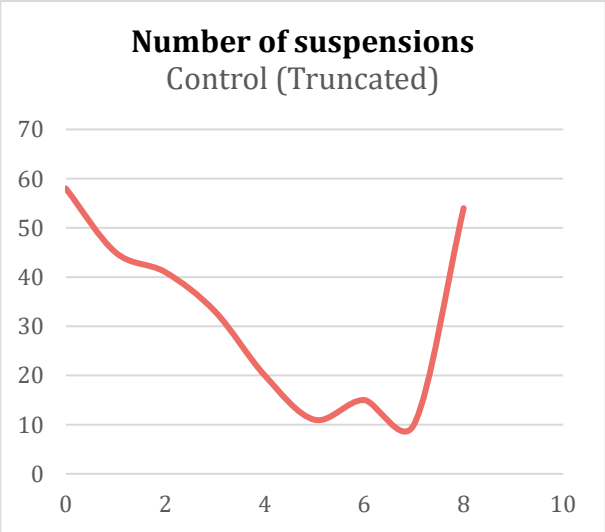


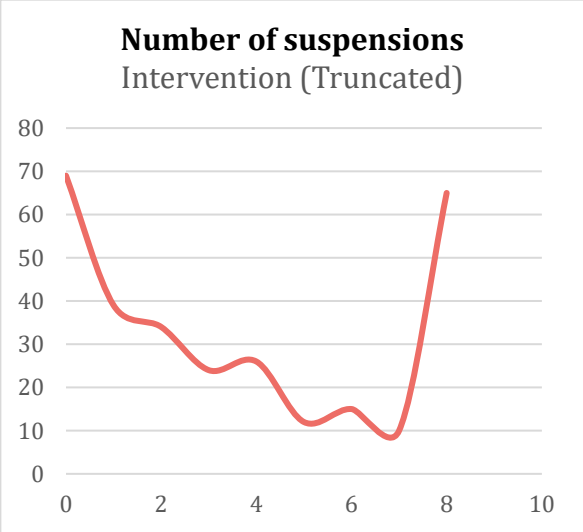

Staff follow up internalising SDQ score
Control (Truncated)
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
5
10
15
20


Staff follow up internalising SDQ score
Intervention (Truncated)
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
5
10
15
20


Staff follow up prosocial SDQ score
Control (Truncated)
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
2
4
6
8
10


Staff follow up prosocial SDQ score
Intervention (Truncated)
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
2
4
6
8
10


Number of suspensions
Control (Truncated)
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
2
4
6
8
10


Number of suspensions
Intervention (Truncated)
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
2
4
6
8
10

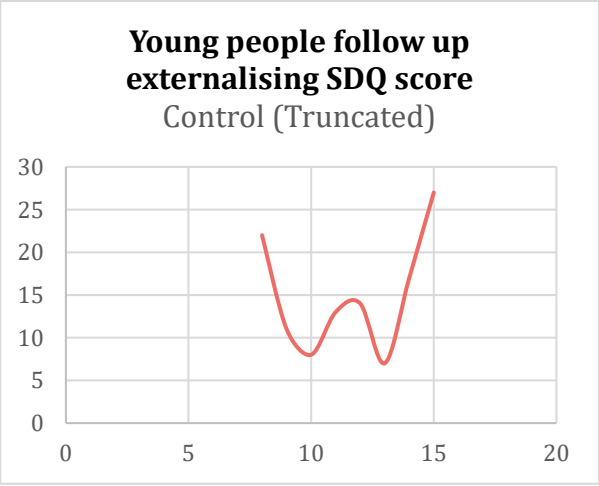
The table below presents descriptive statistics for attendance. As this variable predominantly comprises low counts (<10), the use of density plots is not appropriate.

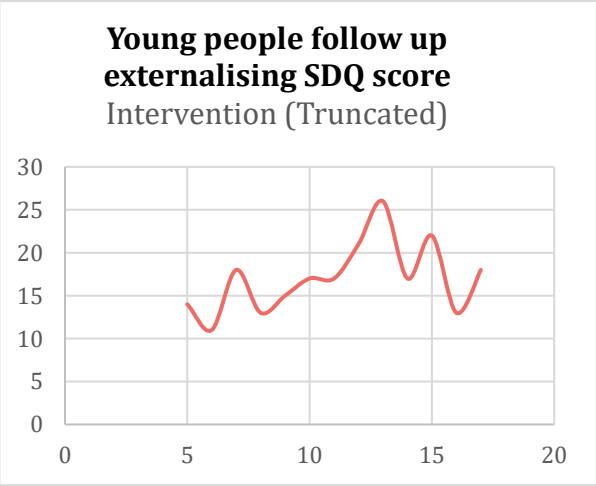
Attendance		Control	Intervention
N	Valid	244	256
	Missing	49	45
Mean		75.6	75.2
Median		84.7	83
Mode		100	100
Std. Deviation		23.9	22.5
Percentiles	25	63	61.0
	50	84.7	83
	75	94.2	93.3

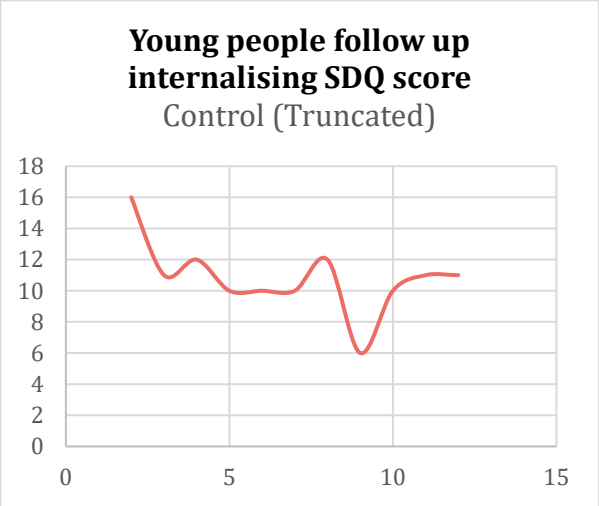
Young person SDQ and SRDS measures

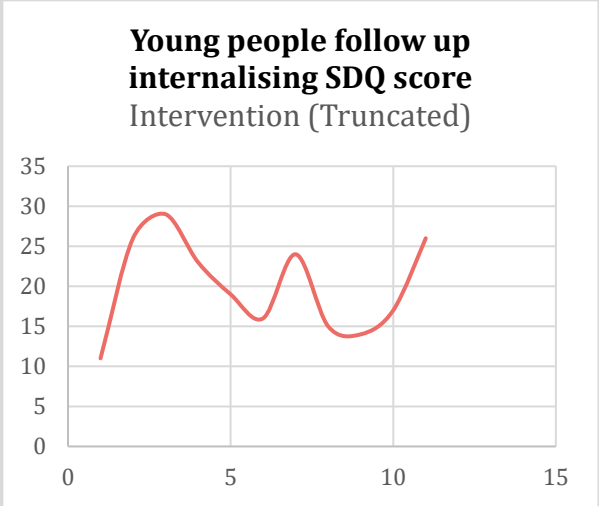
Density plots illustrate the distribution of young people's follow up secondary outcomes, including externalising, internalising, and prosocial SDQ scores, as well as the variety of delinquency (SRDS) scores.

