NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme

Evaluation report 2022-23

Produced by the National Children's Bureau on Behalf of the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership
July 2023

Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Background and methodology

In Summer 2022, the National Children's Bureau (NCB) was commissioned by the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) to undertake a process and impact evaluation of the Habitual Knife Carriers (HKC) Programme in East Sussex. The aims were to: a) understand how and why participants achieve outcomes, which participants do / do not achieve outcomes, and what factors are the most important drivers of outcomes; b) evidence the short-term outcomes achieved and the long-term impacts of the interventions, and; c) provide recommendations for the future delivery and evaluation of the intervention.

The evaluation methodology and research questions were co-developed with key programme staff and stakeholders. The methodology consisted of:

- Five qualitative case studies of young people's experiences of the programme. These were based on semi-structured interviews with the young person participating, their lead professional from the programme, and where possible, one of the young person's parents.

- Qualitative exploration of process and impact across the programme, based on interviews and small group discussions with nine programme staff and stakeholders.

- Quantitative analysis of project monitoring data and linked police data. This analysis considered all young people who had participated in the programme at some point between 1 April 2022 and 1 March 2023.

About the Programme

The East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme aimed to change the behaviour of a current, active cohort of young people who have previously been identified as knife carriers and divert them and their associates/local peer groups away from future knife carrying and other criminal activity. The HKC Programme was led by the East Sussex Youth Justice Service in collaboration with Sussex Police, Children's Services, the local detached youth work team and the Youth Employability Service (YES).

Young people who were most likely to be carrying knives were identified using the HKC Index, a tool developed and maintained by Sussex Police that draws on police data and intelligence across several domains of risk. The identification of young people through the HKC Index fed into a scoping exercise involving Sussex Police, the Youth Justice Service and Children's Services. The scoping exercise informed which young people enter the HKC Programme for one-to-one work and where group and outreach work delivered through the programme should be targeted.

All young people referred for one-to-one work were allocated a lead professional who oversaw the delivery of both one-to-one and group work. In particular, they utilised

methodologies such as Relationship-Based and Trauma-Informed Practice to develop trusted relationships and worked with the young person to address the range of risk factors they were facing.

By design, the programme engaged with many young people who had already received support from statutory services. The programme sought to enhance this support by improving the coordination and targeting of resources, providing more options for activities to be included in individual and group work, and reaching more young people (i.e. by including those at high risk but not already open to the Youth Justice Service).

The HKC Index and associated multi-agency scoping also informed a range of activities in the wider community. Activities included a) detached sessions carried out by trained youth workers and youth officers from the Early Help team; and b) engagement with other members of the public in high-risk areas to offer advice and training and gather insight to further inform contextual safeguarding.

Findings

Quantitative analysis of monitoring and police data

Analysis of the available monitoring data and linked police data found that:

- 44 young people accessed the programme between April 2021 and March 2023. The length of time these young people had participated in the programme ranged from 97 to 653 days, including many whose participation was ongoing.

- A reduction in violent offending (using the VRPs definition of serious violence) amongst these young people following their referral. More specifically,

  - A 79% reduction in the average number of occurrences per three months this cohort was linked to as offenders/suspects, comparing the 12 months prior to referral with the period since referral

  - 37 out of 43 (86%) individuals being linked to fewer such occurrences following referral, and 32(74%) of these being linked to no further occurrences.

- There was no obvious relationship between either young people's age or their total crime severity score at referral and their likelihood of being linked to further violent offences following referral.

- A reduction was seen in knife carrying/possession offences: Of the 29 young people who had been linked to a knife-carrying or possession occurrence in the 12 months leading up to their referral, 25 were not linked to any further occurrences.

- Of the 24 young people who had been linked to a violent crime occurrence as a victim in the 12 months leading up to their referral, two were linked as victims to further occurrences following referral, whilst 22 were not linked to further occurrences.

These findings broadly reflected the police metrics reviewed regularly by programme staff (see Appendix A). It was not possible through this analysis to assess the impact of the

programme on non-crime outcomes targeted by the programme, such as improved mental health and wellbeing or access to support, due to only limited monitoring data being made available to evaluators.

Qualitative case studies of young people's experiences

Case studies, developed based on the experiences of interviewees, provided in-depth accounts of how participating in the programme had impacted on five particular young people. Qualitative analysis of case study data identified that:

- Most young people had aspirations for the future, and wanted to get (or continue) a job and earn their own money. Adults close to these young people had witnessed a positive shift in their outlook, motivation and optimism for the future.

- Some young people had become more engaged and self-aware during their participation in the programme and were able to think and reflect before acting on their emotions.

- Several young people were able to build more structure and routine into their lives which had facilitated their move away from criminality.

Case study data also highlighted how lead professionals successfully implement support to enable these outcomes. This included:

- **Investing time and expertise into building trust and a good rapport with the young person.** In order to build rapport, lead professionals acted as an ally for the young person, establishing open lines of two-way communication, and consistently offering genuine care and understanding. Also key developing a good rapport was taking account of how the young person's past trauma may affect the relationship-building process.

- **Providing personalised and responsive support.** Lead professionals acted as consistent and reliable role models for young people and worked carefully to adapt their approach based on each young person's individual needs, interests and challenges. Lead professionals also adapted their choice of learning styles in response to young people's immediate and ongoing needs.

- **Supporting decision making and understanding the consequences of decisions.** Young people were supported to negotiate the balance between risk and reward and develop a healthy fear around the potential negative consequences and impact of their actions on themselves and others.

- **Advocating on the young person's behalf.** Efforts were made by lead professionals to help colleagues within and beyond the programme to understand the young person's needs and point of view. Advocacy was potentially hampered by lead professionals lack of insight into how the support they provided related to the wider HKC programme. Some negative experiences of other services were also more difficult to overcome, such as the education system not meeting some young people's needs and some young people feeling they had been unfairly targeted by police after improving their behaviour.

4

Exploration of process and impact across the programme

In interviews and small group discussions, programme staff and stakeholders shared their perspectives on the impact of the programme. The following key themes emerged:

- The programme was effective overall in reducing offending behaviour amongst the young people it had supported.

- There were mixed views on whether the programme could impact on other areas of young people's lives that may in turn affect their offending. Whilst some interviewees were aware of examples of young people accessing diversionary activities or experiencing improved wellbeing, some others were sceptical about the ability of the programme to impact on these areas.

- There was a generally held perception that the programme supported positive outcomes in individuals that were younger at the point of their referral and whose criminal behaviour had not yet become engrained.

The same interviews and small group discussions also uncovered key insight into how the programme was implemented. Key insights indicated that:

- The use of data to target support was seen as a key strength of the programme. Two key elements of this were 1) the use and discussion of data and intelligence across multiple agencies, and 2) the identification of young people at risk due to their peers.

- Data and intelligence sharing provided opportunities to support wider activity. This included informing responses to events in the community and statutory assessments of individual young people's needs.

- Partnership working contributed to the programme in a range of ways. As well as a positive attitude to data sharing, there were examples shared of professionals from different agencies or backgrounds learning from each other and developing solutions to support young people. Partnerships also went beyond services to working with the community to gather insight into the risks facing young people and to support business and transport employees to play their part in keeping young people safe.

- Partnership working was facilitated by working relationships amongst the multi-agency group the programme. This in turn was seen to be enabled, at least in part, by the existence and work of the dedicated contextual safeguarding office and East Sussex County Council's in-house detached youth work service. It was, however, seen as potentially limited by not including the full range of agencies supporting young people. Future involvement of the adult probation was suggested in order to support transitional safeguarding, as well as potentially representation from education settings.

Conclusions and recommendations

Impact

Analysis of police data suggested that young people in the cohort had reduced their frequency of violent offending after being referred to the HKC Programme. Case study interviews illustrated how young people were able to 'stay out of trouble' using the knowledge and experience gained whilst participating in the programme.

Positive changes to wellbeing and lifestyle were also observed amongst case study young people, including positive shifts in their motivation and the development of healthier and safer routines. Positive change was sometimes underpinned by access to diversionary activities which could be hard to sustain beyond the young person's involvement in the programme.

Police data suggested that there was a reduction in victimisation amongst participating young people. Case studies described how young people's adjusted lifestyles and outlook could reduce their overall risk from crime.

Young people accessed a wide range of support during their participation in the HKC Programme. Support mostly came via the Youth Justice Service which the majority of young people were already accessing.

Whilst stakeholders interviewed suggested that the HKC Programme may be more effective for those who were younger and whose criminal behaviour had become less entrenched, this was not reflected in the police data that was analysed.

Implementation

Interviews generally suggested that good use was made of data and insight from a range of sources, both to target the resources of the programme, and to inform the ongoing work of agencies involved. Some young people still felt that the way they were treated by police did not reflect the positive changes seen in their behaviour.

The evaluation identified the important contribution of partnership working to the HKC Programme. Partnership working contributions ranged from a positive attitude to data sharing, to shared learning to a) help mobilise the support of the wider community and b) support young people to navigate services. The Programme's dedicated Contextual Safeguarding Officer was seen as instrumental in facilitating some aspects of this.

Lead professionals used their time, skills and expertise to ensure support delivered to individual young people was effective. Support included building a good rapport with young people, and providing personalised and responsive support, as well as helping young people to develop their decision making and understanding of risks and reward.

Recommendations

This evaluation report makes 14 detailed recommendations in relation to the future implementation, direction, expansion, and evaluation of the programme. Key themes within these include:

- Securing representation of adult probation, and potentially education, in the HKC partnership. Alongside this, setting clear parameters for new work around transitional safeguarding.

- Considering how provision of diversionary activities can be responsive and sustain diversion beyond YP's participation in programme.

- Exploring options for a new system or platform for timely, dynamic information sharing on participating young people.

- Ring-fencing police time to support collaboration, information sharing and expedited criminal investigations concerning participating young people.

- Strengthening how the role and scope of the HKC Programme is communicated to staff working directly with young people.

- Reviewing the programme's Theory of Change to clarify the range of direct beneficiaries beyond young people, the role of partner agencies, and relationship with support already offered to individual young people.

- Considering strategies for how the programme could, should it expand, accommodated different local authority structures.

- Making improvements to how and what monitoring data is collected.

- Build on current project metrics in police data so that they reflect key aims and future developments of the programme.

- Taking a progressive approach to evaluation, so that more robust methodologies can be developed as the design of the programme and key outcomes measures are refined.

1. Introduction

Scope and Aims

In summer 2022, the National Children's Bureau, (NCB) was commissioned by the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) to undertake a process and impact evaluation of the Habitual Knife Carriers (HKC) programme in East Sussex. This report sets out the findings of the evaluation, which relates specifically to the 2022-23 financial year.

The overall aims of the evaluation were to:

- Evidence the short-term outcomes achieved and the long-term impacts of the interventions.

- Understand how and why participants achieve outcomes, which participants do / do not achieve outcomes and what factors are the most important drivers of outcomes.

- Provide recommendations for the future delivery and evaluation of these interventions.

Methodology

The evaluation methodology consisted of three main elements:

- Qualitative case studies of young people's experiences

- Qualitative exploration of process and impact with programme stakeholders

- Quantitative analysis of project monitoring and linked police data.

Detailed methodology and research questions were developed following an initial period of desk research and a co-production workshop with key programme staff and stakeholders. These were set out in an Evaluation Framework (Appendix B). A second workshop was held with this group at the end of the evaluation in order to help refine the recommendations set out in Chapter 6 of this report.

Qualitative case studies of young people's experiences

Case studies were undertaken of five individual young people's experiences of the programme. This involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with the young person themselves and with the person undertaking the role of their 'lead professional'. For three of the five young people's case studies, a parent was also interviewed. Participants were recruited with the support of the Contextual Safeguarding Coordinator who manages the programme. All of the young people were male, had a lead professional based in the Youth Justice Service and had undertaken engagement with this service as a result of a court order or out of court disposal.

Exploration of process and impact across the programme

Semi-structured interviews and small group discussions were undertaken with 9 participants not previously interviewed as part of the case studies. These participants included Youth Justice Services, youth services and police staff directly involved in the delivery of the programme as well as police and local authority stakeholders. The interviews and small group discussions explored participants' perspectives on programme-wide barriers and enablers as well as reflections in relation to the three evaluation aims.

Quantitative analysis of project monitoring data and linked police data

Evaluators undertook an initial assessment of the potential quantitative data sources available to inform this final evaluation report. It was anticipated that the quantitative data analysis would incorporate data for all of the young people participating in the programme from the following data sources:

- Service User Monitoring (SUM) Form; SUM form data is routinely collected in relation to initiatives commissioned through the VRP. In the case of this evaluation, it included a range of information and variables describing the characteristics of young people, such as when, where, and how they participated in the programme and how their needs and outcomes relate to the priorities of the VRP. The data was collected by programme staff, who in some instances were working directly with the young people in question. It provided data from which the sample would be defined and linked to police data (see below), as well as quantitative data on outcomes other than changes in offending or victimisation.

- Police offending data including information on crime occurrences that young people may have been linked to as offenders, suspect or victims before and after participating in the programme.

- Offending data from each of the individual records within the Police NICHE system was used to provide data on risk factors affecting young people before and after participating in the programme. As well as the ONS Crime Severity scores taken from the Power BI Nominals dashboard of the cohort being considered.

- In addition to these main sources, Asset Plus assessments were also identified as a potential source of data relating to young people supported by the Youth Justice Services.

Specific measures from these sources were chosen and aligned with each evaluation question set out in the Evaluation Framework.

In taking forward this originally planned approach, three main challenges were encountered:

- SUM forms were not made available to evaluators in a complete state in time to carry out analysis. A limited set of data was supplied in relation to participating young people in lieu of this.

- Metrics that had been routinely drawn from police data by programme staff did not align with the agreed measures from the Evaluation Framework. This included the

metrics using the Home Office Definition of Offences Violence Against the Person rather than the VRP's local definition of Serious Violent Crime (see below).

- Measures that were agreed to be drawn from police data required manual extraction. This was more time consuming than anticipated and was delayed due to not receiving key data in relation to the sample via SUM forms.

As a result of these challenges, quantitative analysis was primarily limited to consideration of young people's links with occurrences of violent crime (as defined by the VRP) before, during, and after participation in the programme. In order to focus on addressing challenges with the main sources of data, the initial plans to use of Asset Plus assessments were not taken forward.

Analysis of data was undertaken for all young people participating in the programme at some point from **1st April 2022 up until 1st March 2023.** Young people who joined the programme after 1st March 2023 were not included as there would be insufficient time between when the young person joined and any subsequent impacts which might be observed. This includes some young people who were originally referred to the programme in 2021.

When considering the term violent crime, unless otherwise stated, the report refers to the definition of Serious Violent Crime set out by the Violence Reduction Partnership as follows;

- Violence that occurs in a public place

- Has a victim, suspect or offender under the age of 25

- Causes or is intended to cause serious injury (GBH/wounding criminal definition)

  Or involves the use of one or more of the following: - a firearm - a knife or other bladed/pointed weapon, whether made, adapted or intended as a weapon - other offensive weapon, whether made, adapted or intended, including acid or corrosive substance

Note on presentation of qualitative findings

The interviews and small group discussions, the analysis of the resulting transcripts, and the presentation of findings in Chapters 4 and 5 are an exercise in qualitative research. Qualitative research seeks to understand social realities by exploring **how** and **why** experiences occur. Unlike quantitative research, it is not typically aimed at exploring how common or generalisable these social realities may be. For this reason, findings in Chapters 4 and 5 do not attach numerical figures to the themes identified. Language and structure have, however, been used to indicate the strength of different themes. This is based on a number of considerations, including the diversity of participants (i.e. young person, school staff, programme staff) that expressed the issue in interviews, and the relative emphasis each of them gave as well as the number of interviews the issue was identified in. As a guide, 'some' or 'several' or 'a few' are statements or concepts reflected in relation to 3 or fewer case studies or 4 or fewer other interview participants; and 'most' or 'many' are statements or concepts reflected in 4 or more case studies or by 5 or more other interview participants. Direct quotes are used where the interviewees own language illustrates a concept in a richer way than is possible in prose. Participants consented to these quotes being used only

anonymously and as such they are attributed to broad categories of participant, not specific roles, settings or case studies.

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 sets out the aims, structure, and key features of the East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme.

- Chapter 3 sets out the findings of the quantitative analysis, including the reach of the programme and the cohort of young people it involved, and findings in relation to the impact of the programme at a cohort wide level broken down by key characteristics of young people.

- Chapter 4 presents anonymised summaries of the five case studies of young people's experiences and analysis of the key themes emerging from them in relation to Programme delivery and impact.

- Chapter 5 sets out the findings of the stakeholder interviews and discussions in relation to how the programme works, including enablers and barriers, programme impact, and how it may be improved.

- Chapter 6 sets out the conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation across its three aims.

2. About the East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme

The following description of the HKC programme was developed by the evaluation team based on information from a range of written sources available to NCB[1] and refined following the completion of fieldwork.

