Evidence review:

diverting young adults away from the **cycle** of **crisis** and **crime**

REVOLVING DOORS AGENCY

NEW GENERATION POLICING

T2A Transition to Adulthood

Managed & Convened by

Barrow Cadbury Trust

Acknowledgements

This review has been written by Lauren Bennett and Elsa Corry-Roake.

We would first like to thank the organisations that attended our roundtable and took the time to share valuable feedback and innovative practice with us, which has been added to this review:

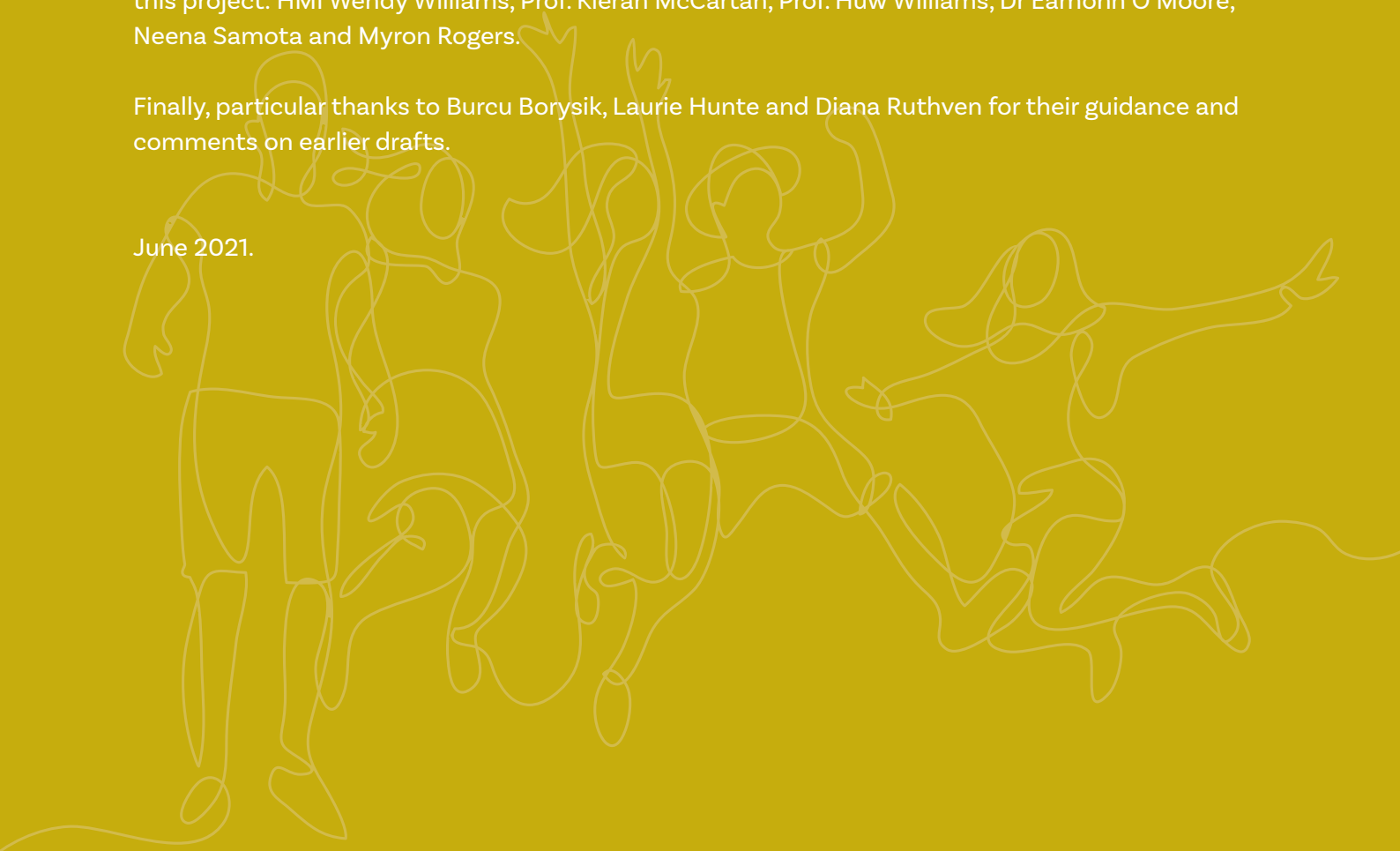
Despina Bardosi (Together for Mental Wellbeing), Maggie Bridge (Agenda), Dez Brown (Spark2Life), Louise Cassie (EngAge Leicestershire), Graham Duncan (Centre for Mental Health), Laura Garius (Release), Laurie Hunte (Barrow Cadbury Trust), Jennifer Rushworth (We Are With You), Joanne Vance (New Beginnings North) and Professor Huw Williams (University of Exeter).