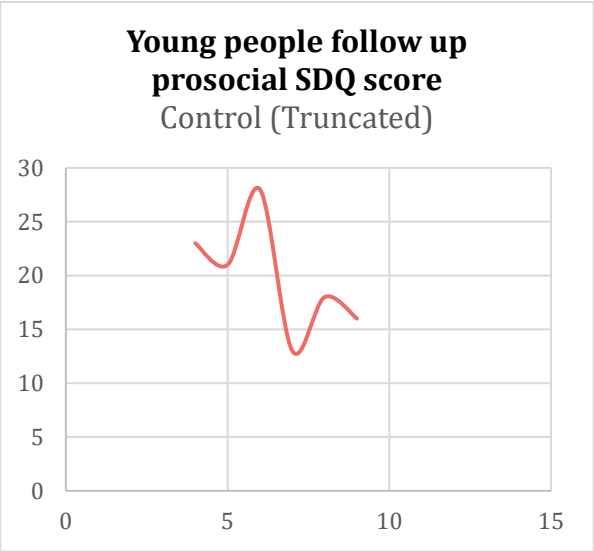
NB: Lower counts (<10) were combined at the tail of the distribution.

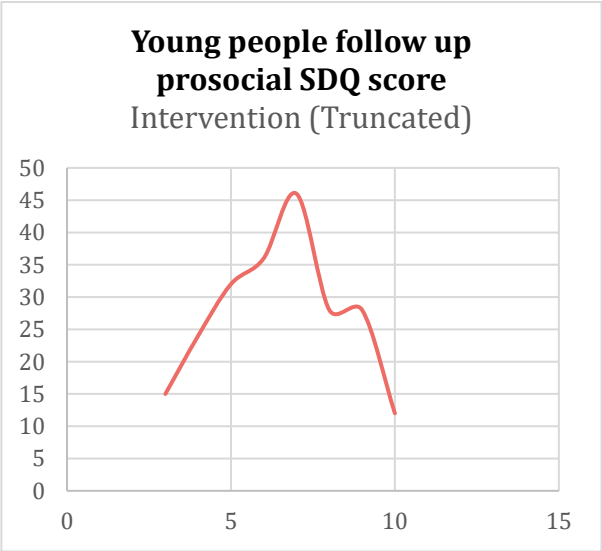


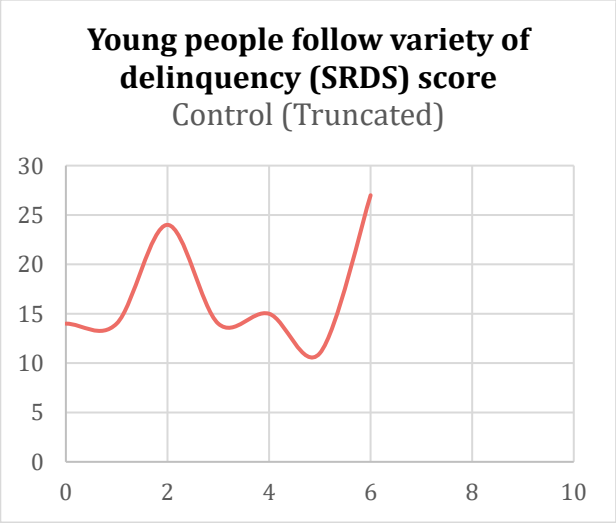


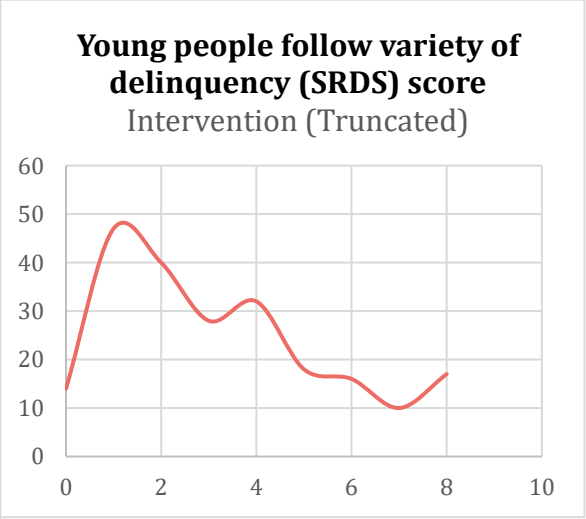

Young people follow up internalising SDQ score
Control (Truncated)
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
0
5
10
15


Young people follow up internalising SDQ score
Intervention (Truncated)
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
5
10
15


Young people follow up prosocial SDQ score
Control (Truncated)
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
5
10
15


Young people follow up prosocial SDQ score
Intervention (Truncated)
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
5
10
15