Overview

The Habitual Knife Carriers Programme aims to change the behaviour of a current, active cohort of children who carry knives, and divert them and their associates/local peer groups from being drawn into future knife carrying and other criminal activity.

The programme is not limited to specific boroughs or sites within East Sussex but focuses on individual young people where there are the most significant concerns around knife carrying. The programme does however aim to respond to higher levels of risks linked to particular sites or geographical areas through outreach work and how risks in relation to individual young people are assessed.

Young people engaged in the programme include those already involved in the Youth Justice Service and those with open cases within local social work teams. It also includes those who do not have statutory involvement but have been assessed through the HKC Index as having an escalated risk of carrying a knife and/or involvement in knife crime either as an offender or victim.

The programme is primarily delivered by the Youth Justice Service, with contributions from the wider children's services at East Sussex County Council and Sussex Police. Young people's access to relevant facilities run by local charities and businesses is arranged and funded through the programme.

The programme is intentionally integrated with the statutory services' normal work with relevant young people. The rationale for this approach is to ensure:

- The partnership work fits with existing safeguarding structures and procedures.

- Existing child-practitioner relationships are utilised, supporting the relationship-based approach to interventions and avoiding unnecessary changes to or additional professionals involved in the children and families' lives.

- The programme can access a range of existing staff skills and expertise. This includes specialist and skilled social work, detached youth work and youth justice practitioners, as well as management oversight of assessments and interventions.

---

[1] These sources include the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the evaluation; the programme's funding application submitted to Home Office; the programme's theory of change document; initial interviews with project staff, and; written information provided by project staff with input from their programme stakeholders from other agencies.

Scoping and referral

Young people who are most likely to be carrying knives are identified using the HKC risk Index. This tool is developed and maintained by Sussex Police. It looks at the risk factors associated with known instances of knife crime and identifies young people who have these risk factors. This is based on a range of standard police data as well as analysis of intelligence reports. Young people are assigned a risk rating score based on these factors.

Data from the HKC Index is considered as part of a scoping exercise that involves Police, Youth Justice Service (YOT) and children's services. This informs which young people enter the programme for one-to-one work and where group and outreach work delivered through the programme should be targeted.

Targeted individual and group work

All young people referred for one-to-one work are allocated a lead professional. This lead professional undertakes an assessment considering individual, peer, family, and community factors affecting the young person. They oversee the delivery of personalised plans which can include both one-to-one and group work. The plan may also recommend onward referral to the Youth Employability Service.

Group work may also include young people who are not otherwise involved in the programme but who are associated with the young person for whom this activity forms part of their personalised plan.

The exact focus and nature of the interventions is determined through an assessment of the young person's needs and risks. Potential content of the interventions include:

- Knife crime;
- Exploitation;
- Emotional regulation;
- Healthy relationships; and
- Substance misuse.

The interventions seek to address knife crime, exploitation, emotional regulation, healthy relationships and substance misuse with a focus on also moving the child away from negative peer influences and towards pro social influences such as positive activities including music or sport.

For this work the lead professional utilises methodologies such as Relationship Based and Trauma-Informed Practice to develop trusted relationships. One-to-one activities include:

- Support for better behaviour, including social and emotional skills, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and restorative justice;
- Support for families and empowering parents/carers to become effective partners in safeguarding;
- Incentives for change such as diversionary activities;

- Pro-social activities; and

- Opportunities for new peer groups/role models.

The young person's progress is monitored through regular, multi-agency information sharing meetings informed by police intelligence submissions and information from key agencies such as schools. The disruption pathway (i.e. enforcement rather than diversion/prevention) is only to be used for young people for whom engagement is not secured or in exceptional circumstances such as, for example, where they were known to be actively involved in drug dealing, or recruiting and exploiting other young people for financial gain.

Work in the wider community

In addition to work with individual young people and their peers, community outreach activities are undertaken where there is a known knife-carrying problem. These come in the form of detached/mobile sessions carried out by trained youth workers and youth officers from the Early Help team. Using local knowledge and an understanding of the participating children's specific interests the team undertake activities to raise young people's awareness of the risks they are taking and help them develop skills to improve their emotional resilience and behaviour. These young people are also, where appropriate, signposted to relevant activities and services including the Youth Employability Service (YES). The team also engage with other members of the public in high-risk areas to inform this work as well as offer advice and training to those who want to take a proactive role in community safety.

The Programme also initially incorporated delivery of the established KnowKnives intervention. This had been delivered by early help practitioners and specially trained youth (police) officers via community based small group work, and community-based roadshows in local areas with known knife crime problems. This intervention was discontinued in East Sussex at the beginning of the evaluation period so did not feature as a part of the HKC Programme for 2022-23.

Enhancement of existing statutory services

It is recognised in the design of the programme that many of the young people engaged may have already received similar support from statutory services prior to the delivery of this programme. Young people involved in the youth justice system would have been allocated a professional from the Youth Justice Service and had plans developed with them to help avoid reoffending. Social workers would lead similar work for young people who had not been sentenced but were deemed at sufficient risk of harm to warrant social care intervention. The programme seeks to enhance what is already offered by statutory services in the following ways:

- **Improving coordination and targeting of resources:** The programme includes, for example, regular partnership meetings between Early Help, Youth Justice Service and Sussex Police to share intelligence and information, develop a partnership action plan and oversee implementation of actions. Time is also allocated to using staff working together, employing the HKC Index and associated multi-agency scoping exercise, to

target existing and additional resources. Youth offending and social care staff additionally make use of the HKC Index to better understand what is going on in the lives of young people they are working with. Police use the HKC Index and discussions with other partnership staff to inform bespoke enforcement and disruption activity.

- **Reaching more young people with professional support:** The programme offers support to young people identified through the Index who are not open to statutory services on a voluntary basis (i.e. the young person/family members are not required to engage through their bail terms or a child protection plan.) This is undertaken by skilled youth justice or social work practitioners via additional hours.

- **More options for individual and group work as part of personalised plans:** Lead professionals can access additional financial resource to support young people in accessing positive and diversionary activities in their local communities. Similarly, with group work, the resource can enable provision of venues in the children's local communities and delivery of specialist sessions (previous examples include First Aid course relating to stab wounds). It has also been used to purchase a virtual reality headset depicting a stabbing scenario, which is available for workers to use with children and families as part of their interventions. The additional staff capacity secured by the programme also allows for continuing interventions to young people beyond their legally required engagement (on a voluntary basis) where assessed as appropriate.

- **Expanding coverage of outreach work:** Additional financial resource is being used to develop a joined-up approach between detached youth workers and neighbourhood police teams by paying for existing professionals' overtime.

3. Quantitative analysis of monitoring and police data

This Chapter sets out the findings of the quantitative analysis of police data in relation to the East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme. This includes further context in terms of the reach of the programme and the cohort of young people it involves. It also sets out findings based on available data in relation to occurrences of crime amongst those who have participated in the programme.

Reach of programme and characteristics of young people

In total, 44 individuals participated in the programme between 1st April 2022 and 1st March 2023. All individuals were male. Just over half (n=23) were aged 16 or 17 years at the point of referral to the programme, with the remainder (n=21) aged 15 or under.

The duration of participation was, on average, 280 days, ranging from 97 to 653 days. This includes young people who were yet to conclude their participation in the programme. For the majority of young people, their lead professional was from the Youth Justice Service (YJS) (n=40), with only a small number of lead professionals from social care (n=3) or Early Help Keywork (n=1).

At the point of their referral to the programme most young people (n=36) young people were under supervision of the YJS. Just over half (n=23) were open to social care classified as looked after, a child in need or subject to child protection plan. Four young people were not open to either statutory service at their referral to the programme.

Data suggests that the programme engaged with young people with a range of levels of historical offending The ONS Crime Severity Score for the individuals is a weighted crime score across the individuals crime occurrences. The average score for all young people participating in the programme during the year was 6818, ranging from 217 to 18,987.

Outcomes recorded in police data

Police data was extracted for the 44 individuals who participated in in the programme between 1st April 2022 and 1st March 2023. This data included a range of metrics that align with the programme's theory of change and were agreed as part of the Evaluation Framework.

The metrics included the number of violent crime and knife carrying/possession offences each young person was linked to and associated ONS crime severity scores as well as the number of violent crime occurrences they were linked to as victims. This crime data was analysed for all individuals for 12 months prior to them being referred into the programme, through to 6 months following their participation in the programme. Findings are presented for 3 sub-cohorts, based on when they completed their participation in the programme (and consequently what time periods data is available for). Cohort A completed participation in the programme by 16/10/2022, Cohort B completed participation in the programme between 17/10/2022 and 16/3/2023, and cohort C had done so since 17/03/2023 or were still participating at the time this data was collected.

Findings are presented below at both an aggregate and individual level. Findings have been presented at an aggregate level to understand potential impact on overall volume of crime and allow interpretation alongside with metrics currently used by programme staff. These existing metrics did not allow comparison of young people's behaviour and outcomes before and after participation in the programme and were not always aligned with the aims of the programme and the VRP. For example, they did not use the VRP's definition of violent crime. A summary analysis using these metrics was provided to evaluators by programme staff and relevant findings are included in the commentary below. Findings are also presented at an individual level to allow analysis of outcomes in relation to individual young people's characteristics and interpretation alongside case studies as set out in Chapter 4.

Aggregated cohort level findings

Findings in relation to the number of young people linked with violent crime (as defined by the VRP) as an offender or suspect are set out in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Violent crime occurrences linked to young people before, during and after participation

Sub-cohort	Number of Young People	Number of occurrences of violent crime linked to young people				
		12 months prior to referral	During participation	0-3 months post participation	3-6 months post participation	Total following referral
A	10	35	0	2	2	4
B	10	37	7	5	NA[2]	12
C	24	97	14	NA[3]	NA[2]	14
Total	**44**	**169**	**21**	**7**	**2**	**30**

As the table above shows, the whole cohort was linked, as an offender or suspect, with a total of 169 occurrences of violent crime 12 months prior to their referral. This compares to a total of 30 crimes following referral. Over two thirds of these occurrences post referral are accounted for in sub-cohorts B and C during their participation in the programme. Sub-cohort A accounts for 4 occurrences following referral, all of which happened post participation in the programme. Sub-cohort C alone accounts for well over half of the occurrences prior to referral and just under half of those following referral. However, it should be noted that as well as sub-cohorts A, B and C being of different sizes, young people within them participated in the programme for different lengths of time. To aid interpretation this same data has been

---

[2] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort concluded their participation in the programme fewer than six months before data was extracted.
[3] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort had either not concluded their participation in the programme, or concluded it fewer than three months before data was extracted.

presented in Table 2 below, expressed as mean number of occurrences per young person per 3 months.

Table 2: Violent crime occurrences linked to young people 3-monthly averages

Sub-cohort	Number of Young People	Average No. occurrences per young person, per 3 months					
		12 months prior to referral	During participation	0-3 months post participation	3-6 months post participation	Total post referral	% Change
A	10	0.88	0.00	0.20	0.2	0.14	**-84%**
B	10	0.93	0.32	0.50	NA[4]	0.40	**-57%**
C	24	1.01	0.20	NA[5]	NA[4]	0.20	**-80%**
Total	**44**	**0.96**	**0.18**	**0.35**	**0.2**	**0.23**	**-76%**

All three sub-cohorts appear to have reduced their violent offending following initial referral to the programme. Sub-cohort A, who all completed their participation at least 6 months ago, were linked with an average of 0.9 occurrences of violent crime per 3 months for the year preceding their referral. This dropped to zero during their participation and reached just 0.2 by six months after completing their participation in the programme. This suggests a reduced offending level has been sustained for this sub-cohort of 10 young people. Smaller reductions can be seen for the 10 young people in sub cohort B who completed the programme at least 3 months ago and for sub cohort C, most of whom were still participating at the time data for this analysis was extracted. Overall there was a 75% reduction in the number of offences each young person was linked to, from an average of 0.96 occurrence per 3 months in the year prior to referral, to 0.24 offences per three months following referral. The impact of the programme on crime occurrences linked with the young people can also be assessed using the Home Office's Crime Severity Score. The table below sets this out for young people completing the programme at least 3 months ago (Sub cohorts A and B). Again, this is presented using averages per young person per 3 months.

---

[4] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort concluded their participation in the programme fewer than six months before data was extracted.

[5] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort had either not concluded their participation in the programme, or concluded it fewer than three months before data was extracted.

Table 3: Severity scores[6] for violent crime occurrences[7]

Sub-cohort	Number of Young People	Average combined score per young person, per 3 months		
		12 months prior to referral	0-3 months post participation	3-6 months post participation
A	10	859.4	280.3	40.1
B	10	717.8	80.9	NA[8]

The average crime severity scores for 20 young people in sub-cohorts A and B reduced notably following their participation in the programme. The average per young person per 3 months of their combined score (taking all crimes within a three-month period cumulatively) for sub-cohort A reduced from 859.4 12 for the year prior to referral to 280.3 in the 3 months after concluding their participation, a reduction of over two thirds. Sub-cohort B saw an even larger reduction from 717.8 to 80.9

Data on knife carrying and possession was also analysed, findings from which are set out in table 4.

Table 4: Knife-carrying or possession occurrences linked to young people before, 3 monthly averages

Sub-cohort	Number of Young People	Average No. occurrences per young person, per 3 months			
		12 months prior to referral	During participation	0-3 months post participation	3-6 months post participation
A	10	0.8	0.0	0.1	0.2
B	10	0.6	0.2	0.2	NA[9]
C	24	1.2	0.3	NA[10]	NA[4]

Because of the small numbers involved, caution is advised in comparing figures between the sub-cohorts. This analysis shows, however, that young people are, on average, linked to fewer knife carrying or violent crime occurrences after referral to the programme. It also shows

---

[6] Crime severity scores are experimental statistics developed by the Office for National Statistics. They are based on sentencing data for various types of crimes. Scores attributed to specific crimes range from 2 for possession of cannabis to 7,832 for homicide. For more information see
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeseverityscoreexperimentalstatistics
[7] Not yet available for Sub-cohort C
[8] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort concluded their participation in the programme fewer than six months before data was extracted.
[9] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort concluded their participation in the programme fewer than six months before data was extracted.
[10] Data not available as young people in this sub-cohort had either not concluded their participation in the programme, or concluded it fewer than three months before data was extracted.

encouraging signs that those young people who have completed participation may be able to sustain this reduction in violent offending. Furthermore, these findings echo those from analysis undertaken by Sussex Police as part of the ongoing monitoring of the programme.

Analysis by programme staff provided to evaluators included all young people referred to the programme between April 2022 and March 2023. It compared the final 3 months of the preceding financial year with the same months of 2023 (one year later), using a range of metrics. It indicated a halving (from 63 to 31) in the number of violence against the person occurrences that young people in the cohort were linked to as suspect or offender. It also indicated a reduction of possession of weapon offences that the young people were linked to (from 15 to 2).

Individual level findings

Following on from the cohort level findings above, Table 5, below sets out how many young people saw change in the number of violent crime occurrences they are linked to. This is based on 3-monthly averages for each young person, comparing this figure for 12 months prior to referral to that for during and post participation.

Table 5: Change in number of violent crime occurrences (3-monthly averages) that young people were linked to pre and post referral

Sub-cohort	Total number of young people linked to at least one occurrence in the 12 months prior to referral[11]	Linked to more occurrences following referral	Linked to fewer occurrences following referral	Linked to no occurrences following referral
A	10	1	9	7
B	10	2	8	6
C	23	3	20	19
Total	43	6	37	32
Percentage	100%	14%	86%	74%

The vast majority of young people who were linked to at least one occurrence of violent crime in the year leading up to their referral went on to be linked to fewer occurrences after their referral (37 out of 43, 86%). Most of these young people (32, 76% of total) were linked to no further occurrences following their referral. Six young people (16%) were linked to more occurrences after their referral than they had been in the year leading up to their referral.

---

[11] One young person from sub-cohort C was not linked to any occurrences in the 12 months prior to referral

Box A, below, highlights findings from analysis of the relationship between young people's characteristics and violent offending, whilst Box B highlights further analysis of outcome measures.

Box A: Young people's characteristics and violent offending

AGE: Young people aged 15 or under at referral were no more or less likely than those aged 16 or over to be linked as an offender or suspect to further occurrences of violent crime.

HISTORY OF OFFENDING AT REFERRAL: Young people with total ONS Crime Severity Scores scores (i.e. above the median score) at referral were no more or less likely than those with lower scores to be linked as an offender or suspect to further occurrences of violent crime.

Box B: Further crime-related outcomes measures

KNIFE CARRYING AND POSSESSION: Of 29 young people who had been linked to a knife-carrying or possession occurrence in the 12 months leading up to their referral, four were linked to further occurrences after their referral whilst 25 were linked with no further occurrences. However, out of the 15 young people not linked to a knife-carrying or possession occurrence in the 12 months leading up to their referral, two went on to be linked to at least one occurrence following their referral.