Thanks also to The Police Foundation for their support with delivering the Knowledge Exchange Network, and to Network members who continue to share current practice from police services and OPCCs across the country. Contributions from these Network meetings have been embedded into this review.

Thanks to the members of the New Generation Policing Advisory Board for their ongoing support in this project: HMI Wendy Williams, Prof. Kieran McCartan, Prof. Huw Williams, Dr Eamonn O'Moore, Neena Samota and Myron Rogers.

Finally, particular thanks to Burcu Borysik, Laurie Hunte and Diana Ruthven for their guidance and comments on earlier drafts.

June 2021.



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About Revolving Doors Agency

Revolving Doors Agency is a national charity that aims to change systems and improve services for people 'in the revolving door' – people who come into repeat contact with the criminal justice system due to multiple unmet needs such as mental ill-health, substance misuse, homelessness, poverty and other traumatic life events.

We work to create a smarter criminal justice system that makes the revolving door avoidable and escapable. We do this by working alongside national and local decision-makers. We combine lived experience insight, robust research and system knowledge to drive effective policy solutions.

About New Generation Policing

New Generation Policing is delivered by Revolving Doors Agency and supported by three independent funders, the Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Esmée Fairbarn Foundation, and the Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales. It is a three-year programme supporting police and crime commissioners and police services to develop and implement new interventions to stop young adults from being caught in the cycle of crime and crisis.

Our partnership with local commissioners and police services aims to divert young adults at the cusp of the revolving door away from the criminal justice system and into support. We bring lived experience insight and research evidence to address the root causes of crime, and find systemic solutions to poverty, trauma and structural inequalities that bring so many young adults into a cycle of crime and crisis.

About the Transition to Adulthood Alliance

The Transition to Adulthood (T2A) initiative is part of the Barrow Cadbury Trust's criminal justice programme. The Trust is an independent, charitable foundation committed to bringing about socially just change.

The Trust's criminal justice programme develops and promotes evidence of effective policy and practice for young adults at all stages of the criminal justice system and supports the lived experience voices to be heard.

T2A makes the case that developmental maturity is a better guide than age when deciding on the best response to offending by young adults. It has developed a robust case for a more effective approach to young adults. This has been achieved through research, pilot projects and supporting practitioners and policy makers. This programme of work is available at T2A website **www.T2A.org.uk**.

Foreword

Too many young people come into criminal justice system because of multiple unmet needs. Diverting them into support and treatment can help them to grow out of a cycle of crisis and crime and realise their full potential. The right support can reduce crime in local areas and prevent future victims of gangs and exploitation.

In my experience, young people are drawn into the criminal justice system to make ends meet, or just to keep 'occupied'. If a positive alternative is put in place, this will not only help the young people, but will help their families and communities. It is unfortunate that the criminal justice interventions do not consider what happens to the young person after they leave the service. Future planning and leaving a door open can prevent issues from escalating and prevent young people from returning to the criminal justice system.

This review highlights a number of effective ways to support young people. What made the biggest difference for me was having a consistent support worker who worked with me at every step of my journey, taught me how to notice patterns, followed up after I left the service, and encouraged me to seek help. I liked how they did not judge me or make me feel less than. This made me see the light at the end of the tunnel and push me to make the positive changes and embark on my journey to change.

Natasha, New Generation Campaigner.

Contents

1 About this evidence review

As part of our New Generation Policing Programme, we have been working with Police and Crime Commissioners and police forces across the country to divert young adults (18–25-year-olds) who commit repeat low-level crime away from the criminal justice system and into support. Since the programme began, we have engaged with the offices of all Police and Crime Commissioners, half of Chief Constables and over 120 Inspectors/Chief Inspectors across England and Wales to explore how police-assisted diversion schemes can be used more effectively to meet the needs of young adults and prevent them from being caught in a cycle of crisis and crime.

Our work with police forces across the country highlights that effective use of resources is a key motivator in the uptake of out of court disposals. Many police forces recognise that effective use of out of court disposals can help to better allocate officer time. For example, by allowing officers to spend more time on frontline duties tackling serious or organised crime, whilst also achieving a satisfactory outcome for the public. Furthermore, with court backlogs at critical levels due to Covid-19, there is an increasing local interest in the use of out of court disposals to alleviate some of the pressures on the criminal justice system.