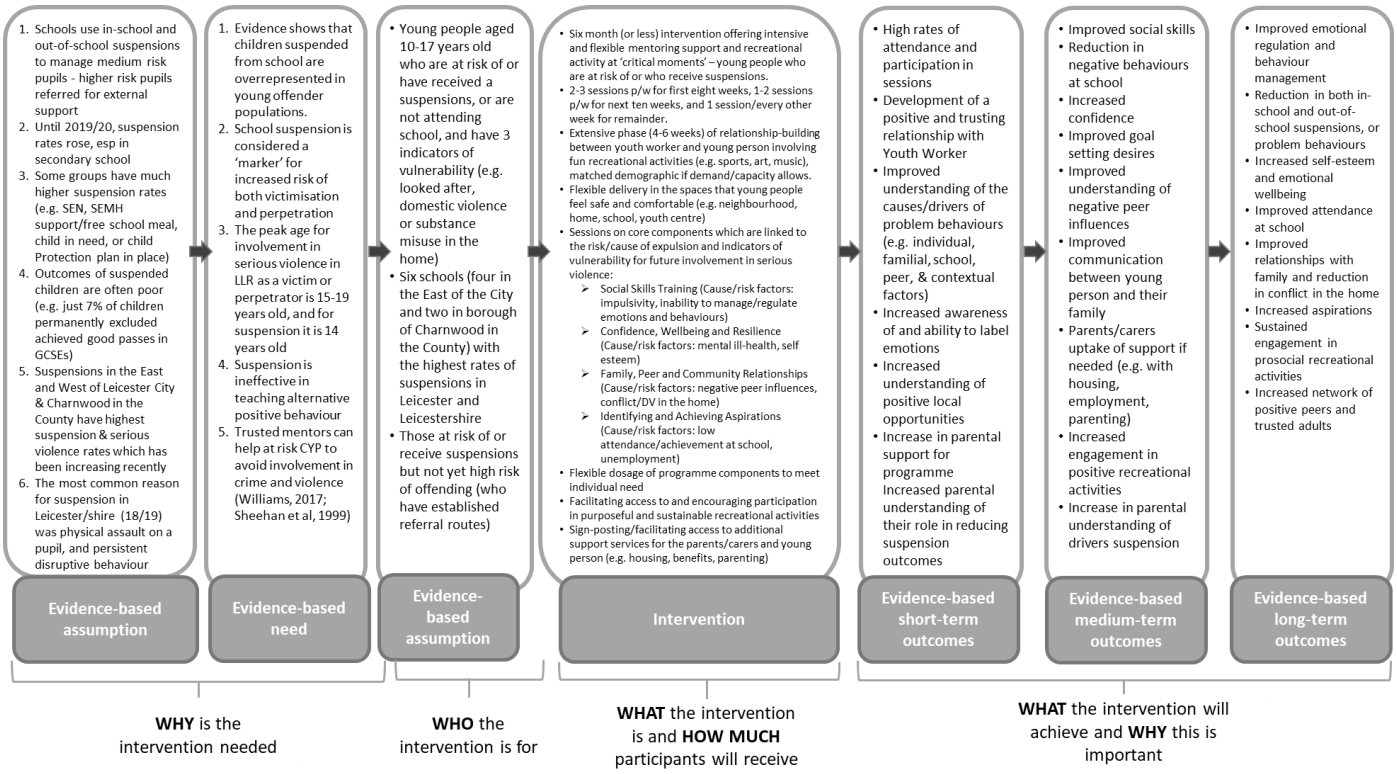

Young people follow variety of delinquency (SRDS) score
Control (Truncated)
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
0
2
4
6
8
10


Young people follow variety of delinquency (SRDS) score
Intervention (Truncated)
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
2
4
6
8
10

The table below presents descriptive statistics for young people's follow up volume of delinquency (SRDS) score. As this variable predominantly comprises low counts (<10), the use of density plots is not appropriate.

Young people follow up volume of delinquency (SRDS) score		**Control**	**Intervention**
N	Valid	119	222
	Missing	0	0
Mean		10.6	11.2
Median		5	6
Mode		0	0
Std. Deviation		16.0	12.9
Percentiles	25	8	1
	50	5	6
	75	14	17

Appendix C: Original Theory of Change and Logic Model



INPUTS	OUTPUTS		OUTCOMES		
What resources do we need?	**Activities** **What do we need to do in order for individuals to accomplish the short-term outcomes?**	**Participation** **What must be reached for the short-term outcomes to be**	**Short term (2 months)** **What preconditions must be met for the medium-term outcomes to be achieved?**	**Medium term (4 months)** **What preconditions must be met for the ultimate goal to be achieved?**	**Long term** **(Completion of intervention)** **What are the long-term outcomes?**
• Financial support from the Home Office (until March 2022) and YEF (until November 2023) to cover staffing, equipment, recreational activity and travel and subsistence • Hiring staff and training Youth Workers to ensure that they're highly skilled and culturally competent • School buy-in and in-kind resource to complete referrals • Training for key stakeholders in schools to ensure understanding of eligibility criteria and aims of intervention • Learning materials and project documents (e.g. referral forms, assessments) for the delivery of the intervention • Existing strategic and operational governance structure, organisational infrastructure and policies (e.g. safeguarding) to escalate barriers and problem-solve • Referral partners (e.g. sports clubs, housing) who are aware of the intervention and anticipate referrals	• Clear and concise referral form for schools • Prompt response following 'critical moment' where young person is at risk of or receives fixed term exclusion – within 24 hours Youth Worker contacts young person and their parents/carers and arranges assessment as soon as practicable • Ongoing communication between Youth Worker and school to update on progress and encourage positive reinforcement from teachers in school • Comprehensive and contextual assessment of young person to identify strengths, needs, risks and interests – information used to match young people to Youth Worker • Parents/carers early engagement in and support for the intervention, includes participating in assessment and monthly reviews, and receiving support for parenting techniques if required • Extensive phase (4-6 weeks) of relationship-building between youth worker and young person involving fun, recreational activities (e.g. sports, art, music) • Flexible delivery in the spaces that young people feel safe and comfortable (e.g. neighbourhood, home, school, youth centre) • Sessions on core components which are tailored to young person's needs, interests and leaning styles: 1. Social Skills Training 2. Confidence, Wellbeing and Resilience 3. Family, Peer and Community Relationships 4. Identifying and Achieving Aspirations • Facilitating access to and encouraging participation in purposeful and sustainable recreational activities • Monthly reviews of progress towards key milestones involves Youth Worker talking to young person, parents/carers, and school. If milestones haven't been met, young person and Youth Worker will continue to work on relevant core components (e.g. Social Skills Training) • Case closure process – when key milestones are met Youth Worker discusses plans with Team Manager, speaks to young person and parents/carers to assess views and gain agreement, and ensures sustainability plans are in place (e.g. formal and informal mechanisms to access support if problems arise)	• Young people aged 10-17 years old who are at risk of or have received a fixed term exclusion and have three indicators of vulnerability (e.g. looked after, domestic violence or substance misuse in the home) • Six schools (four in the City and two in the County) with the highest rates of fixed term exclusions in Leicester and Leicestershire agree to participate • Teachers refer eligible young people • 120 referrals received during feasibility period • Retain Youth Workers throughout feasibility period • 75% of young people referred are recruited to the programme (*n*=90) • Youth Workers and young people meet two to three times a week during the relationship building stage • Young people complete 80% of core component sessions • 75% of young people complete the programme (*n*=67)	• High rates of attendance and participation in sessions • Development of a positive and trusting relationship with Youth Worker • Improved understanding of the causes/drivers for problem behaviours (e.g. individual, familial, school, peer, and contextual factors) • Increased awareness of and ability to label emotions	• Improved social skills • Reduction in negative behaviours at school • Increased confidence • Improved understanding of negative peer influences • Improved communication between young person and their family • Parents/carers uptake of support if needed (e.g. with housing, employment, parenting) • Increased engagement in positive recreational activities	• Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management • Reduction in exclusions or problem behaviours • Increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing • Improved attendance at school • Improved relationships with family and reduction in conflict in the home • Increased aspirations • Sustained engagement in prosocial recreational activities • Increased network of positive peers and trusted adults

Appendix D: Reach Referral form

Referral to The Reach Programme

Please complete if a young person is at risk of exclusion OR has received a fixed term exclusion. (This form MUST be completed and submitted on the same day that the fixed term exclusion is issued).