VICTIMISATION: Of 24 young people who had been linked to a violent crime occurrence as a victim in the 12 months leading up to their referral, two were linked as victims to further occurrences following referral whilst 22 were linked to no further occurrences. However, out of the 20 young people not linked as a victim to a crime occurrence in the 12 months leading up to their referral, one went on to be linked to at least one occurrence following their referral.

GANGS AND PEER GROUPS: Of five young people who were recorded as being at risk due to their membership of a gang or peer group at referral (and for which there was data relating to the end of their participation) three were still recorded as being so on completion of their participation and two were no longer record as being so.

Other outcome measures

The analysis above has focussed on measures of impact as set out in the Evaluation Framework, using data made available to evaluators from police records. It therefore may not reflect the full range of impact perceived by staff or young people or measured through monitoring of police data. There are two key considerations in this regard.

The Evaluation Framework included a number of other measures to give a more rounded view of impact on individual young people, in line with the programme's theory of change. These related to, for example, the young people's wellbeing and engagement in diversionary activities. It was not possible to carry out an analysis of these measures as the expected monitoring data had not been consistently collected.

Furthermore, there were a wider range of police metrics that were used by programme staff to monitor the programme. The summary of this analysis (See Appendix A) provided to evaluators included measures such as the number of crime occurrences of any type that

young people were linked to as suspect or offender, the number of young people coming to police attention and the total cost of crime associated with the occurrences that young people were linked to. It showed positive impact in relation to all of these measures for young people referred to the programme during 2022.

Chapter conclusion

44 young people participated in the programme between April 2022 and March 2023. The vast majority of these were already open to the Youth Justice Service and were allocated a lead professional based there. The length of time that young people participated in the programme varied greatly from 97 to 653 days. This included young people who were yet to conclude their participation in the programme.

Analysis of crime data in relation to these young people indicated a reduction in violent offending following their referral to the programme. This included sub-cohorts of young people who had concluded their participation in the programme at least 3 months and 6 months prior to this analysis and had sustained a lower level of violent offending during these intervening periods. Overall, there was a 76 percent reduction in the number of occurrences of violent crime that young people were linked to as offenders or suspects after referral compared to 12 months prior. A similar reduction was seen in the number of knife carrying and possession occurrences that young people were linked to as offenders or suspects. These findings reinforce observations made by programme staff using analysis by Sussex police using slightly different measures.

Not all young people saw reductions in the number of violent crime occurrences that they were linked to. Most (37, 86%) were linked to fewer occurrences and 32 (74%) were linked with no further occurrences at all. However, a minority of young people (6 out of 43, 14%) who were linked to at least one occurrence of violent crime in the 12 months leading up to referral went on to be linked to more occurrences after referral than they were before. The likelihood of young people being linked to further occurrences did not appear to be affected by their age or total ONS Crime Severity Score at the point of referral. Similar changes in young people's links with carrying and possession occurrences as offenders or suspects, and in young people's victimisation were also observed.

The analysis in this Chapter is based on available data that relates to the impact measures set out in the Evaluation Framework and the relevant police data that was available to evaluators. No data on non-crime related outcomes was available. A wider range of police metrics were also monitored by programme staff. Due to limitations of those metrics, however, the bespoke data extraction and analysis described in this Chapter was required.

4. Qualitative case studies of young people's experiences

This Chapter sets out the findings of case studies developed from 13 individual interviews in relation to the impact and delivery of the programme. It describes the nature of the impact for the five case study young people, informed by interviews with the young people, their lead professionals and parents. It presents a summary of each case study, followed by thematic analysis across case studies and the identified overarching themes.

Case study summaries

The five case studies are summarised below including the young person's presenting needs, programme activity undertaken, and impact. Findings from interviews are complemented with relevant information from monitoring data (SUM forms) and police data.

Case Study A

Presenting needs: Young Person A was referred to YJS on a court order as part of their sentencing for a previous offence and was included in the programme because of their ongoing risk in relation to knife crime. Throughout their record, there was evidence of multiple crime types which are identified risk factors for serious violence. The young person was already open to the YJS at the start of intervention; and had been linked to multiple violent offences and carrying/possession offences as a suspect/offender (and as a victim in one instance) in the 12 months prior to starting the intervention. Young Person A was involved in the programme for more than 12 months and at the time of data collection, their contact was ongoing. Based on interview data, Young Person A presented with a range of social, emotional, and mental health needs and risky behaviours, more specifically emotion regulation difficulties, anxiety, stress, anger, trauma and knife carrying behaviour.

Programme activity: Young Person A's youth justice worker was allocated as their lead professional. The young person expressed an interest in physical activity, particularly going to the gym, as well as spending time with peers and gaining employment. Programme activities focused on supporting them with lifestyle changes and building a better understanding of the chain of events that led them to carry a knife. A lot of the programme was supporting Young Person A to manage their emotions, increase their level of self-awareness, and process the trauma connected to their past life. Regular one-to-one sessions consisted of: discussing the risks of carrying a knife to themselves, their family and others; encouragement to maintain a routine, stay active and occupied; discussions with family members to improve relationships; and support in planning movements to reduce risks of being drawn into further criminality.

Impact of programme on mood and motivation: Based on qualitative interview data, Young Person A found all the work they had done with the lead professional to be helpful. They reflected that although making changes was hard and stressful, they had experienced positive changes in their life and were resolute that all the hard work they had put in to affect change would not be wasted. Interviews as part of this case study reported that taking part in an

interview with people they had never met before showed how much progress the Young Person had made with their mental health. Young Person A had started to take personal responsibility for their actions, understanding that people can help them, but ultimately individuals must want to make the change. After involvement in the programme, interviews described how the Young Person's wellbeing had improved, experiencing: a reduction in stress and paranoia; less fear for their safety; increased self-awareness; lower anxiety levels; and increased openness to receiving praise.

Impact of programme on lifestyle and relationships: Based on quantitative data, since the commencement of the intervention, Young Person A had multiple occurrences whereby they were the named suspect in violent crimes. The young person's involvement in the intervention was still open at the time of data collection and no detail was available on 'post intervention' impact. According to qualitative interview data, meeting with the lead professional (one to one) and speaking about the dangers of carrying a knife was helping Young Person A to change their behaviour and to stay out of knife crime. A number of the young person's behaviours changed, such as: building more structure and routine; increased physical activity; change in activity engagement (i.e. spending more time with family, playing Xbox and going to the gym); change in peer interactions (i.e. no longer spending time with old friends they used to associate with, and had made new friends at the gym who are in employment); and improved course attendance (which would provide them with employment options).

Despite improvements, two separate risks were being managed on an ongoing basis, a) from the group of friends involved in gang behaviour and b) from members of their family who were still operating on the edge of criminality. Young Person A's opportunities for employment were connected to b) and therefore provided increased risk that they would be drawn into further criminal activity. The long-term impact of the programme on the young person's trajectory was still unknown, so moving forwards the focus of involvement work was on scaffolding the young person to support them in continuing to reinforce the changes they had made.

Case Study B

Presenting needs: Young Person B was referred to YJS on a court order as part of their sentencing for a previous offence and was included in the programme because of their knife carrying behaviour. The young person was already open to the YJS and social care at the start of intervention, and had been linked to multiple violent offences and carrying/possession offences as a suspect/offender (and as a victim in multiple instances) in the 12 months prior to starting the intervention. Young Person B was involved in the programme for more than 12 months and at the time of data collection, their contact was ongoing. Based on interview data, Young Person B presented to the programme with a range of social, emotional, or mental health needs and risky behaviours, more specifically concentration and attention difficulties; disruptive behaviour at school; criminal activity; substance misuse; and suspected autism or learning needs.

Programme activity: Young Person B's youth justice worker was allocated as their lead professional. The young person expressed an interest in fashion and they were motivated to

gain some experience for their CV to help advance their job prospects. Young Person B attended regular one-to-one and group sessions. One-to-one programme activities focused on informal discussions about decision making processes around criminal behaviour and psychoeducation i.e. weapons awareness and the impact of drug use on brain development. Group sessions involved taking part in active, recreational activities, such as go-karting or paintballing.

Impact of programme on mood and motivation: Interviews as part of this case study reported mixed findings on the changes to Young Person B's wellbeing. Young Person B said that their general mood had improved, and they felt better knowing that they had support and people to talk to. However, adults interviewed found it hard to confirm a consistent improvement, describing the young person's mood as changeable, sometimes presenting as moody and irritable, and at other times appearing to be in good spirits. The young person always felt confident and outgoing, but this was made easier through having to speak to a lot of adults about their life. The young person said that they did sometimes feel hassled by the number of meetings they had to attend with professionals. Young Person B described their motivation to get out of the youth justice system before an age when they would go on adult probation for criminal behaviour. They recognised the benefits of the programme, which kept them motivated to engage even when they felt low.

Impact of programme on lifestyle and relationships: Based on the quantitative data, since the commencement of the intervention, Young Person B had multiple occurrences whereby they were the named suspect in crimes involving knives. The young person's involvement in the intervention was still open at the time of data collection and no detail was available on 'post intervention' impact. According to the qualitative interview data, some positive shift was identified in the young person's behaviour. Young Person B said they were more motivated, planning and focusing more on their future in an effort to become self-sufficient. However, according to the parent and YJW's accounts, there was no clear change in the young person's motivation. Young Person B reported they were much busier than they had been prior to the intervention, and therefore had less time or ability to get into trouble. However, according to the YJW's account, the young person was still at risk of serious harm to others

Case Study C

Presenting needs: Young Person C was referred to YJS on a court order as part of sentencing for a previous offence and included in the programme due to being at risk of knife carrying and low-level offending. The young person was already open to the YJS and social care at the start of intervention, and had been linked to multiple violent offences and carrying/possession offences as a suspect/offender (and as a victim in multiple instances) in the 12 months prior to starting the intervention. Young Person C was involved in the programme for less than 12 months and at the time of data collection, their contact was ongoing. According to interview data, Young Person C presented with a range of emotional mental health needs and risky behaviours, more specifically learning and processing difficulties, anger, impulsivity, antisocial behaviour, truancy, and knife carrying behaviour.

Programme activity: Young Person C's youth justice worker was allocated as their lead professional. The young person expressed an interest in music, sports and being outdoors. Programme activities focused on supporting Young Person C with understanding the negative consequences of their actions on their future; building the young person's strengths; setting boundaries; and engaging with activities that help release emotions. Regular one-to-one sessions consisted of reparation work, creating music, physical activity, practical support and developing a communication passport.

Impact of programme on mood and motivation: Interviews as part of this case study reported some improvements to Young Person C's wellbeing. They sometimes felt happier and experienced less stress and anger. Young Person C continued to show care and sensitivity towards their friends, demonstrating some reflective skills, including discussing the emotional impact of interactions with the police. However, due to the young person's learning needs, they found it difficult to ask for the help and support they needed and heavily relied on professionals to advocate on their behalf.

Impact of programme on lifestyle and relationships: Based on quantitative data, since the commencement of the intervention, Young Person C had multiple occurrences whereby they were the named suspect in crimes involving knives. The young person's involvement in the intervention was still open at the time of data collection and no detail was available on 'post intervention' impact. According to qualitative interview data, Young Person C was no longer carrying knives or coming to the attention of the police on a regular basis. Young Person C's behaviour had improved, with typically daily interactions with the police prior to programme involvement. Young Person C was getting on better at college, attending lessons and interacting better in class, but they still had to leave the class on occasions as they struggled to sit still and concentrate. Young Person C was trying hard not to put themselves in dangerous situations and was beginning to learn when to distance themselves when a situation did not seem right, or a person was not good for them. However, some ongoing issues were reported by interviewees, with Young Person C regularly going missing from their place of residence, and a slight increase was reported in the young person's drug taking.

Despite improvements, interviewees reflected that there was still a way to go to keep the young person out of the criminal justice system long-term. Young Person C's behaviour was worse when they did not have structure and routine, and there were ongoing concerns that they would jeopardise their situation in order to retain strict rules around their movements and behaviour. Interviewees felt that engaging the young person in employment would help provide them with the necessary structure they needed to maintain change moving forwards.

Case Study D

Presenting needs: Young Person D was referred to the group programme on a voluntary basis due to being at risk of knife carrying and exploitation. They had been recently supported by the YJS on an out-of-court disposal and therefore were already open to the YJS at the start of the group intervention. Young Person D had been linked to a violent offence in the 3 months prior to starting the intervention. Young Person D was involved in the programme for less than 12 months and at the time of data collection, they were no longer receiving one-to-one

sessions but were still involved in group sessions. According to interview data, Young Person D presented with a range of needs and risky behaviours, more specifically ADHD, dyslexia, learning needs and cognitive disability, impulsivity, drug use, safety concerns, and risky behaviour in school.

Programme activity: Young Person D's youth justice worker was allocated as their lead professional. The young person expressed an interest in cooking, adrenaline-based activities and going to the gym. Programme activities focused on supporting Young Person D with life skills (e.g., budgeting), learning about peer influence, drug use and impulsivity, and the long-term consequences of criminal activity. Group sessions involved recreational activities, such as cooking.

Impact of programme on mood and motivation: Interviews as part of this case study reported some changes in Young Person D's demeanour, appearing more open and engaged. Although interviews reported that the young person did not struggle with their mental health, they had remained positive and polite and had engaged well with a range of adults. A shift was reported in the young person's attitude towards knife crime, and they appeared to be more motivated for their future (i.e. getting a job and earning money). However, the young person was not motivated to continue attending group sessions on a voluntary basis, as they felt the sessions got in the way of them pursuing other recreational activities.

Impact of programme on lifestyle and relationships: Based on the quantitative data, during and since the intervention, Young Person D had been a suspect in instance(s) of violent crime. No instances of knife crime were recorded during or since their involvement with the programme. According to interview data, there had been a brief escalation in Young Person D's behaviour, which had appeared to deescalate at the point of interview. Despite less police involvement, there were still some instances of drug possession. The young person was reportedly engaging better with professionals and with programme activities, however they were still not engaging with school.

Case Study E

Presenting needs: Young Person E was referred to the YJS on a court order as part of sentencing for a previous offence and included in the programme due to knife carrying behaviour. The young person was open to social care, but not open to the YJS at the start of the intervention. They had been linked to violent offences and carrying/possession offences as a suspect/offender (and as a victim) in the 3 and 12 months prior to starting the intervention. Young Person E was involved in the programme for less than 6 months and at the time of data collection, their contact was ongoing. According to interview data, Young Person E presented to the programme with a range of needs and risky behaviours, more specifically suspected ADHD, aggression, antisocial behaviour, criminal behaviour and suspected weapon carrying.

Programme activity: A youth justice worker was allocated as the lead professional. Young Person E expressed an interest in spending time with their partner, playing football and staying fit and healthy. Programme activities included discussing peer pressure, influence and

coercion, and the long-term consequences of criminal behaviour. One-to-one sessions also included support in managing emotions and taking part in recreational activities.

Impact of programme on mood and motivation: Interviews as part of this case study reported an overall improvement in Young Person E's mood. They felt less volatile and emotionally reactive, and as a result felt calmer and more relaxed.

Impact of programme on lifestyle and relationships: Based on quantitative data, since the commencement of the intervention, Young Person E had multiple incidences of violent crime, including knife crime (and potential possession/carrying). The young person was the victim of violent crime and had continued affiliations with gangs and 'county lines'. The Young Person's involvement in the intervention was still open at the time of data collection and no detail was available on 'post intervention' impact. According to qualitative interview data, Young Person E was taking practical steps to stay out of trouble, including staying away from certain areas and friends. Young Person E had a change in attitude, recognising that getting into trouble wasn't worth the potential serious consequences, including hurting others. The young person had made new friends who did not get into trouble, and instead they just spent time together having fun.

Overarching themes – programme impact

Thematic analysis of case study data identified three overarching themes: 1) outlook and motivation to follow a different path, 2) impact on mood and life satisfaction, and 3) impact on lifestyle and relationships.

Outlook and motivation to follow a different path

Several young people were motivated to change and had **lost interest in continuing down a criminal path**. Although making changes could be 'tiring' it was considered 'worth the effort.' Most young people had **vocational ambitions** and were motivated to enter or continue in the world of work. Young people were motivated to earn their own money and gain some independence and autonomy. Lead professionals talked about how earning money could be "really positive and powerful" for young people, giving them a sense of "self-worth". A contributing factor was when young people learnt to take personal responsibility for their choices. Several young people appreciated the support they had received from the YJS staff but understood that ultimately "you've got to be the one to make that change." Young people said they had to be **"self-motivated"** to attend one-to-one sessions, whereas with group work they motivated each other to attend. Some young people felt **driven to change out of fear** for what their life would be if they continued on this path i.e. entering the adult probation service where they would not receive as much support.

> "I think work would give him that foundation and that support and that sense of self-worth that college doesn't give him at the moment and his friends don't give him. I think he wants to earn, and he wants to feel good about stuff because he hasn't got much that's made him feel good in his life."