At the same time, police officers and Police and Crime Commissioners recognise that out of court disposals are an opportunity to intervene and provide support to meet the health and human needs of young adults. Furthermore, out of court disposals can offer a rehabilitative alternative to prevent reoffending or reduce escalation of offending. However, police forces usually hit a major barrier when they decide to set up schemes for young adults: they have very little evidence on 'what works' for supporting young adults who commit often repeat low-level crime due to unmet multiple needs.

This review aims to address that gap, by building on the literature and the practice know-how of roundtable attendees to demonstrate the key elements of support that can be provided as part of an out of court disposal that can turn young adults lives around. It is important to note that this paper was not intended as a systematic review, and it does not include an exhaustive list of all available studies and practice. Instead, this paper takes a practical approach to summarise relevant evidence to inform decision-making and highlight gaps in both practice and knowledge. The primary evidence in relation to diversion, reoffending and young adults are based on the Crime Reduction Toolkit developed by the College of Policing. The secondary evidence on good practice case studies are based on a desktop review of, often, qualitative evaluations and reviews of practitioners and policy experts who attended the roundtables.

Taken together, the review highlights practice and policy approaches (in the UK and internationally) that have been found to be effective in supporting people to move away from the cycle of crisis and crime and towards positive futures. It also considers where there are evidence gaps (in relation to young adults and more generally), emerging good practice, and where activities have been found to have a negative or harmful impact on young adults.

2 Why young adults?

Demand on the criminal justice system

Young adults, aged 18-25, represent 10% of the UK population, but over 30% of all police cases[1]. There is strong evidence from neuroscience, psychology and criminology that the brain development is not complete until a person's mid-20s, and the last elements to develop are forward planning, rational thinking and empathy. We know that poverty, trauma, health and human needs make young adults vulnerable, but also make them more likely to come into contact with the police.

We also know that the figure for adults convicted of an indictable offence with a history of repeat offending is now at its highest ever level, accounting for nearly two-fifths (39%) of the offending population[2]. Furthermore, the reoffending rate for young adults in the revolving door is significantly higher than all other young adults in the criminal justice system[3], and the more entrenched the young adult is in the revolving door, the more likely they are they to reoffend[4].

'Cliff edge' in support

As outlined by T2A (2009) any progress made by a child in the youth justice system is interrupted by the 'cliff edge' of turning 18[5]. Vulnerabilities such as mental health needs can be made more acute by the transition from youth justice and child social care services into the adult system[6]. Those growing up in multiple deprivation are more reliant on statutory agencies for support, and turning 18 can be like a cliff edge, when state responsibility is suddenly withdrawn.

Maturity

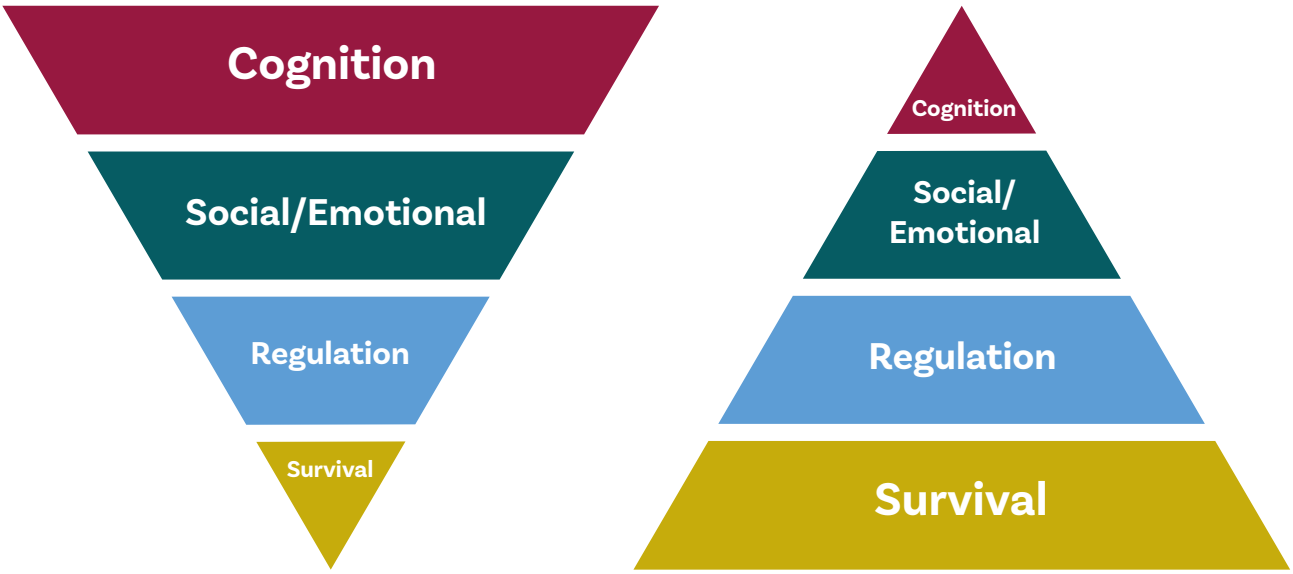
For the police to successfully divert young adults, it is crucial they understand the cohort's needs and the impact of trauma, poverty, and inequalities on their lives (as demonstrated in Figure 1). This includes understanding that young adult's brains will still be developing, and this may lead to impulsive behaviour and a lack of emotional regulation. The Justice Select Committee's inquiry into young adults in the criminal justice system specifies the importance of recognising maturity as crucial to a successful intervention: "flawed interventions that do not recognise young adults' maturity can slow desistance and extend the period of involvement in the system"[7].