Name of Referrer	
Job Title	
School	
Telephone Number	
Email	

Young Person Details						
Name						
Date of Birth						
Year Group						
Attendance						
Attainment						
Gender						
Any identified SEND/SEMH/SLCN						
Positive Attribute/ Strengths and areas of interest						
Home Address						
Home Telephone						
Other Telephone						
Ethnicity	White		Asian or Asian British		Mixed	
	Black or Black British		Chinese		Other	

Family Details					
Who holds Parental Responsibility?		Mother	Father	Other (Please give details)	
Relationship	**Name**	**Address**		**DOB**	**Telephone Number**

Situation that has occurred to put the young person at risk of exclusion, or fixed term exclusion

Previous exclusions and periods of reduced timetable		
Reason for exclusion or reduced timetable	**Date Excluded**	**Number of days of exclusion**

Please Tick all that apply to the young person:		Tick
1	Showing signs of early abuse and / or neglect	
2	Impulsive (low self-control)	
3	Aggressive behaviour	
4	Low school attainment	
5	Substance use	
6	Previous head injury	
7	Unconcerned attitude towards offending	
8	Showing signs of anti-social behaviour	
9	Previous offending	
10	Low self-esteem	
11	Previous truancy and school exclusions	
12	Association with pro-criminal peers	
13	Child criminal exploitation (CCE)	
14	Gang membership	
15	Looked after child	
16	A family circumstance presenting challenge for the child, such as substance misuse, mental health, domestic violence, young carer	
17	Living in a deprived household	
18	Poor parental supervision	
19	Parental or sibling criminality	
20	Lives in a high crime area	

Details of Any Other Agencies Involved (For Example, Social Care, CAMHS, Youth Service, Police, etc…)	
Name of Contact	
Agency	
Telephone Number	
Details of Their Involvement	
Name of Contact	
Agency	
Telephone Number	
Details of Their Involvement	

Consent

Please confirm this referral has been discussed with the parent or carer of the young person you are referring: Y/N

Name of person you have discussed the referral with: _____

Relationship to the young person_____

Date_____

Referrers signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Recruitment documents

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - Reach Evaluation

This document has four sections:

Section A: **Project Overview**

Section B: **Responsibilities** (of the school, evaluator and deliverer)

Section C: **Legal basis for research**

Section D: **Agreement** (to be signed by the participating school's head teacher/senior lead)

If you have any questions relating to this document, please contact:

Ayesha Desai Ayesha.Desai@leicester.gov.uk (for schools in Leicester City or

Emily Jackson Emily.Jackson@leics.gov.uk (for schools in Leicestershire County)

Anna Stevens for any queries relating to the evaluation a.stevens@shu.ac.uk

Section A: Project Overview

What is the Reach Programme?

The Reach Programme is a six month mentoring intervention aimed at young people aged 11-16 in secondary schools (years 7-11). A team of youth workers will provide intensive one to one support for young people across schools in the Leicester and Leicestershire area. The programme incorporates intensive and flexible mentoring, offers opportunities for prosocial activity, and addresses individual, relationship and community risk factors through structured learning components such as social skills training.

Evaluation of the Reach Programme

The Reach programme is funded by the "Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)". YEF's core approach is to evaluate, test and research the most effective ways to support children and young people at risk of becoming involved in violence. The most scientifically 'robust' evaluation design for capturing the causal effect of the Reach programme is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). A simple RCT randomly splits a sample into two groups. One of these groups would experience the Reach programme and the other would receive their schools usual support (commonly known as "business as usual"). YEF are providing a payment to schools to support their "business as usual" case. If evidence of positive change in the Reach group is found to be sufficiently greater than what is seen for the control group, the conclusion is that the Reach programme caused this observed positive impact (or effect). YEF has commissioned a team at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to undertake this RCT. Alongside the RCT, SHU will undertake an in- depth implementation and process evaluation (IPE) involving fieldwork with the delivery team, youth workers, school leads, young people and their families to explore issues including:

- The implementation of the Reach programme into schools
- Responsiveness of the young people to the programme
- Perceived quality and outcomes of the programme including views from young people themselves

Evaluation Outline

The evaluation will take place in schools from **January 2024** until **July 2025.** Schools will make referrals to the evaluation between **January 2024 and December 2024** to allow young people adequate time to complete the programme before the end of the study.

Consent: At the outset, SHU will provide schools with an accessible information sheet for schools to distribute to parents/carers – this could be done via written letter and/or text/email- whichever method schools deem most appropriate. At this point families will be consenting for their young person to be part of the evaluation and randomised to either Reach **or** to receive the support they would otherwise normally receive in schools. YEF are providing schools with a **payment for schools** to use flexibly to support their usual provision for the comparison group.

Referral and baseline data collection: Once schools receive consent from families, the referral process involves completing the referral form (where schools are asked to indicate "risk factors" for the young person) plus the "strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ)" (a behavioural screening measure which takes 5-10 mins to complete). The young people that are referred will also need to complete the SDQ online to give perceptions from their viewpoint. We would also like young people to complete the "self-report delinquency scale (SRDS)" which asks about anti-social and offending behaviours and is paper based. Schools will be asked to facilitate completion of this with the young people with guidance from SHU on this. Every young person completing this will receive a **£10 voucher** for completion of baseline measures and **a further £10 voucher** for completion of follow up measures.

Eligibility: Once referrals have been shared with the Reach team, the referrals will then be assessed for eligibility by the Reach team. Once eligibility has been confirmed, the baseline data will then need to be collected ahead of randomisation and allocation to Reach or "business as usual".

Reach: Schools will then receive a list of young people who have been randomly assigned to participate in the Reach Programme who will undergo the usual procedures via the Reach team and allocated Youth Worker.