Programme staff

Some young people continued to have **low motivation** throughout their involvement with the programme. Despite efforts made by the services, the young person couldn't "see the point" or the link between the support being offered and avoiding being put into custody. In a number of cases, young people were not motivated to attend or try hard at school or college. Lead professionals and parents suggested that the **traditional education system was not fitting the young people's needs** (emotional, behavioural, cognitive). Attempts to adapt the traditional school timetable sometimes back-fired, with lead professionals concerned that it would be putting young people at greater "risk of doing something silly" in the community. Interviewees identified the complex pathway forward for some of these young people, with a number of risks and "push and pull" factors to manage, "there's always a risk" that young people will "get drawn" back down a criminal pathway. Some parents were **cautiously optimistic** about their child's future, but worried it might be too late to change the path they are on. At the same time, many parents sounded resigned, knowing it wouldn't be possible to know whether something had worked until the young person was "out of it" later down the line.

> "He hasn't got the motivation. He won't get himself up in the morning. Today, just to come to this meeting, he had to be woken up. It was ten minutes before he got up to get here; we're all up waiting for him to get ready."

Parent

Impact on mood and life satisfaction

Changes in young people's mental health and wellbeing were also explored as part of interviews. The interviews suggested that most young people had experienced **difficulties with their mood**, particularly with feelings of anxiety, stress, paranoia, anger, or frustration. Some lead professionals highlighted that such difficulties were to be expected amongst this cohort of young people, who would likely have experienced some form of trauma. Young people generally did not share their own views on emotional wellbeing and mental health, but evidence of change was observed through discussing their behaviours with lead professionals and parents According to them, just taking part in an interview with people they had never met before was evidence of the progress they had made with their mental health. As wellbeing improved, so too did young people's level of engagement, with individuals being more open to praise, and 'to have a laugh' with their lead professional. Some interviews highlighted the changes or challenges young people have had with **managing their emotions**. Some accounts of young people's journeys described a positive shift in their attitude and general temperament, but others highlighted how 'volatile' and changeable young people's mood can be in their teenage years. One parent witnessed positive changes in their child's 'temperament', seeing how they had learnt to step back from their emotions and think through their actions rather than acting on impulse. Although difficulties with emotional

reactivity were often described in the 'normal' range, in some instances young people would close up and would not readily talk about their feelings.

> "He does suffer, with a lot of anxiety. I'm really impressed how he's put himself in front of two people he's never met before and that sort of thing. Most of the time it would be head down, hands on his head. Can't get a word out of him."
> Programme staff

Difficulty was reported in assessing young people's emotional wellbeing. Several lead professionals were unsure about whether there had been a shift in young people's general happiness and state of wellbeing. These interviewees found it **'tricky' to report any real change** in some cases, acknowledging 'there will always be something not okay with him on some level.' Lead professionals felt they could not support all of young people's mental health needs, but it was important that a young person felt ready to receive additional mental health support from other agencies. One young person did not feel they benefitted from involvement with CAMHS, but their lead professional reflected that **any support given was not "wasted"** as the young person would be able to think about what they had learnt when they were in a 'better place.'

> "So emotional well-being, I don't know. Tricky with [young person]. I think there will always be something not okay with [them] on a level, but again, it's sophisticated... I don't know how much... He disassociates so much. It's complicated."
> Programme staff

Lifestyle, routine and relationships

Building structure and routine helped most young people to **stay busy and keep a "low profile".** Certain activities such as work or regular gym attendance provided "natural structure". Young people's efforts to keep **"occupied" through physical or vocational activities** meant they did not have the time or energy to get into trouble. Young people kept themselves active by playing football, going to the gym, working, community service, job searching and vocational qualifications. For some young people, they changed what activities they took part in, and instead chose to spend more time **"chilling" at home** with their family and/or partner, rather than going out into town where they used to interact with peers (often still involved in criminal behaviour). It was important for young people to find **the right activities to occupy their time**. It took some trial and error for young people to find what worked for them. Channelling aggression through activities such as boxing was helpful for some young people, but for others this felt like a trigger and would not help them to be less reactive.

> "...I feel like when I go out and I see people it's just always the same people I used to chill with and I just don't want to get back involved in that again, to be fair. So I just chill in with my girlfriend, that's it."
> Young person

Some interviewees discussed the changes they saw in young people's **relationships** and the impact this had on their lives. A few young people reported **spending more time with their**

family and their relationships had improved. Young people's peer groups played an important role in their involvement in criminal activity, and for some young people **"pulling away" from associated peer groups** was an important change. For some, they remained on friendly terms, and would greet each other in the street, but no longer spent time together. **Friends could be a positive influence**, and one young person talked about the new friends they had made who "don't get into trouble." Young people's **relationships with the police** also featured within the interviews. For some young people, their relationship with the police was dependant on the individual, being on friendly terms with some police officers, but other police officers were described as "not very pleasant." One young person had a unique relationship with the police, where they would regularly call the police if they felt scared or in danger. For some young people, they felt that they had gained a "reputation" with the police which meant they "don't really like them" and/or they felt unfairly targeted.

> "So the fact of what I was doing could hurt other people and it just made me feel like - I stopped hanging around with my proper mates after that because they were just still getting into trouble. So he did, yes, he made me realise basically that it wasn't all worth it."
> Young person

There was a positive impact on several young people's **behaviour**, with interviewees reporting that several young people had "stopped getting into trouble" and were no longer "coming to as much attention with the police." For some young people, concerns had "subsided" to the point where police involvement was no longer a topic of conversation in sessions. For some young people, they were "**trying not to put [themselves] in situations."** In some cases, working together across services was necessary in order to reduce "risks of exploitation". Some young people said that they had stopped carrying knives early on in the process, partly due to maturity or arrests, and wouldn't "stab people now". According to interviews, there was also a reduction in drug use and supply. Some young people continued to **exhibit risky behaviour**, but it was often difficult to assess the level of risk and in some cases lead professionals, parents and the police remained wary or sceptical.

> "Yes, you can only go on behaviour, can't you? He might not be able to tell you about it or why it's changed but his behaviour is showing something has changed for him which is good."
> Parent

> "I was getting arrested maybe twice every week, two times a week, but now it isn't really happening anymore, so."
> Young person

Overarching themes – programme implementation

Thematic analysis of case study data identified three overarching themes: 1) building a good rapport, 2) personalised and responsive support, and 3) advocacy and coordination of support.

Building a good rapport

Data from interviews indicated that **building a good rapport** between young people and their lead professional was the foundation for change. It was important for lead professionals to be aware that they are asking really personal "in-depth questions" and as such, they needed to give young people the **time and space to "warm up"** and not expect them to engage straight away. An important way that lead professionals helped to build rapport with young people was **planning recreational activities**, engaging young people in activities for the purpose of fun and relationship building. With this cohort of young people, they "fear that you're setting me up, or you're going to tell the police and I'm going to get arrested." Several lead professionals described the importance of understanding young people's lived experience, recognising that "we're not just carrying our weapons because we think we're hard, actually my lived experience is that I am scared." Although lead professionals were not mental health professionals, they acknowledged that it was essential to build in time to support young people's **emotional wellbeing and mental health**, and avoiding it becomes a barrier to engagement. Lead professionals made efforts to create a **comfortable environment** for young people to feel safe to open up in. Often, young people felt more comfortable to talk when going for a drive or eating food.

For young people, it was very important that they felt like their lead professional was **an ally**, someone **"that is actually on [their] side."** One young person described their lead professional as "funny", "helpful" "understanding" and someone that **"just clicked to me straightaway."** The distinction was made between the type of relationship young people had with their parents or teachers and their YJW. It was much easier for young people to open up to their lead professional. One parent described this space as "neutral ground", giving the young person their "own person" to talk to and offer support. For young people, having someone to speak to that was "always there", a constant ally was so crucial for building their trust. For one young person they struggled to engage because they didn't "see the point" of the work, so there was a focus on building the relationship back up again. Building that trust was vital for enabling lead professionals to challenge young people's behaviour, "not judging" them but allowing them to broach difficult subjects and question their choices.

> "I think it helps that they listen to him. I think it feels like he's got someone that actually is on his side; someone who will listen or help him with things. I think that's probably more what helps. He won't talk to us, because we're his parents – it's a bit different, isn't it?"
> Parent

> "For someone like [Young Person], it's building up trust. It's being on their side but being a critical friend as well and being upfront with them and saying [Young Person],

that's not pretty, that's not good, and not judging him."
Programme staff

Lead professionals talked about how important it was to have **"open and honest" two-way communication** with young people. This was well received, with young people feeling like "they do listen to you" and "obviously help with a lot of things." It was important that the lines of communication were open both ways, with one lead professional reflecting on what a big ask it was for young people to be expected to open up on big issues, "it's a deep thing to start talking to someone about," but on the whole, young people were willing to talk. It was important for some young people that they were provided with a confidential space to talk. Although parents were informed when necessary or required, young people knew they could talk openly, and **"they can talk to them without it going further on."** Where appropriate, giving parents a space to talk and be listened to was also important. Building that relationship with the parent and following through on actions was important for the young person as well. It also allowed the lead professionals to learn from the parents, about the young person's learning needs, interests and hobbies.

"I can actually speak to them and they wouldn't go back and tell people, because it's their job... So yes, I knew I could kind of like trust them, even though I didn't know them, if you get what I mean? ... Yes, whereas if I spoke to one of my mates about what's going on, they would then go and tell somebody else probably..."
Young Person

For young people, believing that their lead professionals **genuinely cared** about them and understood their experiences was key. They described how lead professionals were "talking like as if [they] actually cared," as if **"they want the best for me."** When young people felt that the relationship they had with the lead professional was real, they understood why they were providing help and support. Having an awareness for how **trauma** can negatively impact on individuals and their ability to feel safe and develop trusting relationships was important. For some young people, being able to engage with some of the issues was important in building trust and "I got to talk to him and actually get his own perspective of it and you get the bigger picture of it." Feeling understood often came from having relatable experiences. This could be having similar interests, career ambitions, life or work experiences. In some instances, having these joint experiences allowed the young person to open up a bit more, and be more receptive to change. In some instances, not having some similarities, for example the young person and lead professional being different genders, introduced limits to what activities they could engage in together.

"I think he was just like talking like as if he actually cared, if you know what I mean? Like actually cared if I went to prison or not, because he was like talking to me about like he knows what can happen in there and stuff like that."
Young Person

Personalised and responsive support

Interviews reflected on how young people benefitted from having **access to a consistent, reliable role model** in their lives. For several young people, they have had a difficult relationship with their parent(s) who were sometimes "battling their own demons". Lead professionals themselves became a positive role model for most, and they also supported young people to identify other people who were "significant in their life" who they could "easily relate to or recognise positive aspects in them." Young people were more receptive to the advice of role models, and so this was an effective way to challenge their views on criminal activity, such as knife carrying. Once a YJW was seen as a role model, they were able to provide young people with **encouragement and a "gentle push" in the right direction** through collaborative discussion and motivational interviewing. Lead professionals encouraged young people by reminding them of their potential and "celebrating" times when they made a different choice, showing them how many changes they had made and could continue to make. This was a careful balance, of challenging and encouraging, with some parents concerned that if young people were given too much support they would "put up a wall where [they] don't have to do it" for themselves.

It was important for young people to learn about **taking personal responsibility for the actions**. One young person described how they "never really had any discipline when I was growing up," so being held accountable for their actions was new to them. Lead professionals provided advice and would not shy away from important issues, at times taking a firm stand and putting boundaries in place. Lead professionals would support the young people but would not hold back from being clear about what they thought about their actions and they often had the power to send young people back to court if they did not follow the rules. "Getting into trouble" was often the result of boredom, therefore lead professionals provided practical support, helping young people to stay **productive, active and busy** by developing **life skills (e.g. budgeting) and access to diversionary activities.** In order to support these activities, the YJS provided workers with access to funds for things like ID, which would help with applying for jobs as well as for certificates, driving license, glasses, and prescriptions.

> "I think it's having a positive male role model... Having somebody say to him, who's outside of the family circle and not a lecturer who's worked with children who stabbed people and stuff and just plugging away at it, using the VR thing. He respects those opinions, I think, and he responds well. Once he trusts you and likes you, I think he listens to your views. He might not absorb them straight away, but he certainly looks to take them on board and tries to impress you, I think."
> Programme Staff

Lead professionals identified that helping young people **build a structure and routine** in their lives was really key to lasting change. For some young people, enforced structure was helpful, and they found it easier to continue with a strict routine once it was no longer compulsory, but another young person did not follow their "doorstep curfew" and continued to risk it as they had not yet been caught. Lead professionals recognised the importance of educational or work settings for keeping young people's "mind active" and being able to **give their day structure**, regardless of whether young people achieved any qualifications.

However, a number of young people were on part-time school or college timetables, which meant a lot of their day was unstructured. Building a routine in the evenings was also important, as often young people described being "bored" and would get in to trouble. Going to the gym or spending time at home filled young people's time and energy so they were less likely to engage in their past behaviour or meet up with certain peer groups.

Although organisational structure could be helpful for young people, most found it difficult to learn using more traditional methods, and several had additional needs which made it difficult to concentrate, sit still, and learn in a typical way. Therefore, lead professionals were **flexible in teaching young people new ways of thinking or learning information**, and a lot of the work was "unstructured" and responsive to how the young person presented on the day, or the direction the young person took the conversation or activity. For some young people this meant being outdoors, being on the move, or having a conversation whilst engaging in a recreational activity e.g. playing pool. It was important to keep conversations brief and break up discussions about "heavy" topics with conversations on other things like music.

> "I've seen a decline in his routine since he's stopped going to school where he's up through the night, he's sleeping in the day, whereas when he was at school that was more balanced." Parent

> "A lot of the work was unstructured and there was a lot of responsivity that's needed because you were thinking, this is work we're focussing on today. Then, he draws you in a different direction so instead of having to go with it and then park that for a while and then come back to it."
> Programme Staff

Supporting young people to understand the consequences of their behaviour

Lead professionals identified that it was important to support young people with **making decisions and negotiating the balance of risk to reward**. For lead professionals their role was often helping young people to make a better choice for themselves, "just giving them options" i.e. how can you still hang out with your friends without getting into trouble – maybe go play pool rather than be on the streets? Interviews indicator that some young people acted on impulse or did not make a "conscious choice" to commit a crime, therefore the work was about helping them to understand that they are making a "choice". For one person, once they realised it was their choice the "penny dropped" and they decided to change their behaviour. An important activity for keeping young people busy and occupied was **planning diversionary activities.** This involved planning active pursuits that young people expressed an interest in, such as paintballing or go-karting. It was important for most young people that these activities were "sporty", but one young person also enjoyed cooking and this was an activity they took part in together with a friend. Some activities with young people were around supporting them to manage and **regulate their emotions.** Music, conversation, and physical activity were helpful tools to release emotions and help to learn to self-regulate.

> "So when it came to planning, that's why I think he was starting to be very unmotivated, because all he could see was someone telling him this is what you need to do, but he

didn't see the benefit from it. ...it's about helping him see that his lifestyle that he's choosing is very risky, and there's other ways of earning money where the risk is not there. You can keep the money that you earn, rather than having it taken from you because the police do take all the money that you make."
Programme Staff

A clear focus of the work with all young people was **understanding how actions lead to serious consequences.** Lead professionals talked with young people about the potential serious consequences of their actions, such as going to young offenders, prison, having a criminal record, limited job prospects, injury, and death. Lead professionals tried to instil a "healthy fear," but reflected that it was often hard to know whether what they had said had got through. For many young people, they felt "invincible" and had not previously thought about the potential negative consequences of their criminal behaviour on their own safety (i.e., being stabbed by their own weapon) or the safety of their family (i.e. modelling certain behaviours), or wider society (ambulance workers and people processing a crime scene). One young person described how talking about these serious consequences **"opened my eyes up to stop carrying knives and stuff."** Reinforcing the serious nature of criminal behaviour and their consequences was particularly challenging for young people with additional needs. One young person approached low-level criminality and police involvement as "all a bit of a game," and there was increasing concern around the young person.

"[If it carried on this way] I may go... young offenders. Maybe I could get myself killed. Yes, even more other stuff, to be honest. So I've realised, I know I'm getting older and like if your behaviour, if you keep on getting arrested you can't get a job, like it's going to be hard. Yes, it's just going to be a difficult life really, to be fair."
Young Person

Discussing the risks and long-term consequences of criminal behaviour was the most commonly used approach to helping young people to learn to think differently. These conversations, although educational, were typically informal "chats" that covered issues of peer influence, and risks of exploitation, drug taking, and knife carrying. Several young people were known to be involved with **drugs,** and so lead professionals worked with them to explore the laws around cannabis and the impact it can have on a young person's brain and their development. The **dangers of exploitation** and **risks of knife carrying** were important topics of conversation. Although most of the input from lead professionals was more organic, in some instances they did use more **structured content** with written exercises. Activities covered decision making and issues around knife carrying and being safe. A couple of young people did **reparation work**, which involved practical activities such as making posters, booklets, a journal, and "stuff in the community." Young people had access to a reparation worker who set up projects as part of this work. **Virtual reality (VR) headsets** were reported to be a useful tool in challenging young people's perceptions of knife carrying and starting a dialogue. It shows a virtual reality experience of knife crime from different perspectives. Several young people and parents found the VR headset, "really helpful," "powerful" and "effective."