Multiple needs

Equally, the police may only be seeing a fraction of the wider context of a young adult's life. While a young adult may present with substance use needs, their ability to successfully engage with a drug diversion programme may be limited if their other basic needs are not being met, such as food and housing. We know that socio-economic constraints and poverty have an impact on the maturation process [8], preventing young adults from becoming fully independent and that younger single people now face highly disproportionate risks of poverty, especially if they are living outside the family home[9]. Data also shows that three quarters of adults with mental ill-health will have experienced the onset of those issues by the age of 24[10] and that of the young adults in recent contact with mental health services, 45% were in contact with the police or youth justice services[11]. Therefore, wider needs such as poverty and mental health must be considered when deciding the appropriate intervention in order for the young adult to have the best chances of success.

Furthermore, we recognise there is a strong case for gendered and culturally sensitive support. For example, young women[12] in the criminal justice system often present with complex, overlapping needs with their contact with the criminal justice system underpinned by experiences of violence, abuse and exploitation, high rates of mental ill-health, substance use and economic disadvantage. Previous Revolving Doors' research[13] also suggested that Black young adults are less likely to be given a diversionary route compared to White young adults. Hence, interventions will need to be tailored to specific groups, address both the range of needs experienced by young adults and account for their maturity.

Figure 1: How trauma affects a child's development



Interventions will need to respond to gender and racial inequalities. In the roundtable, attendees highlighted the benefits of gender specific services for those on diversion schemes, considering the evidence about the distinct needs of women in contact with the criminal justice system and the specific patterns in offending which are different to men. The need for interventions to be culturally competent was also highlighted, so that provision was person-centred and accounted for different cultural norms, values and beliefs.

3 Police-assisted diversion

This section brings together two separate approaches to diverting people away from the criminal justice system. Police services could choose to follow either mechanism when working with young adults.

Pre-arrest diversion schemes[14]

In the youth justice system, pre-charge diversion models offer an alternative response to traditional court procedures for young people under 18 who have committed an offence, but who have limited or no prior involvement with the criminal justice system. Diversion occurs before someone is charged. Instead, the police impose sanctions. This model holds considerable promise for young adults.

There are different types of diversion models that can begin before a young person is charged:

1. **Diversion only.** A caution where a police officer explains the legal and social consequences of continued anti-social/criminal behaviour to the person in question, and their parents/guardian if they are under 18.

2. **Diversion with referral to services.** An example of this is a final warning and reprimand scheme where an assessment-based approach is used to evaluate the seriousness of the offence to determine whether someone receives a reprimand or final warning with referral for multi-agency assessment and placement in a service such as a behavioural treatment programme.

3. **Diversion with police-led restorative justice.** This involves additional elements such as a script to structure discussion between the individual and affected parties, and presence of the victim.

Police led pre-charge diversion models for young people reduce reoffending by:

- Reducing someone's contact with peer groups within the criminal justice system who may convey negative values, attitudes or techniques or encourage offending behaviour.

- Reducing the potential for young people to become labelled as 'criminals', which might encourage the police to develop negative expectations.

- Facilitating forgiveness and non-stigmatisation, therefore allowing a young person to successfully reintegrate into society.

- Signposting young people to services which could help to prevent further offending behaviour.

Overall, the evidence suggests that police-led pre-charge diversion models for young people under 18 have reduced reoffending amongst those deemed 'low risk'. Meta-analysis combined the results of 19 studies which included 31 individual comparisons of diversion versus traditional processing[15]. This found that police-led pre-charge diversion models for young offenders led to a modest but statistically significant 6% decrease in reoffending compared to those who received standard formal sentencing. Assuming a 50% reoffending rate for those who received traditional processing, the average reoffending rate for those receiving pre-charge diversion was 44%. There is not a statistically significant difference by type of diversion model or country of implementation.