Comparison group and payment: Schools will also receive a list of those young people who will not receive the Reach Programme. These young people should continue to receive support in school as they would have done had Reach not been available (termed "business as usual") as deemed appropriate by the school (e.g. group work, after school clubs, other internal/external support). Schools will be given a payment to support their "business as usual" case. Flexibility of how this money is spent will be given to the schools and there is no requirement to spend a particular amount per pupil. Please keep a record of if/how this money was spent on each young person and the support that they received and share this with the evaluation team at an appropriate point. The payment should also be considered as an incentive for the school to engage in the evaluation and to provide data at appropriate timepoints. The payment will be staggered throughout the calendar year.

Outcome measures: After a time period of 6 months post commencing participation in the evaluation (the approximate time taken for a young person to complete the Reach programme), the young people involved will be asked to complete outcome measures which will be the same measures that were completed at baseline. The member of staff completing the baseline SDQ should also complete the follow up SDQ where possible. This is so that the research team can analyse any changes that may have occurred for those receiving Reach compared with those receiving "business as usual".

Data collection

Young person data: Additional data will be collected alongside the outcome measures, such as the pupils name, gender, date of birth (DOB) and unique pupil number (UPN). This data would be used for the trial to match pupil data and their responses to baseline and outcome measures.

For the purpose of research, at the end of the study pupil data supplied to the SHU evaluation team by schools will be shared with the Department of Education (DfE). The DfE will pseudonymise the data, so it is no longer possible to identify any individual young person from the study data. The DfE will then transfer the data to the YEF Data Archive, which is stored in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Secure Research Service. The SHU evaluation team will also submit pseudo-anonymised evaluation data directly to the ONS to also be stored in the YEF data archive. The YEF is the 'controller' of the information in the Archive. It will be possible for information in the Archive to be linked with information about the pupils from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and the Police National Computer (PNC). This will help approved researchers find out the long-term impact of the projects funded by YEF. Please see here for further information: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/evaluation-data-archive/

It is YEF's intention to retain data in the YEF archive indefinitely. This is consistent with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)'s view that data can be held indefinitely for research and archiving purposes. However, YEF will commit to reviewing every 5 years, following submission to the YEF archive, to see whether there is a continued benefit to storing the data and its potential use in future research. For transparency, the precise terms of data sharing will be stated in a fair processing notice that will be provided to all schools, specifying the personal data (pupil names, pupil ID numbers, FSM status, ethnicity) to be processed, in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines that came into force from 25 May 2018.

Summary data: Schools will also be asked for summary data on their suspension rates by gender, age and ethnicity. This data will be compared alongside participation in the Reach programme, to understand how far the programme is reaching its intended recipients. The research team are also keen to try to examine patterns of consent to the evaluation from parents/carers, and schools will be asked to provide a summary demographics relating to parents/carers who do and do not consent, and where no response was gained.

School survey: At the end of the project, all participating schools will be sent a brief survey to collect information on what the control group experienced and how the financial resource was spent. It will also collect a brief overview of school leaders' perceptions of the Reach programme (in terms of implementation) to supplement the findings from the qualitative study.

Qualitative data collection: This will take place a sample of 4 schools where staff are willing to take part in this aspect. This would involve (spread over the 4 schools):

- Two focus groups/short one to one interviews (whichever the young people would prefer) undertaken with young people participating in the Reach programme.
- Two focus groups/short one to one interviews (whichever the young people would prefer) undertaken with young people allocated to the control group. Young people allocated to the control group will receive an incentive voucher to take part in these groups/interviews.
- Two focus groups with parents/carers of young people receiving the Reach programme to explore family engagement with the programme. Parents/carers will also receive incentive vouchers for participation.

- One to one interviews with school leads to explore implementation of the Reach programme, views on the referral process/participation in the evaluation and perceived outcomes of Reach on the young people so far.

Main evaluation activities:

Activity
Schools contact parents/carers to gain consent (documentation provided by SHU), make referrals to the evaluation and baseline measures are completed. Young people are then allocated to receive Reach or "business as usual" (supported through a payment to schools).
Collection of follow up questionnaire data once young people have completed the Reach Programme, or have had the equivalent time in the control group.
Interviews with schools leads and focus group/short interviews with young people (sample of 4 willing schools).
Focus groups with parents/carers of those participating in Reach.
Interviews with youth workers and lead delivery team.
School survey of all schools to gain information on what those allocated to the control group experienced and how the financial resource was spent.
All young people complete the programme and final set of outcome data collected.

Evaluation FAQs

What does sign up mean for my school?

By signing this MOU, you are agreeing for your school to take part in the trial. You are committing to undertaking the baseline and follow up measures the young people involved. You are agreeing for the young people (post consent from parents/carers) to be randomly allocated to either the intervention or control group. The team at SHU will contact you to arrange for the measures to be completed.

How will school and pupil data be protected?

For SHU to contact participating schools to arrange the above data collection, SHU will need for Reach to share with the evaluation team: the names of participating schools, school lead contact details and a scan of the signed MoU. This data will be stored securely on password protected computers which are only accessible to the evaluation team. Details of data to be shared as part of the RCT are outlined below in the responsibilities section.

The researchers will also have access to the data that school staff and young people are asked to complete and submit at different points in the programme. This data will be used as part of the evaluation. Sheffield Hallam Universities privacy policy can be found https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research .

Section B - outlines full responsibilities for all parties connected to evaluation

Responsibilities of Reach and SHU

Conducting the trial

The team at SHU will contact all schools in the trial with details of how to complete the measures outlined above with pupils, including a link to the combined measures and instructions on how to facilitate pupil completion. The responses will be collected and stored securely on password protected computers by the

research team at SHU. The team at SHU will be available to answer questions from school staff or parents about the evaluation throughout the trial process.

Data protection

SHU will not use pupil names or school names in any report arising from the research.

SHU and Reach will strictly comply with current data protection legislation, including the GDPR. Under GDPR Article 6, Paragraph 1e, the legal basis for this project is it being a 'public task'. Opt-in parental consent will be sought for participation, and parents/carers are free to withdraw their child from data collection and analysis at any time until the data is archived at the end of the project. Information on how to withdraw will be provided for schools, parents and carers. If a parent/carer decides to withdraw, this would mean that no data on their child would be included in the evaluation and they would no longer participate in Reach if allocated to the intervention group.

SHU and Reach will act as separate data controllers during the evaluation period and the YEF will be the data controller once the data is archived at the end of the project. A data sharing agreement will detail the personal data to be shared, and a fair processing notice will be sent to all participating schools as per GDPR requirements.