"Learning about the danger of knife crime and the dangers of being involved in knife crime and how to stay safe and stuff, and he's helped me get out of the knife crime stuff too I was like, I don't know, it's just, when people told me what the dangers of it, it just kind of really opened my eyes and I thought no, this isn't for me really."
Young Person

Advocacy and coordination of support

It was important that lead professionals were able to **advocate and speak up on a young person's behalf** to other professionals. Lead professionals supported young people by making referrals to other services, giving families access to additional support, and having access to funds so young people could engage in "positive activities". Lead professionals took steps to manage young people's expectations around interaction with other services/professionals, as well as taking practical steps to coordinate young people's appointments. Due to **additional needs**, a number of young people relied on their YJW to ask for help on their behalf. For one young person with speech and language difficulties, the lead professional developed a report for custody so if the young person was taken in, police officers would be aware of their needs and how to ask them questions. In some cases, in order to effectively support young people, it was important to **support the parents directly.** Often parents were at capacity with other commitments but did really value and benefit from this support. Parents described "not feeling judged" by lead professionals, in a way that they hadn't experienced from other professionals. Supporting parents was often a way of helping to improve their relationship with their child and/or gently challenging "toxic" views around masculinity and parenting, which had directly impacted the young person. It was also useful where possible, for YJWs to be able to signpost parents to other services to meet their needs, such as housing support.

 "I think because of his - the difficulties he has, I think he finds it hard asking for that help or support. If he's struggling with something, he would just continue to struggle, he wouldn't necessarily ask for the help, he does rely on other people to say things for him."
Parent

"I've done direct work with her a little bit. I think I've got quite a good relationship with [parent]. She's called me for support which is really good, and advice. When she found the [potential weapon], she was straight on the phone to me going, 'What do I do?' All that sort of stuff." Programme Staff

Access to new opportunities often needed to be collaborative, **working closely with other organisations to meet individual needs.** Giving young people access to new opportunities (recreational and vocational) helped to develop their prosocial identity, focusing on their individual strengths and interests. For example, young people took part in **recreational activities** like boxing and art courses, supported by the YJS and other organisations like Eggtooth. Another young person had started to discuss potential positive activities with other young people at a support group for cannabis users. Helping young people to "upskill", giving them access to **vocational opportunities** was also important. This often involved working

closely with the Youth Employment Service (YES) to support young people with finding a job, gaining relevant qualifications (e.g. Construction Skills Certification or AQA exams). Providing access to new opportunities ran smoothly in most cases but in some cases would take longer to arrange. This included if the young person was less clear what they were interested in or it was a new activity being arranged for a group of young people such as paintballing. Furthermore, although lead professionals did have access to funds which were usually granted when requested, it was not deemed sustainable to continue to fund provision such as gym membership over longer periods of time.

> "...being with the [Youth Justice Service] it gives us opportunities to do things that we couldn't normally just do day-to-day life. Obviously, they can provide gym memberships so you can go to the gym, and they could plan these days out that obviously we might not be able to do by ourselves, so it's better in a lot of ways to be fair."
> Young Person

For successful collaboration, it was important for lead professionals to **develop good working relationships with individuals in other organisations.** Notable organisations were social services and Youth Employment Service, and the Under 25 Substance Team. Interviewees reported that successful joined up work was enabled by many organisations working in the same office, and therefore being able to communicate regularly. It was important for successful collaboration that lead professionals were able to **"keep [their] finger on the pulse."** There would often be a number of professionals involved with one young person so this was a balancing act for lead professionals who were "mindful of not taking over" but also keeping up with what everyone else was doing. Lead professionals' role was often to coordinate with other services, which generally went "smoothly" and was "well-coordinated" and "just works well." **Encouraging young people to engage with other services** was important. For example, this could be explaining the referral process to the young person, so they were "open" to it. Lead professionals also supported young people with managing transitions, thinking about housing, or into adult services.

> "So I'm case managing it and I speak to all the professionals that are involved; but because I have a good relationship with the social worker as well because she's in my office, we manage it and talk to each other all the time... I manage all his appointments for him and make sure the right professionals are meeting him when they're meant to, making contact with him when they're meant to, and then they share with me the work they're doing, and then I make a record of it each week."
> Programme Staff

It was reported that programme workers often had to **negotiate gaps in, and negative experiences of, statutory services.** There were several instances where lead professionals and/or parents were critical of the education system, with the needs of the individual young person not being met, and YJS involvement was often crucial in these circumstances. The YJS involvement was not limited to what the young person was referred for, often supporting with education or employment in addition. For one young person, they were open to other services, some of which had covered similar issues around knife awareness, so it was important to "liaise" to make sure all content was being covered but not repeated. The

challenge of the YJS worker being the referrer/key coordinator for young people's involvement with other services was that if they took a step back it was not always clear or possible for young people to still access those opportunities; "it's a bit of a jigsaw." One young person described how it could feel "annoying" to have multiple meetings with different professionals; although they appreciated and benefitted from the support, in some ways so much support felt like being "hassled."

> "...they've helped us like when [my son] has been at risk of being permanently excluded from school and having meetings. It's been helpful having them professionals involved."
> Parent

Interviews also explored the **relationship between the support provided to young people participating in the programme and that provided to other young people** that the same youth justice workers were also supporting. Staff described how they worked with their supervisors to understand what could be offered on a personalised basis for all individual young people. They also suggested that they applied their skills and approaches in similar ways regardless of whether a young person was part of the HKC programme or not. Whilst they engaged with a wider range of professionals and services around the young person, they were generally not able to share specific insight as to what the HKC programme offered exclusively to participating young people.

Chapter summary

In terms of impact, notable changes reported in case study interviews included a positive shift in young people's outlook, motivation, and optimism about the future despite the effort it took to change. Most young people had aspirations for the future, wanting to get a job and earn money, but had struggled in the education system. Parents and project staff hoped that existing changes would continue but recognised the ongoing risks. For some young people difficulties with motivation were ongoing.

Interview data also indicated that, during their participation in the programme, some young people became more engaged, more self-aware and were able to think and reflect before acting on their emotions. However, this experience was not universal, with some young people continuing to struggle with feeling or expressing their emotions, or not having any difficulties with their mood or wellbeing from the start.

Building structure and routine was key for a number of young people to change their life and move away from criminality. Several young people needed support to build these changes and switch unhealthy rules to more healthy ones.

In terms of programme implementation, case studies indicated that building a good rapport was crucial to engagement and positive behaviour change. The necessary ingredients for (successful) rapport building, included 1) being an ally; 2) having open two-way communication; 3) showing genuine care and understanding; and 4) taking account of how trauma may affect the relationship-building process. Interviews also highlighted specific planning, practical and emotional support activities that helped build rapport.

Personalised and responsive support that was adapted to support each individual young person and their needs was reported as essential for continued engagement and ongoing

cognitive and behaviour change. Key ingredients included: 1) access to a consistent, reliable role model; 2) providing encouragement and direction; 3) encouraging accountability and personal responsibility; 4) building structure and routine; 5) taking a flexible approach to learning and support; and 6) providing practical support.

Lead professionals talked young people through the choices they were making with an emphasis on supporting them to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Key ingredients of this approach included a focus on 1) decision-making – negotiating the balance of risk to reward; and 2) developing a 'healthy fear' – understanding how actions lead to serious consequences. These two components were supported through a range of activities, such as discussing the risk and consequences of criminal behaviour(s).

Advocacy was reported as a key to supporting young people and enabling cognitive and behaviour change. Key ingredients included: 1) advocating on the young person's behalf, and 2) working closely with other agencies to meet individual needs. This was achieved through a range of activities such as identifying unmet needs and managing transitions. Staff working directly with young people, however, had little insight into how the support provided to the young person related to the wider HKC programme and differed to that provided to others that they supported.

5. Exploration of process and impact across the programme

This Chapter sets out findings from the interviews and small group discussions with programme staff and stakeholders. It complements the findings set out in the previous two Chapters by exploring interviewees perspectives across the programme as a whole. It is structured around four key lines of inquiry that were pursued through these conversations – the use of data and intelligence to target support, the contribution of partnership working to the programme, perceptions of effectiveness and impact, and ideas for potential changes and improvements.

The use of data and intelligence to target support

Using and valuing different sources of information

Several interviewees reflected on how they felt the HKC Index had **evolved** since it was initially developed. A key part of this was increased use of children's services data and intelligence held across the partnership. Interviewees across the partnership were clear that whilst the mapping of police held data to inform this work was an important innovation, it was just the start of a more complex process – **"one piece of a puzzle"** - to identify who may most benefit from additional interventions and support. They suggested that using children's services data and discussing young people at partnership meetings helped better understand the wider context of young people's behaviours and peer connections. For example, it was suggested that using both police and children's services intelligence could identify where peer groups may be a protective factor for some young people as well as a risk. Insight gathered through the contextual safeguarding review of Eastbourne station was used to highlight how contextual risks, including those in relation to county lines, may affect young people in this area Being able to identify where young people posed a risk to others at the same time as a risk to themselves was seen as key to targeting support.

> "The two key things that would be looked at is their risk of serious harm to others, and their own safety and wellbeing risks. So if you've got assessments that are indicating high risk of serious harm to others and high concerns around safety and wellbeing, then that would then be a justification that there's clearly work that needs to be done to address those risks."
> Programme Staff

By using the wide range of data and having time to discuss different perspectives on the young people, staff felt that the partnership had created something "really unique" "really accurate". In particular, they found that the fact that most young people identified through the Index were in receipt of statutory intervention was **reassuring in terms of its accuracy**. They suggested that whilst different agencies may "prioritise different children for different reasons", when discussing young people as a partnership, **agreeing which children to prioritise for support was rarely a challenge.**

Early intervention via peer group mapping and support

A key element of the HKC programme is the mapping of peer networks and the delivery of work with peer groups as well as individuals. Staff suggested that, as part of this, a key strength was the ability to identify those who were **within the wider peer group** of a prolific offender but had **not started to engage in similar behaviour**. This was seen as creating an opportunity for early intervention and prevention through the support that the programme would offer to these young people. As a corollary it was also noted that those with highest scores on the HKC Index may not be those whom the support element of the programme would be effective for as they had got "so far down the line" of entrenched criminal behaviour and negative relationships with the police.

> "There's a potential criticism. that initial identification of how we identify the young people is those which we know have come to police notice around knife carrying, knife possession, knife crime. But I guess...it's that wider piece of contextual safeguarding where we look at not just the individual, but we look at their peer groups, we look at their associates and it's kind of I guess it's the wider work they do that wider group or around those locations of risk is where we're probably getting that focus on the protective factors."
> Stakeholder

Ensuring information is up to date

Interviews highlighted the importance of keeping the HKC Index data up to date. Staff thought that it was helpful that the Index was refreshed quarterly to ensure that "children aren't then remaining on a Index when that information is really no longer relevant". Some staff working directly with young people were keen to be able to reflect on the progress those young people had made, for example going long periods without coming to the attention of the police. Interviews indicated that young people could get frustrated about continuing to be treated negatively by police despite having changed their behaviour for several months. Whether a young person has made such progress is also of course relevant in terms of deciding whether to prioritise further support for them and their peers.

Whilst some staff were satisfied that the data was regularly updated, some pointed to limitations of the Index and wider services which meant that **young people's current situation may not always be accurately reflected**. Firstly, whilst the Index was being updated quarterly, due to their manual, intelligence-based nature, some measures were only updated every six months. This would affect understanding of a young person's peer relationships, for example. Police and YJS staff also acknowledged that young people may remain under investigation for some offences for many months. This would give them a higher score under the Index (indicating higher risk) even if there had not been any new instances of suspected criminal behaviour for some time.

Informing reactive work

Access to the intelligence from the HKC Index and partnership mapping activities was seen as having wider benefits beyond identifying which individual young people and peer groups to support. Interviewees gave two examples of how this information helped plan responses to specific events in the community. One of these was a stabbing in an area of the county. The partnership was able to **strengthen support offered through the 'youth café'** to young people for whom information held suggested they may have been particularly affected. The other was responding to the **increased risk created by schools closing** on a strike day by targeting youth work resource at town centre locations where the information indicated that high risk young people congregated.

Informing statutory referrals and assessments

Staff suggested that, in its current iteration, HKC Index included mostly young people who are already receiving a statutory intervention from children's services or the YJS. They did indicate, however, that discussions between members of the partnership could prompt individual staff or agencies to **reassess the risks faced by particular young people**. One interviewee gave an example of a young person who had recently been assessed by children's services and deemed not to meet the threshold for intervention, but their appearance on the Index prompted a fresh assessment which drew a different conclusion. Another staff member reflected that they thought that awareness of the national referral mechanism (for trafficking and modern slavery) had seen more use locally as a result of the sharing of information through this programme.

Contribution of partnership working to the programme

Constructive relationships between partners

Interviewees in different roles and from different agencies described and demonstrated the constructive working relationships they had with one another. They saw this as a **key enabler** of the successes of the programme.

> "Back in the day… you didn't work that closely with the police, whereas now it's quite, you know, everyone working together."
> Programme staff

Meanwhile a member of police staff said that

> "What it is, is we've all got round the table. We've discussed these individuals and we've got a real openness to make a change"
> Stakeholder

This appeared be underpinned by a strong sense of **respect** for each other's roles and expertise.

> "[There are] some good relationships and some very respectful relationships… where these relationships have been built… I would pick up the phone and I would ask them

something and what they say to me is gospel cause I know that they're so good at what they do… I think that respect has been built between some individuals within the organisation as well."
Programme Staff

Whilst there were strong relationships between the members of the current partnership running the programme, some **limitations of the scope of the partnership** were noted. Interviewees highlighted that the relationship between these partners and (adult) **probation services** was at an earlier stage of development. It was also clear, through the case studies, how important personalisation **of education and schooling** could be for young people's progress. Despite this, schools have only been involved at an individual, and not a strategic level.

Data sharing

One of the ways in which the strong relationships between partners was used within the programme was the sharing of data. As described above, the range of data and information used to target support was seen as important for the programme's effectiveness. This necessarily required police, YJSs, detached youthwork teams and children's social care to share information with each other in relation to the individual young people they worked with. One staff member highlighted that in their wider experience some people can be "quite risk averse". They noted that because the **right people were championing data sharing** for this programme that it had been "relatively easy".

Interdisciplinary learning

Interviewees from different agencies and professional backgrounds alluded to differences in how they see and work with young people who have been linked to violent crime. They also suggested, however, that they had seen **shifts in understanding and attitudes** from their colleagues in other agencies.

The most widely cited area of change was in relation to more police understanding that some children and young people can be both victims and perpetrators. It was described in interviews how those responsible for youth work learnt about the rules and responsibilities which police are subject to, and about a perceived increase in social care's appreciation of risks outside the family and home.

Through sharing experience and perspectives, a number of solutions were developed to improve support for young people. For example, police and detached youth work agreed to **deploy joint patrols selectively**, so that in locations where young people were particularly mistrusting of police, youth workers could maintain a lead in carrying out positive engagement with young people. Another example was services **coordinating their representations to court** to enable young people on bail to associate with their peers for the purposes of taking part in the programme's peer group work.

One staff member described how the respect between partners had enabled honest discussions about differing perspectives:

"What's really positive about this particular partnership is that you can have those conversations and that's met with genuine curiosity and interest and is not dismissed. Whereas, I've been in other forums where that kind of approach, where if we were challenging that use of language, it would be just dismissed."
Programme staff

As with other positive aspects of partnership working, there was a **limit to the scale of change that staff felt was achievable**. One staff member reflected on their disappointment on hearing a colleague refer to a child as "working for a criminal gang". Furthermore, whilst much of the supportive aspects of the programme were described as 'trauma informed' one interviewee relayed a cautionary note that once a young person was becoming involved with the police "much of what happens to them is not trauma informed."

Partnerships beyond statutory services

Some interviews uncovered examples of how communities had been engaged in wider partnership working. At a population level, a key example of this was the contextual safeguarding work carried out in relation to Eastbourne train station. This involved **building new relationships with local businesses** and railway employees. This led not only to consulting and sharing intelligence, but the training in de-escalation being offered to the community.

"If you see something happening, we should be going out there and challenging it in a safe way… So we're getting a lot of information and intelligence through from train staff, from coffee shop staff, from subway staff from…We are able to go in and provide training to staff that would have never had that kind of training how to deescalate situation or how to approach a young person…real tangible things are coming out from engaging with our communities, encouraging them to keep young people safe."
Programme Staff

There were examples of how, at an individual level, young people's **peers and parents had also been supported to play a positive role**, and how young people's employers could also form part of their support network. Young people in peer group sessions advised each other on how to get belongings back from the police and encouraged each other to apply for jobs. Parents were advised on how they could be a more positive role model and avoid young people using household knives.