However, it is worth noting that most evidence is from the United States and is more than ten years old. Therefore, less is known about the success (or otherwise) of diversion models in England and Wales and about their implementation in current youth and young adult justice contexts.

Pre-court diversion schemes

The Centre for Justice Innovation (CJI) define pre-court diversion as operating in two ways[16], either:

1. Individuals who are arrested and likely to receive a formal out of court disposal are 'diverted' into either a less serious out of court disposal or an informal disposal.

2. Individuals who are arrested and likely to be prosecuted in court are 'diverted' into either a formal out of court disposal or an informal disposal (sometimes called 'deferred prosecution).

A review by CJI found that there is strong evidence internationally, and moderate evidence from the UK, that pre-court diversion reduces reoffending. The review also found moderate evidence that pre-court diversion reduces the costs to the criminal justice system and promising evidence on the impact of pre-court diversion on victim satisfaction.

Pre-court diversion schemes are becoming more common in England and Wales. For example, a recent National Police Chiefs' Council survey has highlighted that most police forces across England and Wales are currently piloting or developing new pre-court diversion schemes for adult offenders[17]. However, such schemes are described and implemented differently across different areas.

An issue raised at the roundtable was the discretion that the police services have when making decisions about referring young adults to diversion schemes. Attendees explained that the presence of a diversion scheme does not necessarily negate the discretion that the police have in who they stop and search in the first instance. Furthermore, guidance about offence type meant that decisions were at the police offer's discretion, and there were concerns about how that would impact different ethnic groups. For example, whether more young adults from ethnic minority communities, namely young Black men, would be able equally to access the diversion services. Findings from a current study in West Midlands will give further insight on whether diversion schemes have any effect on the racial disparities driven by who is being stopped and searched in the first place.

Roundtable attendees also discussed the issue of funding for diversion schemes for young adults, and who can and will pay for this. Currently, young adults eligible for diversion services are themselves sometimes expected to cover the cost of some low-level interventions, such as drug and alcohol awareness courses. The cost of 'self-funded' diversion schemes varies across the country (£20-60), and we have heard from Inspectors and Chief Inspectors, who are members of the Knowledge Exchange Network, that they would either like to try, or already do try, to be more flexible and offer these diversionary interventions for young adults who are struggling to cover the costs of schemes, but in the absence of national guidance, these flexibilities remain discretionary. Attendees felt that the government, local authorities, and police and probation services should pick up these costs instead of pushing them on to young adults.

Both at the roundtable events and Knowledge Exchange Network meetings, we heard from experts that it was easier to fund diversion services for children. The recent funding announcement by the Youth Endowment Fund was welcome but the lack of funding specifically allocated for young adults made it difficult for police services to provide the right support. There are also challenges because where only short-term funding was available such schemes suffered from a lack of time to embed in a local area. As more diversion schemes are implemented, the evidence base should also increase.

Checkpoint

Checkpoint was introduced in 2015 with the aim of reducing reoffending by addressing the motives and causes of offending behaviour. It is a voluntary adult offender diversion scheme that operates in County Durham and Darlington. It targets low and moderate level offenders at the earliest stage of the criminal justice process and offers to quash criminal conviction in return for successful participation in Checkpoint.

Checkpoint offers individuals a meeting with a navigator to discuss their needs and identify the underlying causes of their offending. Here, they agree to a four-month contract, that is tailored to their needs. This can have up to five conditions including a combination of:

- Not reoffending over the period of the contract (mandatory).
- Taking part in a restorative approach if the victim wishes.
- Attending sessions with relevant services to address personal issues that contributed to the person committing the offence (e.g., substance use, accommodation, finance, employment, mental or physical health).
- To complete 18-36 hours of voluntary community work and/or wear a GPS tag.

If they agree, the offence outcome is then classed as a deferred prosecution. This can be invoked at any point during the four-month period if the contract conditions are breached. If this happens, the individual is prosecuted, and the courts are informed of their failure to comply.

Using a forecast model that is the first of its kind globally, offenders are graded green (low), amber (medium), and red (high) based on their offence – to support resource allocation and learning about who the programme is working best for.

A randomised control trial was implemented to evaluate the scheme. The results indicate that the Checkpoint treatment cohort achieved a lower reoffending rate in comparison to the control cohort, considering prevalence of reoffending (10.3% reduction) and risk of reoffending during the 24-month follow-up study period (30% reduction). Hence, there is reasonable evidence that the Checkpoint intervention can reduce reoffending in comparison to traditional criminal justice procedures.