Type of personal data	**Variables/types**	**Data sharing flow**
Pupil characteristics	Pupil names, DOB, UPN	Reach/SHU/DfE*/ONS/YEF
Monitoring data collected by Reach	Reach attendance data, pupil characteristics data (gender, ethnicity, FSM, SEN, risk factors from referral form)	Reach/SHU/ONS/YEF
Qualitative data (observation/focus groups/ interviews)	Audio recordings, anonymised transcripts	SHU
Measure (survey) data	Pupil/teacher SDQ data/other measures	SHU/ONS/YEF

*DfE will pseudonymise the data - so no personally identifying data will be transferred to PNC (Police National Computer) or YEF

The pilot study underwent a full ethics review and was approved with ethics reference number ER48532519. The review for this next stage is currently in progress and will be confirmed ahead of any data collection in schools. All researchers visiting schools will hold a current enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) certificate and have completed additional safeguarding training.

If a sub-sample of pupils or teachers are involved in additional qualitative data collection activities (observations, focus groups and interviews) these will also be covered by GDPR legal basis as a public task. In keeping with good research ethical practices, participant consent will be sought for participation in the additional qualitative research activities.

Responsibilities of Sheffield Hallam University across the evaluation

Consent and ethics

- SHU will strictly comply with current legislation in relation to data processing and storage. Following the signing of this MoU, a data sharing agreement will be sent to all schools, outlining all aspects of data collection and sharing process.
- Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Article 6, Paragraph 1e, the legal basis for this project is it being a 'public task'. Given ethical considerations, separate permission will also be sought from school staff, pupils, parents/carers for additional data collection as detailed in this document.
- For any qualitative data, verbal consent would also be taken before proceeding with any interview or focus group.
- SHU will provide information sheets that make pupils, staff, and parents/carers aware of the expectations underpinning their involvement. It will make clear that participating pupils/school staff/parents/carers are free to withdraw from the evaluation.
- SHU will ensure that this evaluation has been assessed and approved by an independent ethics committee at Sheffield Hallam University.

Data

- At all points, SHU are responsible for retrieving and processing data as part of this evaluation using secure transfer methods such as SHU Zend To which SHU will send links to.
- No pupil/staff names or school names will be used in any report arising from the research.
- Pupil names, D.O.B and UPN will be used for matching of data only. Once data is matched ready for analysis, these identifiers will be removed.
- SHU are responsible for the qualitative and quantitative analysis of all the data collected.

Communications

- SHU will be the point of liaison for schools on anything related to the evaluation throughout the course of the evaluation.
- SHU will liaise with Reach and YEF throughout the course of the evaluation.

Fieldwork

- All researchers visiting schools will hold a current enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) certificate.
- SHU researchers will undertake case-study visits at times convenient for the school.

Responsibilities of Reach

Communication

- Acting as a point of contact for sending signed MoUs between schools and SHU
- Dealing with any queries from school staff related to the delivery of the Reach programme
- Sending scanned copies of signed MoUs and consent to SHU in PDF format for records

Data

- Securely sharing school contact details and Reach monitoring data (as previously outlined securely) with SHU.

Delivery

- Delivering the Reach programme to young people allocated to the intervention and supporting schools as necessary.

Responsibilities of all schools

- Allocate a school-based lead to the trial that can be the main contact for all queries from SHU.
- Complete and sign this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) if in agreement with the terms outlined.
- To complete a referral form at the point of referral of the young person (post consent) including the names, D.O.B and UPN of each young person participating in the trial. This data will be collected by the Reach team and shared with SHU to allow matching of baseline data, endpoint data and other data collected by the Reach team (Reach attendance data, time spent with youth worker).
- Facilitate completion of baseline and outcome measures for young people, and to the complete baseline and outcome measure from the viewpoint of the school.
- Keep SHU up to date with any pupils that have left the school or withdrawn from the trial, so that they can ensure accurate records at all time points.
- Ensure that the Reach sessions are timetabled and delivered as planned and let the Reach team know if this is not possible.
- Allow Reach to share their school contact details with SHU.
- Agree to be *contacted* by SHU to be invited to take part in a case study visit. Engagement in this activity is voluntary and separate permission will be sought from teachers, young people and parents/carers for additional research activities as detailed in this document. Data generated from research activities will be handled in accordance with the GDPR requirements and the fair processing notice.
- Issue information to parents/carers of young people about the project and provide details to SHU of any young people whose parents/carers do not wish for them to be part of the data collection and analysis. Parents/carers should know that they can ask for their pupils' data to be excluded at any stage of the trial. SHU will provide suggested relevant phrasing for the parent/carer communication. Given ethical considerations, separate permission will be sought from parents/carers for additional research activities as detailed in this document.

Section C: Legal Basis for Research

SHU undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of public tasks that are in the public interest. A full statement of your rights can be found by clicking our privacy policy for research participants.

All University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately, and their rights respected. This study was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee. Further information can be found on our research ethics and integrity page.

Below we outline key contacts should you or any participants have any concerns (this information will also be included in parental/participant information sheets).

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:

- you have a query about how your data is used by the University
- you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)
- you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk

You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Dr Mayur Ranchordas) if:

- you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk

Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT
Telephone: 0114 225 5555

Section D: Agreement

If the above terms are acceptable, please sign (electronic signature or scanned signature) and date both copies, keeping one copy for your records and returning the other to the Reach team before XXX. If unsure of any aspects of the delivery or the evaluation, please don't hesitate to contact Reach or SHU (details at top of form)

Name of School_____

Headteacher	Full name: Work email: Signature:	Date
School based lead (SBL)	Full name: Work email: Signature:	Date
Sheffield Hallam University **(Principal Investigator)**	Full name: Anna Stevens Signature:	Date
Reach Team	Name: Signature:	Date

Evaluation of the Reach Programme: Information sheet and consent form

Invitation for your child to take part in an evaluation of the Reach Programme

Your child's school is taking part in a study funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) which is looking at the effectiveness of a mentoring programme called the Reach Programme. To find out if this programme works and if it has a positive effect on young people, we would like to undertake some research with a group of young people who will receive the programme, and with another group of young people who will continue to receive the ongoing support from their school.

We would like to invite your child to take part in this important study. If you consent for your child to take part in the study (by signing and returning the form below to your child's school) they will either receive the Reach programme **or** continue to receive the ongoing support from their school. We would really value your child's participation and we will be offering a total of **£20 worth of vouchers** to **all** young people who take part in the study. Please look through the information in this form and in the privacy notice and talk this through with your child so that you can decide whether your child would like to take part.

What does taking part in the study involve?