Capacity for coordination

A wide range of interviewees identified the existence of the **dedicated contextual safeguarding coordinator role**, based in the YJS, as a key enabler for maintaining the constructive relationships between partners and the benefits that flowed from this. The role was seen to be critical in providing capacity to undertake discrete work such as that in relation to Eastbourne station but also building relationships and encouraging partners contributions to the work. The skills and experience of the current postholder were identified as making the deployment of the post particularly effective. Interviewees also suggested that

basing such a role in the YJS supported the building of relationships due to being respected by both police and youth services.

> "you need someone to oversee because otherwise if you've not got that personal championing it and pulling the parties together you it will not work. You need someone there to be driving it. It is [also] resource heavy initially you know when you're doing the peer group assessments and contextual safeguarding work, it does take time."
> Stakeholder

Local authority structure

Another enabler for the partnership that was identified by interviewees related to the structure of East Sussex County Council. It was noted that unlike some neighbouring authorities, who had outsourced youth services attached to particular settings, the Council maintained an **in-house detached youth work service**. This was seen as critical for the ability of Council to deploy its youth service offer in a targeted and reactive way as described. It was also thought to enable some of the flexibility required to share information with other statutory partners, and to allocate its staff as 'lead professionals' for some young people as part of the programme's trusted adult model.

Perceptions of effectiveness and impact

Perceptions on effectiveness in intended outcome areas

Managers and analysts who took part in the focus groups and interviews to discuss overarching issues were **generally positive about the impact** of the programme. In addition to the examples discussed in case study interviews (see Chapter 4, above), staff from the YJS and youth services were able to identify some examples of young people being supported to **access education and employment** and maintaining engagement with **diversionary activity** such as the fishing club. Police staff said that they had observed, via official police data, a reduction in offending amongst the young people identified as knife carriers through the programme.

> "I think there have been some positive results in terms of reducing knife carrying or evidence of knife carrying, but certainly increasing children's awareness of the risks of being of knife carrying and involvement in economy and exportation."
> Programme Staff

Whilst staff shared their general perceptions on how the programme was impacting on different outcome areas, they often qualified this with an acknowledgement that they did not have access to detailed information across the whole cohort. In particular, they highlighted that whilst it had been discussed amongst the partnership, children's **wellbeing had not been systematically measured**.

> "It's really difficult to monitor, isn't it? … How do you capture an improved life and improved social life and improved relationship with your mum and your dad?"
> Programme Staff

Some staff also questioned how relevant emotional wellbeing was in terms of the programme's impact, citing the **important role of other services in ensuring young people get the support they need**. Even where staff did have access to data on offending they acknowledged its limitations. Firstly, they suggested that it would not show long term impact due to the age of the programme which is a **relatively short period of time**. Secondly, they shared examples of young people making progress with their engagement with support and awareness of risks but still coming to the attention of police, indicating that such data would not tell the whole story.

Perceptions on differential engagement and outcomes

When discussing which types of young people typically saw more benefit from involvement in the programme, staff identified five potential factors.

- **Level of criminal activity on referral**. Several staff members from different agencies acknowledged that there may be a group of young people whose criminal behaviour may be too ingrained for them to respond to the additional support offered through the programme, although they may respond to focussed deterrence. They identified young people who were classified as the highest risk on the HKC Index who remain high risk. They suggested that some of these young people had had services targeted at them in the past and still escalated in terms of their offending.

- **Links with adult offenders.** Some staff suggested that young people who were known to have links to adult offenders were sometimes more cautious about opening up to their lead professional. This was seen as presenting a barrier to tailoring support and advice for the young person around staying safe and reducing their involvement in violent crime.

- **Age at referral.** Some staff highlighted what they saw as a limited time window in which young people could be most effectively supported before adulthood. This related to the difference in the type and scope of support available to young people aged under 18 compared to those aged 18 and over. It was suggested that if young people were referred into the programme shortly before turning 18 there would not be enough time to influence their behaviour.

  "In terms of the support that is available for them under the age of 18. That changes and it's not necessarily that the interventions couldn't work with them. But just that they're not necessarily available after 18 and that level of support changes drastically. It takes time to get to the risk level that they're at, and then there's less time to work with them as children afterward."
  Stakeholder

- **Family and wider support networks.** Staff perceived more progress with young people who had support from adults beyond the programme. Parents were identified as important in terms of their attitude to engaging with services. They also were seen to play a role, alongside schools, colleges and employers in supporting young people to maintain structure, health lifestyles and positive activities.

- **Presence of high-risk peers.** A member of police staff described a situation where a young person who was scored as particularly high risk on the HKC Index received a custodial sentence and was sent to prison. They observed that other members of that young person's peer group, who had been identified through the programme, were more receptive to support thereafter.

Staff and stakeholders' thoughts on potential changes and improvements

In interviews and small group discussions staff were asked for their own thoughts on potential changes and improvements they would like to see for the programme in the future. The ideas shared were as follows:

- **Transitional safeguarding.** Several staff indicated a desire to collaborate more with adult probation services as part of the programme. The main reason for this was to enable work with peer groups which include young people aged both under and over 18. Programme Staff suggested that some discussions had already happened between the YJS and the probation service about taking this forward.

- **Targeting police resource to support programme aims.** Another area that was already the subject of discussion between partners was how police resources could be targeted. In particular, police were looking at allocated additional resource to accelerate investigations relating to young people that were being supported by the programme. The rationale for this was to enable young people to move on from the episode that had led to them being investigated by resolving the case more quickly one way or another – see 'ensuring information is up to date' above. One member of staff also suggested it may be helpful to have a staff member dedicated to coordinating the police contribution to the programme, in addition to the coordinating role based in the YJS.

- **Expanding area-based contextual safeguarding activity.** Several staff members reflected on what they saw as the successes of the contextual safeguarding activity undertaken around Eastbourne station. They suggested that it may be beneficial to expand this work.

- **A more explicit focus on early intervention.** After discussing their observation that young people with a higher level of criminality on referral appeared less responsive to support, some staff suggested that the programme could seek to better identify and target those young people whose behaviour had not yet become as engrained. They suggested that this could build on peer group mapping and support to address the risks some young people face through their associations with offenders.

- **How the programme is named and described.** Some staff were keen to find a new name for the programme so that its supportive aspects could be better communicated to young people.

- **Enhancing the supportive role of schools.** In addition to some of the negative experiences of young people highlighted in the case studies, some staff also expressed frustration that schools in the area were not as supportive and inclusive as they could

be. They suggested that the current partnership could work more closely with school leaders to encourage more trauma-informed approaches to behaviour management and coordinate support for individual young people.

- **Using technology for dynamic coordination of support**. One staff member suggested that it may be beneficial to share information about young people between members of the partnership more dynamically. Whereas there are currently monthly meetings to discuss developments and progress of young people involved in the programme, sharing information about events in a young person's life as and when they happen may enable staff to respond more rapidly. The staff member suggested this could be facilitated by a digital information sharing platform.

Chapter Summary

Staff generally thought that the programme made good use of data to target support. This was thought to be particularly effective because of the layering of social care data on top of police data and discussing the young people amongst agencies to refine understanding. The HKC Index and wider system used was seen as useful in identifying peers of higher-risk individuals who may benefit from early intervention. There were also examples of how the data collected had informed responses to events in the community and contributed to statutory assessments of individual young people. Some police data, however, particularly that informed by intelligence reports or focussing on investigations into young people, did not always paint an up-to-date picture of the young person's level of risk.

Staff and stakeholders from different agencies felt that they had very constructive relationships with each other, and that partnership work made a major contribution to the programme. This contribution was seen as taking several forms including a positive attitude to data sharing, learning from each other's experience and perspectives, and developing partnerships with the community. The strength of partnerships in the programme was seen to be facilitated, in particular, by the existence of dedicated staff members that coordinate the work, and an in-house detached youth work team.

The programme was thought by staff from different agencies to be effective overall in reducing offending behaviour by the young people that it had supported. There were mixed views on whether the programme could impact on other areas of young people's lives that may in turn affect their offending such as wellbeing and access to diversionary activities. Staff thought that the programme was more likely to secure positive outcomes for young people who had not yet developed the highest risk patterns of offending, were younger, had seen their highest risk peers incarcerated, were not connected with known adult offenders and who had strong informal support networks.

Staff and stakeholders shared a range of ideas on how the programme could be improved or further developed. Two popular ideas which were already being initially explored were the expansion of the partnership to include adult probation service and the targeting of dedicated police resources to support the programme. Other ideas supported by multiple interviewees included changing the name of the programme and giving it a more explicit focus on early intervention.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has set out the findings of a process and impact evaluation of the East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers programme for 2022/23. The programme aimed to change the behaviour of the current, active cohort of children who carry knives and divert them and their associates/local peer groups from being drawn into future knife carrying and other criminal activity. It was funded by Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and delivered by East Sussex Youth Justice Service (YJS) in collaboration with other council services and Sussex Police. At the heart of the programme was the use of intelligence, data and partnership working to identify young people at risk and plan support and deterrence. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 44 young people participated in the programme.

The evaluation assessed the programme through analysis of programme and police data, five qualitative case studies of young people's journeys, and reflections from programme staff and stakeholders collected through interviews and small group discussions. It had three aims in relation to: a) understanding the programme's impact on outcomes for young people; b) exploring the programme's implementation and how this relates to outcomes; and c) making recommendations for future delivery and evaluation of the programme. This concluding Chapter of the report sets out a summary of findings and makes recommendations under these three headings. The recommendations of this evaluation may also support the implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 national evaluation of Violence Reduction Units (see Appendix C). Particular synergies are highlighted against each relevant recommendation or group of recommendations.

Findings on impact

Knife carrying and involvement in violent crime

Analysis of police data suggests that young people reduced their frequency of violent offending after being referred to the programme. Available data was analysed in terms of the average number of occurrences young people were linked to as suspects or offenders per three-month period. Figures for twelve months prior to young people's referral were compared to those for the varying periods of time that had passed since each young person's referral. This analysis found a 76% reduction in the frequency of such occurrences after referral to the programme for the participating group of 44 young people as a whole. It found that, of the 43 young people that were linked to least one occurrence in 12 months prior to referral, 37 reduced their frequency of offending, of which 32 had been linked to no further occurrences after referral. The majority of young people who had been linked to a knife carrying or possession occurrence 12 months prior to referral had not been linked to any further occurrences since.

Interviewees suggested that several of the case study young people had stopped 'getting into trouble' since commencing their participation in the programme. Some young people explained that they had found ways to avoid certain situations and areas and had stopped carrying knives. A small proportion of young people were linked with increased frequency to occurrences of violent crime and carrying or possession and not all young people interviewed described a positive change in terms of their interactions with the police.

Emotional wellbeing, motivation and outlook

Case study interviews uncovered a number of ways in which young people's wellbeing changed during their participation, potentially supporting long term behaviour change. Notable changes reported included a positive shift in young people's outlook and motivation. Young people and the adults working with them indicated optimism about the future despite the effort it was taking them to make change. Most young people interviewed had aspirations for the future, wanting to get a job and earn money, but had struggled in the education system.

Interviewees indicated that, during their participation, some young people became more engaged, more self-aware and were able to think and reflect before acting on their emotions. However, this experience was not universal. Some young people continued to struggle with feeling or expressing their emotions. When reflecting on the programme as a whole, some staff and stakeholders stressed that such difficulties were to be expected amongst this cohort and that any progress young people make on mental health would be dependent on availability of support from specialist mental health services. Furthermore, not all young people (and their parents and programme staff) had ever identified emotional wellbeing as a particular barrier.

Lifestyle and diversionary activities

Case study interviews identified changes in young people's lifestyle during their participation in the programme, which may support long term behaviour change. Notable changes included building a structure and routine. Young people, their parents and staff supporting them identified how keeping active and busy through physical, recreational, or vocational activities occupied their time and energy. They described how, in turn, this helped them to stay away from places or peers that were linked to criminal behaviour.

Planning diversionary activities was an important way to keep young people busy and occupied. According to case study interviewees, it was important for young people to find the right activities to occupy their time, and this often took some trial and error. Lead professionals were able to facilitate young peoples' access to a wide range of pursuits such as cooking, music and sports as well as vocational opportunities in collaboration with the youth employability service. Activities took longer to set up if the young person was not sure what they were interested in, suggested something the service had not facilitated before, or the activity was arranged as part of a group. Support towards the costs of activities could also only be provided for a limited period of time.

Victimisation and general risk from violent crime

Analysis of police data indicated that 24 young people participating in the programme had been linked to a crime occurrence as a victim in the 12 months prior to referral. The vast majority (20) of these were not linked to further occurrences as victims after referral. Changes to lifestyle that some case study young people made also meant they spent more time at

home, which had a positive impact on family relationships. Parents and lead professionals reported that some young people continued to exhibit risky behaviour, but it was difficult for parents and staff to know for sure about all of the activity they were engaged in.

Case study interviews identified the importance of working together across services in order to reduce risks of exploitation. Young people often reported feeling unfairly targeted by the police, even when they had exhibited positive behaviour change, they had built a negative reputation.

Access to support

Case study interviews suggested that participating young people accessed a holistic range of support. Lead professionals often supported with education or employment, as well as more directly addressing offending behaviour, and most young people had accessed the Youth Employability Service. Some young people also accessed treatment for substance misuse and social work from professionals within the YJS. Some young people accessed other statutory and voluntary services with support from their lead professional, but most support that the young people were accessing came from within the YJS. Lead professionals sometimes adapted their approach to negotiate gaps in, and negative experiences of statutory services, in particular education.

It is important to note that out of the 44 young people who participated in the programme, 36 were already being supported by the YJS at referral. Furthermore, lead professionals interviewed as part of this evaluation were generally not able to distinguish unique aspects of support offered through this programme versus what they would normally provide to other young people they worked with. The range and nature of support provided by YJS, including those as part of the HKC programme, makes it inherently difficult to attribute impact on young people to the specific programme.

Variations in outcomes

Staff and stakeholders reflecting on the programme as a whole suggested that it may be more effective for young people who: had not yet developed the highest risk patterns of offending, were younger, had seen their highest risk peers incarcerated, were not connected with known adult offenders and who had strong informal support networks. Analysis of police data, however, did not indicate that frequency of violent offending post-referral was related to age or total crime severity score at referral.

All case study data was collected from young people in their mid to late teens, and therefore it was not possible to establish how important age was in terms of outcomes. However, some young people's reflections provided potential explanations for older, higher risk individuals being motivated to change and therefore benefiting from the programme. They indicated that discussions around consequences of their actions may not have been so well received if they had been younger. Several young people in their late teens expressed concerns about entering the adult probation service and were motivated to be out of the criminal justice system before they reached 18. Some reported that experience such as attending court or

being put on a tag, alongside discussions with their lead professional about the long-term consequences of criminal behaviour, opened their eyes to the seriousness of their actions.

Findings on implementation

Identifying young people at risk

Several interviewees reflected on how they felt the HKC Index had evolved since it was initially developed. A key part of this was increased use of children's services data and intelligence held across the Partnership. Interviewees across the Partnership were clear that whilst the mapping of police held data to inform this work was an important innovation, it was just the start of a more complex process. An important element of the HKC programme is the mapping of peer networks and the delivery of work with peer groups as well as individuals. Staff suggested that, as part of this, a key strength was the ability to identify those who were within the wider peer group of a prolific offender but had not started to engage in similar behaviour. Access to the intelligence from the HKC Index and partnership mapping activities informed reactive area-based interventions and the day to day work of statutory agencies as well as identifying which individual young people and peer groups to support through the programme.

The importance of keeping the HKC Index data up to date was reported in a number of interviews, including some in relation to the young people's case studies. Whilst some staff were satisfied that the data was regularly updated, others reported limitations of the Index and wider services which meant that young people's current situation was not always accurately reflected. Staff suggested that, in its current iteration, the HKC Index was mostly populated by young people who are already receiving a statutory intervention from children's services or the YJS. They did indicate, however, that discussions between members of the partnership could prompt individual staff or agencies to reassess the risks faced by particular young people.

Partnership working

Staff stakeholders in different roles and from different agencies described and demonstrated the constructive working relationships they had with one another. Strong relationships were seen as a key enabler of the successes of the programme, underpinned by a strong sense of respect for each other's roles and expertise. Interviewees from different agencies and professional backgrounds alluded to differences in how they see and work with young people who have been linked violent crime. Through sharing experience and perspectives, a number of solutions were developed to improve support for young people. Case study data also highlighted the importance of partnership working to supporting young people in the education system, as well as to giving them access to new opportunities. Notable organisations were social services, Youth Employability Service and the Under 25 Substance Team.

Interviews with staff and stakeholders identified how communities had been engaged in wider partnership working, which had involved building new relationships with local businesses and railway employees. There were also examples of how, at an individual level, young people's peers and parents had also been supported to play a positive role, and how young people's employers could also form part of their support network.

A wide range of interviewees identified the existence of the dedicated contextual safeguarding coordinator role, based in the YJS, as key enabler for maintaining the constructive relationships between partners and the benefits that flowed from this. Partnership working was also enabled by the structure of East Sussex County Council, where an in-house detached youth work service has been maintained. This was seen as critical for the ability of Council to deploy its youth service offer in a targeted and reactive way as described above. Some interviewees noted the limitations of the scope of the current partnership as not including representation from services that impacted on participating young people, such as adult probation services and education settings.