It is worthwhile to note the evaluation of Ministry of Justice's Chance to Change Pilots by Manchester Metropolitan University, will provide further insight into outcomes achieved by deferred prosecutions, which do not require admission of guilt. Similarly, there will be further evidence available from the Merseyside Deferred Prosecution Scheme which targets young men aged 18-25 who committed minor violent offences and all adults from Black and minority ethnic communities who committed minor offences. This good practice review also highlighted that young adult specific services in South Wales and Gwent, and North Yorkshire and the City of York.

Future 4 – South Wales and Gwent

Future 4 (a consortium made up of G4S, Safer Wales, Include and Llamau) deliver an early intervention service for men aged 18-25 and a pathfinder whole system approach service for women of all ages across the Gwent and South Wales police force areas. The services were jointly commissioned by the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, the Welsh Government and HMPPS in Wales.

If a young adult is arrested anywhere in Gwent or South Wales the Police will refer them to Future 4 if they are not to be charged with an offence. Young adults are encouraged to make the best possible use of the opportunity to avoid a criminal record both following the incident of concern and longer term. There may also be times when they have received a formal caution or are charged with an offence, but the police or others consider that support should be offered by Future 4. Between October 2019 and September 2020, over 1200 young adults were referred into the 18-25 Early Intervention Service. For women, Future 4 support is available at any time during their involvement with police, courts, probation and prisons.

Between July-September 2020, 98% of those diverted into the Future 4 Service were found to have engaged positively in support provided and 84% of voluntary referrals engaged with support.

The service offers a range of different support, including advice and guidance, signposting, onward referral and practical and emotional support. Interventions are provided via one to one, group based and online interventions. Caseworkers will help promote understanding that life is about choices and decisions and these can be constantly reviewed, to refocus on strengths and on the possibilities that life offers and to move forward positively.

North Yorkshire and the City of York – Support and Diversionary Scheme

The aim of the Support and Diversionary Scheme in North Yorkshire and the City of York is to reduce the number of women and young adult first-time entrants, reduce the reoffending rates of 18–25-year-old men and women of all ages and prevent offending by addressing the needs of these groups.

It combines voluntary pre-arrest support for young women and men at risk of entering the criminal justice system, as well as support to those who are offered a community resolution or conditional caution at the point of arrest. The service accepts self-referrals as well as referrals from a range of services, including North Yorkshire Police, Multi-agency Tasking and Coordination protocol, Liaison & Diversion and the Community Safety Hubs. There is some flexibility around the point at which individuals are referred, for example North Yorkshire Police may make a pre-arrest referral for an individual who has previously come to police attention, as a victim or a perpetrator of crime but has not accessed other support since.

The service provides a single point of contact model whereby individuals are allocated a keyworker who offers consistent, accurate and timely support, and make onward referrals and ensure engagement with other appropriate support services when needed.

The Service takes a gender-informed approach and offers one-to-one support, peer-support, group work and onward referral to address substance use and/or mental health problems, improve family contact, and build and maintain a pro-social identity. The service also helps young adults to build their social capital and achieve their goals. This could include support with accommodation, their finances or entering education, employment or training.

Centre for Justice Innovation has identified promising practice principles emerging from the literature on pre-court diversion[18].

These included:

- Avoid net-widening. Do not draw individuals further into the criminal justice system than they otherwise would have been.
- Keep eligibility criteria broad to avoid unnecessarily low referral numbers and reach all those who are suitable.
- Consider the impact of formal admissions of guilt on eligibility and participation, as certain groups have less trust in the criminal justice system.
- Ensure referral is simple and swift. This will help to encourage referrals – evidence shows quick responses build future compliance.
- Prioritise victim satisfaction and procedural fairness. This benefits victims of crime and helps to build public trust.
- Avoid 'overdosing' with overly intensive interventions. Individuals may struggle to complete these, they should not be set up to fail.
- Deliver responsive and need-focused interventions. Consider the assessed risk and needs which drive reoffending.
- Work in partnership so that all relevant agencies buy into the scheme and the vision of how it should be delivered.

Further research is needed to examine the implementation and economic issues surrounding police-led pre-charge diversion for young people under 18. There is also a gap in the evidence base about the effectiveness of such schemes for 18-25-year-olds. For example, the CJI evidence review highlighted the limited amount of specific evidence on the impact of pre-court diversion on different groups, despite wider evidence on what works to reduce reoffending suggesting that pre-court diversion may be particularly applicable for specific groups of individuals, including young adults[19].

4 Building positive relationships

One intervention which has been found to help to divert people away from the criminal justice system and/or reduce reoffending is that which tries to help individuals build positive relationships. This section provides an overview of these interventions.

As well as specific interventions based on the principle of creating positive change through constructive and supportive relationships, roundtable attendees highlighted the benefits of positive relationships more generally when working with young adults.