If you agree for your child to take part in the study by completing the form below, they will be asked to complete two questionnaires at the start and at the end of the study, which are designed to measure emotions, relationships and any involvement in anti-social behaviours. Your child will then be randomly allocated to either receive the Reach Programme mentoring **or** continue to receive the ongoing support from their school. If your child is allocated to receive the Reach Programme, you will receive further information on the Reach Programme at that point. **All** young people will receive a **£10 voucher** for completing the questionnaires at the start of the study and a **further £10 voucher** for completing the questionnaires at the end of the study.

What will my child's data be used for?

All questionnaire responses will be collected securely by Sheffield Hallam University and linked with other data as set out in the privacy notice (which you should have received alongside this form). This data will include your child's name and date of birth to facilitate data linkage, please be reassured that any data that is used will be reported **anonymously,** so no individuals can be identified. The data that SHU collect as part of the evaluation will be combined and analysed and then written up into an evaluation report. The report will be published on the Youth Endowment Fund's (YEF's) website and publicly available. The data collected may be used in academic journals and/or present at academic conferences. The findings from the evaluation will also be used to inform future evaluation work of the Reach programme. Data collected from the project will be held in the YEF data archive. Names and dates of birth will be removed at this point so it is **no longer possible to identify any individual young person** from the study data, please see privacy notice for further details.

The evaluation's ethical approach

This evaluation has been checked and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) - (www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/ethics-and-integrity). Below we outline the key things we will do to ensure fair and respectful practices:

- All the data, including personal details, collected from young people as part of the evaluation will be stored confidentially and securely on password protected computers
- The SHU evaluation team will comply with UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR legal basis: public task Article 6 (1e)) and the SHU Data Protection Policy Statement. Please refer to the privacy notice for more information (which you should have received alongside this)
- No young person or school will be identifiable in any reports or publications
- Any data shared with SHU by schools/the deliverers of Reach will be done so using a secure transfer system, such as ZendTo
- All researchers collecting data from SHU are DBS checked
- Data from the evaluation will be held by SHU for up to 10 years after the last publication, as standard. This will be continuously reviewed so that data is not kept longer than necessary.

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:

- You have a query about how your data/your child's data is being used by the University
- you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately) you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk

You should contact the University's head of Research Ethics if:

- You have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk

Does your child have to take part?

Taking part in the evaluation of the Reach programme is voluntary. Your participation would really help us in being able to know if and how the Reach programme works and will ensure that we can conduct a good evaluation. If you decide to take part and then change your mind, you can withdraw your young person from the study by contacting Anna Stevens a.stevens@shu.ac.uk.

Please complete the form below and return this page to your child's school if you are happy for your child to take part in the Reach evaluation.

I give my permission for my child to take part in the evaluation of the Reach Programme:

Child's full name	
Signed	
Parent/carer	
Date	

If you would like more information on this research, then please contact Anna Stevens (evaluation manager) at Sheffield Hallam University: a.stevens@shu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Please complete the form below and return this page to your child's school if you are happy for your child to take part in the Reach evaluation.

I give my permission for my child to take part in the evaluation of the Reach Programme:

Child's full name	
Signed	
Parent/carer	
Date	

If you would like more information on this research, then please contact Anna Stevens (evaluation manager) at Sheffield Hallam University: a.stevens@shu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Evaluation of the Reach Project:

Information for Young People

Our project: We have put this information sheet together for you because you are currently receiving mentoring sessions and undertaking activities with your youth worker. Sheffield Hallam University is doing some research to understand how you feel about taking part in these sessions, if they are helping you and if you are enjoying them. We would like to talk to you about the sessions: on your own, or in a group with other young people who are also taking part, and following one of your mentoring sessions. We would also like to record these sessions with your permission, so we don't miss anything you say.

What is it for? Talking to you and others who are taking part in mentoring is a really important part of a wider research project which will tell us what's going well, and what could be done better. Once we've finished, we'll put all of the information together in a final report.

What will happen if I'm part of the group discussions or if I do an interview?
A researcher will ask you some questions about what you think about the mentoring, how it might be helping you or not. This will either be an interview of about 20 minutes with you - or as part of a discussion group with other young people of a similar age to you who are also receiving support from a youth worker. The group will be no more than 40 minutes.

Do I have to say yes to being part of this?
No, it's totally up to you – you do not have to take part in the research if you don't want to. No one will be upset if you say no.

You can also change your mind at any point, for any reason, and you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. You being comfortable is most important.

If you decide you want to remove your contribution once the session is finished, we won't be able to remove your voice from the recording, but we can remove your words when we write it up.

You don't have to tell us your reason for not taking part if you don't want to. If you say no, it won't affect the sessions that you are taking part in with your youth worker.

Will anyone else know what I've said in the interview or discussion?

Only the research team will know what you have said. No personal details, like your name, will be shared in our final report.

The only time that we'd share what you say with others is if you say something that makes us worried that you or someone else might be in danger of harm. If this happens, we will have to tell someone who can help. We would talk with you about this first.

How we comply with the law

We will only use your information [not your name or personal details] if the law says it's ok [this is also called 'legitimate interests' and it fits with your rights]. Because this study is interesting and important to lots of people, the law says we can use your information to do this kind of work.

What happens after the session with the information I've shared?

We will study what you and other young people said, and write a report. In this report, we might include quotes from what you and other people have told us - but we will not use any names so no one will know what you have said.

Any research data will be kept safe and secure on a computer where no one can access them without permission.

If you feel upset by any of the questions we ask you, you should tell your teacher, parent or guardian, youth worker or the researchers. You can also contact us via the below:

Anna Stevens (project manager) – a.stevens@shu.ac.uk

If you are happy to take part in the group discussion or in an interview please sign the

Consent form

I have read and understood the information sheet and I've had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that:

- It is totally my choice whether I take part or not. I don't have to take part, and I can stop taking part at any time, for any reason. No one will be upset if I do this.
- If I say no, it won't affect the support I receive from my youth worker.
- I don't have to answer any questions if I don't want to, or say anything I don't want to say.
- The discussion/interview with me and others will be recorded, but if I decide I do not feel ok with this afterwards, my words will be removed before the research write the report.
- The data is stored securely on a computer and follows the UK policies around keeping data safe (called General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR). Personal information [like my name so you can contact me] will be held for a maximum of 2 years as the law says.