Interviewees suggested ways of expanding partnership working in order to strengthen the impact of the programme. In particular, plans for working more closely with adult probation services were described. This was being explored in order to enhance transitional safeguarding, that is, as young people become adults. A particular aim of involving members of young people's peer groups who were over 18 was highlighted. Some staff also felt that education settings may have a contribution to make to the programme, given the impact their practices and approaches were seen to have on young people's progress.

Delivering support to individual young people

Case study data indicated that building a good rapport between young people and their lead professional was the foundation for change. For young people, it was very important that they felt like their lead professional was an ally, and someone who genuinely cared about them and understood their experiences. Case study interviews also uncovered evidence of lead professionals building strong two-way conversations with young people and showing patience in response to the challenges that young people may have faced in building relationships due to trauma. The resulting trust that was built was seen as vital for enabling lead professionals to start to influence young people's behaviour. This included challenge the behaviour directly in conversation, carefully broaching difficult subjects and questioning their choices.

Interviews also highlighted the importance of taking a personalised approach to support. Lead professionals described how they aimed to provide the young person with a consistent and reliable role model and took a different approach to this based on the needs of the young person. This role facilitated encouragement and direction specific to the young person's interests and challenges.

Although consistent structure could be helpful for young people, most found it difficult to learn using more traditional methods, and several had additional needs which made it difficult to concentrate, sit still, and learn in a typical way. Lead professionals responded by being flexible and teaching young people new ways of thinking or learning new information. They

moderated the use of structure and forward planning of sessions in response to how the young person presented on the day or the direction the young person took the conversation or activity. The bespoke nature of practical support offered to young people by some lead professionals, particularly in relation to accessing other services (see 'Partnership working' above) was also a key feature of this personalised approach.

A clear focus of the work with all young people was understanding how actions lead to serious consequences. These conversations, although educational, were typically informal "chats" that covered issues of peer influence, and risks of: exploitation, drug taking, and knife carrying. The dangers of exploitation and risks of knife carrying were important topics of conversation. Virtual Reality (VR) headsets were a useful tool in challenging young people's perceptions of knife carrying and starting a dialogue.

Recommendations

Programme design features

Findings of this evaluation, including the many ideas shared by staff and stakeholders for potential improvements, have informed the following recommendations on strengthening the delivery of the programme as it is currently conceived.

1. To build on existing successes in partnership working, the current programme partners should consider how a **wider range of the statutory organisations** that impact on young people's progress could be engaged in the programme. This would include:

    a. Progressing existing work to explore how adult probation services may be able to help coordinate support for young people who have adults in their peer groups.

    b. Exploring how insight and intelligence from the education sector can be brought into the partnership – through representation by local authority, schools or alternative provision staff. Whilst developing a proportionate and sustainable approach to this may take particular care, it may also present important opportunities for understanding how participating young people can be better supported in their educational settings.

2. The programme's **approach to facilitating diversionary activities** should be reviewed and rationalised with a view to:

    a. Ensuring more young people, particularly those undertaking group work, can access these in a timely manner. This may involve researching activities that have been suggested or requested by young people to date and maintaining an up-to-date process and relationship with relevant providers. This could then be mobilised quickly when future programme participants express and interest in such activities.

    b. Exploring ways that young people may be supported to sustain their engagement in diversionary activities beyond their participation in the programme. This may include identifying low/no cost activities to pursue a particular area of interest that a young person may have developed through the more substantial activities they were involved in through the programme.

c. Defining activities that are supported exclusively for programme participants, so that lead professionals are aware of the options available to young people (see also recommendation 5 a)

3. The partnership should consider options for more **timely and dynamic information sharing** about participating young people. At the time of interviews being undertaken, some staff were already exploring potential digital platforms which may be suitable for sharing information about young people in-between the current monthly partnership meetings. This may enable staff from different agencies to alert each other to significant events affecting the young person so that support can be targeted promptly. How any new system is implemented will need to take account of the potential impact on staff capacity across all agencies involved. Opportunities for existing information sharing exercises to be made less frequent or discontinued could be explored if the new system is deemed to offer a suitable alternative.

4. Ways of **ringfencing police staff time** to contribute to the programme aims should be considered. This may involve protecting time within multiple roles to reflect the several areas in which the evaluation has indicated police contribution could be enhanced.

   a. Implementing the information sharing system referenced in recommendation 2 and cascading information within police to inform both deterrence and positive reinforcement.

   b. Accelerating investigations relating to young people that were being supported by the programme.

   c. Data and monitoring related tasks such as implementing relevant recommendations on monitoring and evaluation (below) and more frequent refreshing of the intelligence-based metrics within the HKC Index.

5. The way the programme is **defined and described** to individuals beyond those coordinating it should be reviewed and updated. This could involve:

   a. Detailed briefing of all staff that have been allocated as lead professionals for participating young people. Staff working directly with young people would benefit from understanding the options for support for young people that are part of the programme compared to those who are not. It may also provide opportunities for them to contribute to the ongoing learning about the strengths of the programme and ways in which it may be improved and expanded.

   b. Developing a set of materials to encourage young people's voluntary engagement in the programme. This may help to expand the reach of unique preventative aspects of the programme to involve more young people.

Focus and scope of the programme

The East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme is a complex and ambitious initiative involving many partners and a range of potential direct and indirect beneficiaries. To build on past success it will be important for those leading the programme to maintain a shared

understanding amongst all partners of the aims of the programme and of how it delivers behaviour change amongst individual young people and any other direct beneficiaries. Two key recommendations are made to this end:

6. The Programme's **Theory of Change should be reviewed and updated** at least annually. This will support implementation of recommendation 8 from the national evaluation, which calls for VRUs to be clear on how interventions meet identified needs and for this to be reflected in Theories of Change. Issues to consider in the first review could include:

   a. Clarifying and prioritising any direct beneficiaries beyond young people (such as parents and professionals) and the outcomes that the programme aims to achieve for them.

   b. Describing inputs and activities in ways which clearly state how they add to what is normally provided by statutory services, particularly in terms of how support for individual young people is informed or enhanced.

   c. Reviewing and defining the role of agencies that make up the partnership e.g. in light of the small number of young people with a lead professional based outside the YJS, considering if, and in what cases, other agencies should continue to take on this role going forward. The activities, and roles of different agencies, in delivering focussed deterrence work could be similarly clarified.

   d. Considering how, and the extent to which different strands of the programme are interdependent – i.e. what inputs, activities and outcomes are shared by support for young people, focussed deterrence and community mobilisation? This may inform which activities to prioritise in further programme development and outcomes to prioritise in future evaluations.

7. The scope of planned activity and collaboration to support **transitional safeguarding** should be carefully considered and defined. Programme staff and stakeholders set out a compelling case in interviews for working with adult probation services to include young people aged over 18 in group work. Joint work with adult probation could also help young people participating in the current programme to sustain their progress if they are still under supervision when they reach the age of 18. It will be important to clearly define the aims and scope of this work to manage the expectations of young people and stakeholders and ensure the programme as a whole remains manageable. This would support implementation of recommendation 2 from the national evaluation, which calls for partners' contributions to violence reduction to be 'proportionate and manageable'.

Expanding the programme

Findings of this evaluation have a number of implications for how expansion of this programme to other localities may be most effectively pursued:

8. Building on implementation of recommendations 5 and 6, clear, concise and accessible documentation should be developed to **describe the programme design to external partners**. This will help the programme leaders' counterparts in neighbouring local

authorities to consider, in an informed way, how implementation of the programme may work in their area.

9. Agencies looking to implement the programme in new localities will need to consider how relevant elements may be **adapted to work within their specific local authority structures**. In particular they may need to consider how to implement the programme without access to an in-house detached youth work service. This could include:

   a. Engaging an existing independent provider of youth work or similar interventions. This should look to facilitate reactive activity informed by the programme partners shared intelligence and priorities, which may not always be possible in highly specified commissioned services. To help establish this, learning could be drawn from interventions were commissioned providers have delivered in a particularly flexible and dynamic way. This may include building on the work of independent organisations delivering other programmes on behalf of the VRP. Pursuing this option may support implementation of recommendations 1. and 6. of the national evaluation, which calls for involvement of voluntary, community and grassroots organisations in VRU activity.

   b. Alternatively, supported by implementation of recommendations 6 and 8, a modular approach to expansion of the programme may be pursued. This would involve partners in new localities choosing specific strands or elements of the current programme to implement based on their amenability to their current structures and priorities.

Monitoring and evaluation

The scope of quantitative analysis in this report has had to be limited in order to work around difficulties in accessing relevant, complete data. In addition, whilst qualitative interviews drew rich insight into what the programme has achieved and how, there remain a wider range of stakeholders and potential beneficiaries who may have valuable unheard reflections on the programme. These might include, for example, police involved in delivering bespoke focussed deterrence with young people, youth workers, and members of the public from targeted localities and settings. The following recommendations are made with a view to ensuring effective monitoring and facilitating further and more robust evaluation.

10. Service user monitoring (SUM) forms should be **consistently completed and collated in relation to all direct beneficiaries across all strands of the programme.** The cohort for which this information is recorded should be defined through implementation of recommendation 6a above.

11. Further **improvements to data collection** should be considered to enable assessment of how effective the programme is for different individuals. This should include:

   a. Inclusion of new fields which enable clear recording of which strands of the programme have been implemented with each individual (e.g. recording where partners have agreed to use focussed deterrence with a young person)

   b. Further guidance on definitions for those completing SUM forms.

c. Continuing work to simplify and lock down the data entry spreadsheet. Programme leads have recently been consulted on some of these changes which will hopefully help programme staff to understand what is required of them but avoid having to enter repetitive information (such as delivery model, which will be consistent with programmes). Locking down the SUM form enables data cleansing to be undertaken automatically as it minimises the chances of incorrect data being inputted. This could also be programmed with a range of formulae to automate the analysis in terms of the production of tables and charts.

12. **Police metrics** currently used by programme partners to monitor progress should be reviewed and revised. The programme partners' existing approach of drawing on available police data to regularly assess impact in an evidence-based way represents an important opportunity to develop further learning. Specific adjustments to and development of these metrics would facilitate robust quantitative impact evaluation going forward. This should include:

a. Adopting the VRP's local definition of serious violent crime when measuring frequency or relevant crime occurrences

b. Reviewing and prioritising other metrics, informed by implementation of recommendation 6.

c. Considering development of metrics that enable the comparison of young people's behaviour before, during and after their engagement with the programme. This would involve, if feasible, automating the creation of additional variables in relation to young people's links with crime occurrences within specific time periods unique to those young people (i.e. replicating the manual extraction and analysis carried out for this evaluation).

13. Improving the range and consistency of data collected will require **investment of staff time across the partnership**. This may include:

a. Programme organisations protecting time at regular intervals to complete SUM forms and being proactive in seeking out guidance or support from VRP spoke leads when needed.

b. VRP spoke leads working with programme delivery organisations to clarify expectations and identify and solutions to challenges in collecting data in a timely and consistent manner.

c. The VRP considering protection of further police analyst time to undertake ongoing improvements in data collection tools, data linkage and reporting.

14. As with any complex and ambitious programme, it may be beneficial to adopt a **progressive approach to evaluation**, incrementally building understanding of the workings of the programme and refining its design and outcomes metrics. Priorities for further evaluation should be developed to take this forward, and may include:

a. Undertaking further qualitative interviews or a survey with staff from the wider range of agencies involved in the programme to explore aspects of partnership working. This in turn may help to identify future quantitative metrics for more complex

intended outcomes of the programme related to partnership working, effective targeting of support, and community mobilisation.

b. Developing more sophisticated modelling of impact on young people relative to cohorts who have not accessed the programme. This may involve defining a local cohort of young people to which the outcomes of those participating in the programme may be compared (I.e. young people in West Sussex or Brighton and Hove who have a similar risk profile to those accessing the programme in East Sussex) and relevant analysis carried out using existing police metrics. Alternatively, the approach used in the national evaluation of developing a theoretical counterfactual[12] could be adapted and applied to this specific intervention.

These recommendations (10 to 14) align with and support implementation of recommendations 5., 9. and 10. of the national evaluation which relate to access to data, evidence-based interventions and monitoring and evaluation strategies:

Concluding remarks

This evaluation has uncovered a range of evidence of the impact the East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme has had on the young people it engaged with during 2022/23. This includes the journeys that many young people have gone on to reduce the frequency of their violent offending as well as a wider range of positive personal changes some young people have made when accessing support through the programme. The evaluation has, in particular, highlighted the mechanisms and approaches employed by youth justice workers when acting as lead professionals within the programme. It has also uncovered insight into the process and impact of the extensive partnership working that the programme involves. The wide-reaching recommendations made are a reflection of scale and complexity of the programme. It is hoped that these recommendations and wider learning from the evaluation can contribute to more young people experiencing positive transformational change along with the accompanying benefits for services and communities.

---

[12] See the section of the Technical Appendix on 'Constructing the Counterfactual'
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-reduction-units-year-ending-march-2022-evaluation-report/violence-reduction-units-year-ending-march-2022-evaluation-report#annexb

Appendix A: Summary Analysis of Police Metrics

The Star Project: What has been the impact on the 2022 cohort?

Analysis of police metrics for the core group of 45 young people identified through the Star project and starting their engagement in the 2022/2023 financial year. Data available for Q4 period (January to March 2023) with comparison to Q3 (October to December 2022) and the equivalent Q4 period in 2022

Police metrics	Q4 2022/2023	Difference (+/-)	Q3 2022/2023	Difference (+/-)	Q4 2021/2022
No. of nominals coming to police attention	32	-13.5% (-5)	37	-22% (-9)	41
No. of police occurrences	119	-42% (-86)	205	-54.8% (-144)	263
No. of occurrences as suspect or offender	96	-18.6% (-22)	118	-42.9% (-72)	168
No. of violence against the person offences (suspect or offender)	31	72.2% (13)	18	-50.8% (-32)	63
Possession of weapon offences	2	-77.8% (-7)	9	-86.7% (-13)	15
Home Office crime severity score	14,560	-49.4% (14,241)	28,801	-51.8% (15,653)	30,213
SCARF submissions (child to notice forms)	41	-56.4% (-53)	94	-61.7% (-66)	107
Home Office Economic and Social Cost of Crime measure – Police Cost (£)	£55,040	-14.8% (-£9,560)	£64,600	-36.1% (£31,160)	£86,200
Home Office Economic and Social Cost of Crime measure – Total Cost (£)	£423,060	-18.8% (£97,760)	£520,820	-45.5% (£353,060)	£776,120

1

Data summary

- **No. of nominals coming to police attention** – Total number of nominals with any recorded interaction with the police, such as a victim, suspect, offender or witness of a crime

- **Police occurrences** – All crime and non-crime incidents where the nominal has been linked

- **No. of occurrences as suspect or offender** – Total number of crimes where the nominal has been linked as a 'suspect' and/or 'offender'

- **No. of violence against the person offences** – Total number of crimes as per Home Office crime type 'violence against the person' where the nominal has been linked as a 'suspect' and/or 'offender'

- **Possession of weapon offences** – Total number of possession of weapon offences (including) where the nominal has been linked as a 'suspect' and/or 'offender'

- **Home Office Crime Severity Score** – Total harm score for all crime using the Office for National Statistics (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-severity-score-experimental-statistics)

- **SCARF submissions** – **S**ingle **C**ombined **A**ssessment of **R**isk **F**orm (or SCARF) is completed following a child (anyone under the age of 18) coming to the notice of the police. Total number of SCARF submission is indicative of the number of police interactions with the group during the period analysed.

- **Home Office Economic and Social Cost of Crime measure** – The "cost of crime" estimate the costs across the full impact of the crime, including anticipation, consequence and responding to the crime. The police cost is estimated as part of responding to crime. (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime)

Caveats and data limitations

- Analysis of police metrics for the core group of 45 young people identified through the Star project and starting their engagement in the 2022/2023 financial year. Data available for Q4 period (January to March 2023) with comparison to Q3 (October to December 2022) and the equivalent Q4 period in 2022

- All data referenced within this report has been downloaded from a live system (PowerBI Nominals dashboard) and as such is a snapshot at that point in time (data accessed on 2206/2023 @1145hrs).

- The data referenced has not been audited or verified by Statisticians at Police HQ, therefore it represents a reflection of crime rather than the authorised and fully verified "Performance Data".

Appendix B: Evaluation Framework

1. Introduction and purpose of this document

This evaluation framework sets out detailed evaluation questions and indicates the data and analysis that will be used to answer these. Alongside the project management and delivery plan and the contract, it is an important document for communicating and understanding the scope of NCB's evaluation activity including what existing data will be used to answer the questions, what new data we will be collecting and how this, will all be analysed and reported. It consists of the following elements:

- Aims and scope – confirms the scope of the evaluations and how we interpret the aims specified in the tender
- Methodology – summarises the key elements of the evaluation methodology, which has been refined following the co-production workshops
- Evaluation questions – sets out the proposed detailed evaluation questions for each programme
- Quantitative Measures and Analysis – indicates our approach, including key dependencies and limitations, to developing quantitative findings
- Qualitative Analysis – sets out how we intended to analyse the qualitative data collected for these evaluations.