EngAge Young Adult Project – Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

EngAge is a service specifically for young adults (mostly aged 18-24) in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland that was established by the Violence Reduction Network in response to data analysis which showed that the rate of serious violence by those under 25 years is almost twice that of those aged 25 years and over.

The role of the EngAge team is to intervene early with young adults (mostly aged 18-24) when they are starting to become involved in criminal activity, including aggression and violence, and thereby prevent the progression of offending. The team also plays an important role in supporting transitions between young people and adult services where the risk of reoffending is likely to increase.

The concept of 'reachable moments' is integral to the scope of the EngAge team hence they take a pro-active approach to identifying opportunities to engage young adults, such as close working with police services to explore how contacting young people shortly after arrest, including in custody suites, can be achieved. Building relationships and trust, with the young adults being supported, is key to how they work.

As well as self-referrals, referrals come from youth offending teams, the care leavers team, police services through the imposition of community resolutions and conditional cautions, and pro-active referral through police custody suites and engagement with other partners, for example those working on supporting victims of child or sexual exploitation.

Mentoring

Mentoring describes a relationship between two people, built over an extended period whereby one individual uses their (greater) experience and knowledge to support the other individual develop and sometimes progress towards specific goals. Mentors can provide many different benefits to address practical and/or emotional needs, such as increasing self-esteem and confidence. As Jolliffe and Farrington (2008) explain, mentoring is usually intended as a way to reduce reoffending and increase positive life outcomes such as greater levels of education, training and employment[20].

There are different types of mentoring relationships, including between a young person and an adult and/or between peers. Mentoring initiatives have been implemented in numerous settings such as the workplace, in the voluntary and community sector and within the criminal justice system.

There is good evidence that mentoring can reduce reoffending and result in positive behaviours amongst people under 21. For example, a systematic review of 46 studies concluded that mentoring

for young people (defined as anyone under 21) deemed high-risk has a modest positive effect on reoffending as well as on associated outcomes including educational attainment and reduced drug use[21].

The review found that mentoring may help to reduce crime by diverting people from criminal activities and attitudes, as well as by promoting healthy or positive development. The review also explored whether specific elements of mentoring programmes had a positive effect in reducing crime. It found significant reductions when the mentoring intervention included advocacy and emotional support. Reductions in crime were significantly larger when mentor motivation was based on professional development.

However, the evidence on mentoring specifically from England and Wales is limited. Studies mainly explore the impact of mentoring on reoffending after custody (e.g., 'through the gate' or pre-release programmes) rather than as a means to divert someone away from the criminal justice system. T2A pilots also demonstrated that 'through the gate' peer-mentoring services are effective for ensuring continuity of support from prison to community, and for preventing relapse into offending behaviour[22]. In addition, the Making Connections mentoring programme, which targeted women leaving prison, showed that those who took part in the programme were less likely to re-offend in the 12 months following release from custody[23].

Furthermore, understanding of why mentoring is successful (or not) in reducing offending amongst young people is limited by the variation in how mentoring is delivered and the lack of detail available on the content of mentoring programmes. We know, for example, there is a variation of amount and quality of training and provision provided to mentors, as well as variation in the caseload sizes[23].

Tolan et al. (2013) identified four processes as key in successful mentoring interventions:

- the mentee identifies with the mentor which can help with motivation and behaviour,
- providing information or teaching to help the mentee manage social, educational, legal, family, and peer challenges,
- advocacy for the mentee in various systems and settings, and
- emotional support and friendship to promote confidence, self-worth, and skills to be able to cope with different circumstances.

Another systematic review that aimed to provide comprehensive evidence of the effectiveness of interventions, including mentoring, suggested that the reasons why mentoring is successful could include a youth having someone to provide them with good advice and emotional support, and having a role model or parental figure in the absence of their own parent[25].

Multisystemic Therapy

Multisystemic therapy (MST) is an intensive family and community-based intervention aimed at families with children and young people aged 11-17 who are at risk of out of home placement (such as in care or custody) because of their offending and/or social, emotional and behavioural problems. The

key goal of MST is to break the cycle of anti-social behaviours by keeping young people safely at home, in school, and out of trouble[26]. MST is an intervention with promising rather than definitive evidence.

It involves qualified therapists engaging with family members in the home to identify and change factors that are thought to be contributing to the problem behaviour. This could include attempts to address individual issues such as improving communication and school performance, family issues such as parenting skills, or environmental skills such as social networks and peer relationships. Evaluations show that hours of direct contact between MST therapists and family members vary. There is no universal model of delivery, instead MST draws on low caseloads, delivering strength-based, flexible support in the home or community.