If you agree to take part, please:

Print your name clearly in BLOCK CAPITALS on the line below and sign:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____

The Reach Programme

Privacy Notice

Introduction

This document outlines the responsibilities of Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) in handling personal data collected from participants (parents/carers/young people) as part of the Reach Programme evaluation. The evaluation is being funded by the Youth Endowment Foundation (YEF). Transparency is a key element of data protection legislation and this Privacy Notice is designed to inform you:

- how and why the University uses your personal data,
- what your rights are in relation to the use of your personal data, and,
- how to contact us so that you can exercise those rights.

Why are we processing your personal data?

The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data Protection laws allow us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of public tasks that are in the public interest. This is in relation to the evaluation of the Reach Project to help strengthen the evidence base on mentoring programmes. The legal basis for processing your personal data is 'Public Task' (Article 6 (1) (e)). https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/public-task/

Retention

After the evaluation with YEF is complete, SHU will retain participants' data for research and knowledge-exchange purposes, including presentations at professional or academic conferences, or publications in professional or academic journals, for a period of ten years after the last publication arising from the evaluation. **Please be reassured that no individual young person will be identifiable from the study data.** After this period, SHU will review the longer-term archival value of the data.

YEF data archive

For the purpose of research, at the end of the study pupil data supplied to the SHU evaluation team by schools will be shared with the Department for Education (DfE). By consenting to the evaluation, you are also consenting to the participant's data being used in long-term follow up in the YEF data archive. The DfE will pseudonymise the data, so it is **no longer possible to identify any individual young person** from the study data. The DfE will then transfer the data to the YEF Data Archive, which is stored in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Secure Research Service. The SHU evaluation team will also submit pseudo-anonymised evaluation data directly to the ONS to also be stored in the YEF data archive. The YEF is the 'controller' of the information in the Archive. It will be possible for information in the Archive to be linked with information about the pupils from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and the Police National Computer (PNC). This will help approved researchers find out the long-term impact of the projects funded by YEF. Please see here for further information: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/evaluation-data-archive/. Please also see here https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/YEF_Data_Guidance_Participants_Nov2020.pdf for the YEF data archive privacy statement.

Respecting confidentiality

In the production of professional or academic publications or presentations, **all data will be fully anonymised and no individual or school will be identified or identifiable.**

Which Personal Data will we collect and use?

In order to provide our services we need to collect and use some personal data. Below is a list of what this includes for the Reach evaluation:

Type of personal data	
Name	Gender
Date of birth	Age
Unique pupil reference number	Reason for referral
Free School Meal status	Other agencies involved
Special educational needs status (SEND/SEMH/SLCN)	Looked after status

Previous/current suspensions	Ethnicity
Attendance data	Criminal offence data
Attainment data	

The data will also be linked in with questionnaire data collected from the young people on behaviours, emotions and relationships. The data will be used to inform the overall demographic make up of participants, and to conduct an analysis to compare outcomes for those receiving the Reach Programme and for those receiving ongoing support from their school. Any variation by factors such as gender, age and ethnicity will be explored in the analysis.

Who will we share personal data with?

The privacy of personal data is paramount and will not be disclosed unless there is a justified purpose for doing so.

Your data may be shared with:

· Immediate project team who are authorised to work on the project and access the information.

· Our research may be audited and access to the data may be required. The University puts in place safeguards to ensure that audits are conducted in a secure and confidential manner.

· In the case of complaints about a research project the Head of Research Ethics may require access to the data as part of our Research Misconduct Procedure.

Data will be shared between the deliverers of the programme (Violence Reduction Network (VRN), Leicester Council and Leicestershire County Council) and SHU. Data sharing agreements are in place between these parties to ensure data protection compliance. As described above upon completion of the project pseudonymised data will then be submitted to the YEF data archive.

Security

The University takes a robust approach to protecting the information it holds. This includes the installation and use of technical measures including firewalls and intrusion detection and prevention tools on the University network and segregation of different types of device; the use of tools on University computers to detect and remove malicious software and regular assessment of the technical security of University systems. University staff monitor systems and respond to suspicious activity. The University has Cyber Essentials certification covering the networks used by the project team.

Alongside these technical measures there are comprehensive and effective policies and processes in place to ensure that users and administrators of University information are aware of their obligations and responsibilities for the data they have access to. By default, people are only granted access to the information they require to perform their duties. Training is provided to new staff joining the University and existing staff have training and expert advice available if needed.

Participant Rights

One of the aims of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is to empower individuals and give them control over their personal data. The GDPR gives you the following rights:

- The right to be **informed**
- The right of **access**
- The right to **rectification**
- The right to **erase**
- The right to **restrict** processing
- The right to **data portability**
- The right to **object**
- Rights in relation to **automated decision making and profiling**

Appendix F: YEF Security Rating

Rating	Design	MDES Outcome: Threshold*	Attrition	Initial score	Adjustments	Final score
5	Randomised design	Offending: <=0.1 SDQ tot: <= 0.3 Other: <= 0.2	0-10%	4		
4	Design for comparison that considers some type of selection on unobservable characteristics (e.g. RDD, Diff-in-Diffs, Matched Diff-in-Diffs)	Offending: 0.11 – 0.19 SDQ tot: 0.31 – 0.39 Other: 0.21 – 0.29	11-20%			4
3	Design for comparison that considers selection on all relevant observable confounders (e.g. Matching or Regression Analysis with variables descriptive of the selection mechanism)	Offending: 0.2 – 0.29 SDQ tot: 0.4 – 0.49 Other: 0.3 – 0.39	21-30%			
2	Design for comparison that considers selection only on some relevant confounders	Offending: 0.3 – 0.39 SDQ tot: 0.5 – 0.59 Other: 0.4 – 0.49	31-40%			
1	Design for comparison that does not consider selection on any relevant confounders	Offending: 0.4 – 0.49 SDQ tot: 0.6 – 0.69 Other: 0.5 – 0.59	41-50%			
0	No comparator	Offending: >= 0.5 SDQ tot: >= 0.7 Other: >= 0.6	>50%			

*MDES requirements vary by outcome measurement. Offending: Offending data collected through self-report or admin data; SDQ tot = SDQ total difficulties score; Other: all other outcomes, incl. SDQ externalising and internalising

Sheffield Hallam University

The REACH Programme Efficacy Trial Report

STEVENS, Anna <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9450-890X>, WILLIS, Benjamin, PARTRIDGE, Benjamin <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0679-2630>, WOLSTENHOLME, Claire <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6660-6385>, DEMACK, Sean <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2953-1337>, RILEY, Laura, BENSON, Jessica, ZHU, Hongjuan <http://orcid.org/0009-0008-8236-1606> and COLEMAN, Charlotte

Available from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

https://shura.shu.ac.uk/37796/

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