Further detail, including topic guides for primary research, is included in the appendices.

2. Aims and scope

NCB is conducting a process and impact evaluation of two programmes that are part of wider programme of work coordinated by the Sussex VRP. These programmes are

- The **Schools Exclusions** programme in **West Sussex**; and
- The **Habitual Knife Carriers** programme in **East Sussex.**

These projects have been running since July 2021 and were evaluated in 2021/22 by another research and evaluation organisation. This evaluation will consider process and impact of the above two programmes for the **2022/2023 financial year**.

There are other programmes being delivered in these areas on behalf of the VRP and these are not part of the evaluation.

The overall aims of the two evaluations are to:

- Understand how and why participants achieve outcomes, which participants do / do not achieve outcomes and what factors are the most important drivers of outcomes (evaluation aim #1)

- Evidence the short-term outcomes achieved and the long-term impacts of the interventions (evaluation aim #2)

- Provide recommendations for the future delivery and evaluation of these interventions. (evaluation aim #3)

Detailed evaluation questions have been developed using the Theories of Change for each programme. Some outcomes and impact described in these theories of change relate to long term, population level, change. Due to the range of interventions being undertaken and wider range of factors that may influence such outcomes, it will not be possible to draw conclusions about the impact of these two specific programmes at the population level. This evaluation will focus on programme level assessments, drawing on the experiences and outcomes of young people and young adults **directly engaged in the programmes,** perspectives of relevant VRP partners, and the processes they engage in to deliver these programmes.

3. Methodology

Table 1, below sets out the key elements of the evaluation methodology, including data collection methods, the specific participant groups and data sources for each programme being evaluated.

Table 1: Methodology Overview

Method element (and finding type)	Data collection method	Participant group/ Data source
Young people case studies (Qualitative)	Face-to-face Interviews* with up to 8 young people per programme For each young person, face-to-face interviews with 2 adults close to them** Qualitative analysis of up to 2 short documents (e.g. case notes from project, written answers to questions from YP/Parents) or recordings (lyrics, poems or conversations recorded by the project) per young person***	Young people Programme staff working directly with them Parents (See Appendices C-E for draft topic guides)
Exploration of process and impact across programme (Qualitative)	Online focus groups (x2 per programme, 3-6 participants) 1 to 1 interviews with key stakeholders who cannot attend focus groups (up to 3 per programme)	Programme delivery staff Stakeholders (School staff, local authority and police managers) (See Appendices I-J for topic guides)
Analysis of cohort-wide implementation and outcomes data (Quantitative)	Requesting data reports from police analysts Collation of data from existing databases (See also quantitative measures and analysis below)	HKC Index Data Standard police reporting data Asset plus assessment data Service User Monitoring Forms

Notes:

* Project staff may be present for some or all of the interview with a young person. Face-to-face interviews will take place during site visits of which there will be 4 for each programme. In the event of industrial action on public transport, the number of site visits and face-to-face interviews may be reduced and will be replaced with online interviews where appropriate so as not the compromise the deadlines for evaluation outputs

** Face-to-face interviews with staff and parents will be conducted where participants are available during pre-arranged site visits. Online will be offered as an alternative where individuals are, for reasons outside their control, not available at the site visit.

*** Analysis of up to two short documents or recordings will only be undertaken for case studies where there are difficulties hearing the young person's perspective via interviews.

Deadlines for NCBs outputs are set out in the project management and delivery plan. This includes an agreed deadline for NCB to **finish all primary fieldwork is 31 March 2023**, to present final reports by 31 May and interim reports by 1 February. In order to complete the above activity in the specified timescales, NCB will require timely input and cooperation from colleagues. Table 2, overleaf, indicates the timescales within which key shared milestones will need to be achieved and which groups of staff will need to be involved in addition to NCB.

Table 2: Key shared milestones an input from local staff

Timescale	Activity	Evaluation project sponsor (VRP manager)	Project leads (Audio Active, The Sid Youth, East Sussex CC)	Analysts (at Sussex Police, East Sussex CC)
January 2023	Evaluation framework agreed	✓		
	Initial site visits scheduled – confirming location, date and start/finish time		✓	
	At least two of eight case study young people identified for each programme		✓	
	First site visits take place for each programme incorporating at least 3 interviews each		✓	
February 2023	All eight case study young people identified for each programme		✓	
	Remaining site visits scheduled		✓	
	NCB's access to data sources confirmed, code books info initial data 'cuts' provided by analysts	✓	✓	✓
	Interim report shared and any actions revisions agreed	✓		
	Second and third site visits take place (third may take place in early March with mutual agreement)		✓	
	Online focus groups scheduled	✓	✓	
March 2023	Final site visits take place		✓	
	Online focus groups take place	✓	✓	
April 2023	Final data collated (including quantitative data)		✓	✓
May 2023	Draft final reports shared and feedback incorporated	✓		

4. Evaluation Questions

Tables 3 to 5, below, set out the detailed evaluation questions developed from the programme's theory of change (see appendix B. Each table relates to one of the three overarching evaluation aims and indicates which method element will be used to answer them[13].

Table 3: Evaluation questions for East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme (Evaluation Aim #1)

Understand how and why participants achieve outcomes, which participants do / do not achieve outcomes and what factors are the most important drivers of outcomes	👤	💬	📊
E1.1	How effectively implemented are the programmes plans in terms of using data to identify young people most at risk of being involved in violent crime?		■	
E1.2	How effective is partnership working in the delivery of the programme and how does this contribute to programme outcomes?	■	■	
E1.3	Which characteristics of the process for developing young people's personal plan are most critical to ongoing engagement and positive outcomes? Why is this the case?	■		■
E1.4	Which young people engage better/worse with the development of their personal plan? What barriers and enablers do they face in this process and why?	■		■
E1.5	Which characteristics of individual activities and services are most critical to achieving positive outcomes for young people? And Why?	■		■
E1.6	Which young people engage better/worse with the activities and services to which they are signposted? What barriers and enablers do they face in accessing these services?	■	■	■
E1.7	Are there any groups of young people who appear more likely to achieve positive outcomes? If so why is this? What are their characteristics? How does this mirror groups who engage better/worse with the development of their personal plan and with activities and services?	■	■	■

---

[13] See table 1 for explanation of method elements.

Table 4: Evaluation questions for East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme (Evaluation Aim #2)

	Evidence the short-term outcomes achieved and the long-term impacts of the interventions	👤	💬	📊
E2.1	To what extent do young people have different access to support after participating in the programme?	■	■	
E2.2	To what extent has young people's engagement in education, employment and other pro-social activities changed during their participation in the programme?	■	■	■
E2.3	In what ways, and to what extent, have young people's internalised wellbeing changed during their participation in the programme?	■		■
E2.4	In what ways, and to what extent, has young people's knife-carrying behaviour changed during their participation in the programme?	■		■
E2.5	In what ways, and to what extent, has young people's association with peers involved in violent crime changed during their participation in the programme?	■	■	■
E2.6	In what ways and to what extent are young people affected differently as victims following their participation in the programme?	■		■
E2.7	To what extent, and in what ways, do young people's overall risk of, and from, knife carrying changed?	■	■	■

Table 5: Evaluation questions for East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme (Evaluation Aim #3)*

Provide recommendations for the future delivery and evaluation of these interventions		👤	💬	📊
E3.1	What changes to the delivery of the programme may lead to more consistent engagement and positive outcomes for young people? Why is this?	■	■	
E3.2	Which, if any, outcomes (including interim outcomes) should be prioritised in the future development of the programme? Why is this?	■	■	
E3.3	What, if any, challenges might be encountered in the process of extending the programme to new geographic areas and Youth Justice Services? How might these be addressed?		■	
E3.4	How can data collection be enhanced to improve evidencing of the programme's impact?			
E3.5	Which new evaluation questions and methodologies could be used to assess all of the above?			

*Questions under evaluation aim 3 will primarily be answered through analysis of data collected in relation to aims 1 and 2.

5. Quantitative Measures and Analysis

This evaluation will draw on a significant amount of quantitative data from a variety of sources including the Service User Monitoring (SUM) Form, Police offending data, the Habitual Knife Carriers (HKC) Index and Asset Plus Assessments. We have mapped these various sources against each of the evaluation questions above. In Appendix A, it can be seen that data for a number of the evaluation questions will come from one or more of these sources, whilst others will rely solely on qualitative data. The following are examples of evaluation measures mapped against potential data sources for two of the three applicable evaluation aims:

Examples of measures and data sources for East Sussex Habitual Knife Carriers Programme

Evaluation aim #1 - Understand how and why participants achieve outcomes, which participants do / do not achieve outcomes and what factors are the most important drivers of outcomes

- Measure E1.4: Which young people engage better/worse with the development of their personal plan? What barriers and enablers do they face in this process? Data sources include:
  - No. and % of YP who are recorded as having intervention stopped because of disengagement. Break down by age, gender, ethnicity, district (urban/rural), risk level/type. (Sum Form)
  - Breakdown by risk level/type in HKC Index and/or coded data from Asset Plus assessments (for young people in contact with Youth Justice Services) that aligns with risks recorded on SUM Forms.

Evaluation aim #2: Evidence the short-term outcomes achieved and the long-term impacts of the interventions

- Measure E2.2: To what extent are young people engaging more education, employment and other pro-social activities?
  - No. and % YP reported to have improved attendance/behaviour/progress at school/college' by project staff (SUM form)
  - % of YP who had relevant presenting need reported to have improved 'attendance/behaviour/progress at school' by project staff (SUM form)
  - Type of engagement/training engaged in at beginning and end of intervention + coded data from Asset Plus assessments for young people in contact with youth justice services. (Quantitative data from Police database, HKC Index and Asset Plus Assessments)

Below we summarise our approach to collating and analysing this quantitative data and our key asks in terms of how the data is provided to us.

5.1 Approach to quantitative data collation and analysis

The following points summarise our approach to undertaking analysis of the quantitative data:

- *High-level data analysis:* **We will produce a suite of charts, graphs and tables for** each evaluation measure**.** These 'toplines' will provide a descriptive picture of each of the programmes in terms of the scale of their delivery, geographical reach and programme impact by collating data for individual young people (where available) from multiple data sources

- *Sub-analysis / data splits:* Dependent upon the amount of data available for individual young people, we will undertake sub-group analysis for each evaluation measure by age group, ethnicity, geography (urban vs. rural)[14], presenting need and risk factor identified as recorded in the SUM form. These data splits will help to build up a picture of the impact of each programme and the extent to which the programmes have been more/less successful for particular groups of young people;

- *Exploratory data analysis*: appropriate statistical techniques may be applied to understand whether any differences in outcomes (e.g. between those in urban areas vs those in rural areas) are statistically significant. The statistical test used will depend on the type of data available and the amount of data available. For example, if we have access to the Cambridge Harm Index score for each young person, we may be able to apply an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test where we can understand whether there are differences in this score based on a particular characteristic of the young person (e.g. their ethnicity) and whether any differences are statistically significant or not.

- *Profiling:* We will undertake a more detailed profiling exercise by combining elements of the data analysis performed above with an end goal of creating a small number of distinctive groups of young people who have achieved varying degrees of success in terms of their engagement with the programme and the outcomes they have achieved. The purpose of this exercise is to create mutually exclusive groups where we can identify what works for particular young people and why.

---

[14] **Please note that we intend to use the** Urban/rural classification as defined in the attached document: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-rural-urban-classification-of-local-authority-and-other-higher-level-geographies-for-statistical-purposes

It is important to note that the extent to which we can undertake the analyses above is contingent upon the availability of data for individuals involved in each of the programmes. For the sub-group analysis, in particular, low numbers within particular groups (e.g. male vs. female or white vs. other ethnic group) will limit the extent to which this is appropriate.

Existing databases contain different amounts of data in relation to young people, depending on which aspect of the programmes that young person is involved in. Most of the analysis above will only be possible in relation young people receiving a one to one intervention. Analysis in relation to young people accessing RealTalk sessions (West Sussex Schools Exclusion Programme) and detached youthwork (East Sussex HKC Programme) will be limited as data on individual young people has not been collected.

The analysis described above assumes that police and project staff will provide the following:

- Provision of 'cuts' of SUM database / Police database for interim and final reports in a consistent/locked down format which we will programme to produce charts and graphs. This means data is provided in MS Excel format with no additional rows and columns add at each timepoint it is provided. This means we can set up our analysis in advance of reporting and it means we can easily copy 'new' data cuts into the database with our analysis updating automatically.

- Data is as complete as possible and missing values are kept to a minimum. Where there is missing data, it is important to note where there are substantial gaps as we can make a note of these for the interim and final reports. It also means that we can select the appropriate analysis techniques to apply.

- Provision of a data code book outlining each variable in SUM form / police data and definition of each for inclusion in reporting outputs. *We are happy to produce an initial draft and will share this with you for your review and comments*. The final version of this will be shared with you and included in all reporting outputs.

- Identification of a designated individual(s) for each dataset to direct queries from the evaluation team at NCB. From our side, this will be Keith Clements (Project Manager) and Dr Richard Nugent (Quantitative Data lead).

6. Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis of interview and focus group data will explore the relevant evaluation questions indicated in tables 2 to 7, above. We will employ the Framework approach to thematic analysis and use specialist software (NVivo) to facilitate efficient refinement of themes/exploration of their interrelationships.

Case studies will be developed from data collected in the one to one interviews with young people, their parents and adults working directly with them. These case studies will be used in our analysis and as evidence to inform a series of overarching findings in our report. To avoid identification of individual young people, these case studies will not be presented in their complete form in the final report. Where appropriate, parts of them maybe used in short, anonymised, vignettes and stories to illustrate key elements of a young person's journey and experience.

Where key themes and patterns are identified in the data this will be used to inform the structure of findings in the final report. This may mean reporting on several evaluation questions in combination and we will share an outline report structure with the VRP for input and feedback.

Anonymised quotes, taken from interview and focus group data, will be used as evidence to illustrate some key findings. Inclusion of quotes will be subject to our ability to ensure that the participant in question is not identifiable in the report.

Appendix C: Recommendations from the 2021/2022 national evaluation of Violence Reduction Units

The table below sets out the recommendations included in Home Office (2023) *Violence Reduction Units, year ending March 2022 evaluation report.* (The report of the evaluation of VRUs in their third year of operation, undertaken by Ecorys UK, Ipsos UK, the University of Hull and the University of Exeter and commissioned by the Home Office). Recommendations have been numbered in this table to ease cross-referencing with Chapter 6 of this report.

1	Continue to engage with a wide range of partners, in particular, the Core Members from health and VSO partners, where engagement may again have been limited, to further the whole-systems approach
2	Linked to the above, work with partners to ensure their role within the response to violence is strengths-based, proportionate and manageable; this would help ensure meaningful engagement and added value from partners, including those with more limited capacity; in other words, VRUs should continue to focus on the quality of partnerships, which might require focusing on key partners initially and gradually involving others
3	As far as possible, focus on providing non-financial support to partners to support and develop their capacity, which will support more sustainable and longer-term impacts
4	Aim for access to at least sub-area level data from key sources so that interventions and wider activity (for example, multi-agency responses to hot spots) can be targeted at areas/groups most in need; VRUs could facilitate this through sharing learning and tools (for example, standardised data-sharing protocols)
5	Ensure there is sufficient expert capacity available to, or within, the VRU to negotiate access to data and provide actionable insights from the analysis; this could include expanding data teams, working with external experts and/or learning from other VRUs
6	Ensure there is representation in the Core Membership from community leaders and representatives of groups / grassroots organisations that can provide valuable insights to (and experience of working with) the at-risk cohort
7	Focus on co-development with young people and communities to ensure that evidence-based interventions and VRU activities are tailored to local contexts and needs; consider drawing on the evidence base to inform engagement approaches so they effectively engage different groups; where possible, consider a dedicated community engagement role to facilitate this
8	Ensure that updated Response Strategies clearly articulate how interventions meet identified needs (based on data), that the VRUs capture these in both their Theory of Change (ToC) and Evaluation Plan/Strategy, and that progress towards meeting these needs can be monitored; this will help ensure interventions are evidenced-based and developed to meet local needs
9	Ensure that intervention portfolios include interventions where there is strong evidence of effectiveness to maximise the impact of the VRU; this could include interventions detailed in the YEF Toolkit (or similar) and local evaluation findings; where existing evidence is more Limited, VRUs should ensure they conduct appropriate monitoring/evaluation to build the evidence base
10	Develop monitoring and evaluation strategies; this would improve the consistency, comparability and quality of evidence generated, which would provide learning for future commissioning decisions; where possible and appropriate, VRUs could seek to strengthen their evaluation capacity through increased collaboration with the What Works Centres and research bodies (for example, local universities)