MST programmes are delivered by licensed teams which carry out staff training, weekly case reviews and apply validated tools to deliver the programme. Both Farrington & Welsh (2003) and Baldwin et al (2012) raised doubts about the capacity to replicate the programme in other settings outside of the control of programme developers.

Available systematic studies have been conducted in the United States, Canada and Norway. There are now over 30 teams in England, Scotland and Ireland.

There is a lack of evidence from existing evaluations about the conditions in which MST is most effective and for whom it works best. It is difficult to compare evaluations of MST because of the variations in the follow-up periods used to assess factors such as offending rates.

Evaluations to date have compared outcomes with young people who have received individual therapy and 'usual services' within the criminal justice system. Available studies show that outcomes are generally more positive for those receiving MST. For example, individual studies have showed decreases in the likelihood of arrest or conviction, the number of arrests, the likelihood of young people going to prison, or the length of sentence. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Farrington and Welsh found that the likelihood of arrest and conviction was significantly lower for those receiving MST[27].

Although there is positive outcome data from the UK and Ireland, there is no evidence of a statistically significant overall reduction in crime compared to other interventions. In 2019, 94% of young people receiving MST remained at home; 78% were in school or working and 90% had no new criminal charges[28].

The Systemic Therapy for At Risk Teens (START) trial was the first large-scale randomised controlled trial of multisystemic therapy in the UK. The results of the five-year follow-up showed that 55% of people in the multisystemic therapy group had at least one offence with a criminal conviction, compared with 53% in the management-as-usual group. The conclusion was that there was no evidence that MST was more effective in the long term compared with management as usual[29].

Nonetheless, lessons can be learnt about the benefits of engagement and support of young people and their families. Individuals who are hard to engage in services have shown they prefer certain aspects of MST, such as delivery of the service, in their own home, the 24-hour, seven days a week support and contact, and access to services from one point. This leads to much lower rates of non-attendance for families who are very hard to engage in community treatments[30]. Furthermore, the individualised intensive treatment offered allows priority areas to be addressed quickly, rather than waiting for a timely assessment process[31].

Furthermore, by reducing or eliminating the amount of time that a young person will be in care or custody, MST can limit the psychological impact of an 'out of home' placement at an important stage of their development. This also results in cost savings because of money saved in in terms of out of home placement, offending costs, police time and educational provision.

Restorative Justice and Victim-Offender Mediation

Restorative justice is an approach to justice which seeks to repair the harm caused by a crime, rather than inflicting punishment on the person who committed it[32].

A face-to-face Restorative Justice Conference (RJC) is one type of restorative justice practice, which brings together the individual who committed the crime, their victims, family and community members, to decide what the individual should do to repair the harm that their crime has caused[33]. This approach addresses the needs of the participants by encouraging open conversation, offering various reparation options, and ensuring that further harm is avoided.

Victim-offender mediation (VOM) is grounded in the same principles as RJCs but focuses on involving the individual who committed the offence and their victim, not their family or community members. During a VOM meeting, the participants have the chance to discuss the offence and its consequences and decide what should be done to repair the harm caused.

There is positive evidence about the impact of RJCs on reoffending as well as on victims themselves. For example, a review investigating the impact of RJCs, found that based on 10 studies, those who had committed an offence and participated in the conference were significantly less likely to reoffend over two years compared to those who did not participate. The percentage differences associated with the 10 studies range from 7% to 45% fewer repeat convictions or arrests. The review also found that victims were significantly more likely to feel safer and more secure following the conference[34].

Research by the Criminal Justice Alliance found similar positive impact on victims' mental well-being following an RJC, including reduced feelings of fear and anger and increased feelings of safety[35]. It has also been found to alleviate symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

However, less is known about the impact of restorative justice on young adults (compared to those under 18) and concerns have been raised about whether RJCs have been tailored sufficiently to account for the needs of young people at different ages. A qualitative study of 41 young people from two different Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) was carried out to explore the effectiveness of RJCs amongst those under the age of 18 in England[36]. While this study indicated a welcome understanding of children's vulnerabilities, it also raised considerable concerns.

The study found that the YOTs age group (10-17 years old) was simply too wide a net to address everyone's needs. A disposal that might be appropriate for the older group could be potentially damaging for the younger group. For example, the meeting-based approach, as opposed to an activity-based approach, was often too demanding for the youngest age group. This resulted in the youngest age group becoming confused with the process rather than facing personal responsibility and growth. In some cases, it was suggested that involving any vulnerable young person in an RJC can be harmful.

A review into the effectiveness of VOM that focused on 15 studies of young people under the age of 18, showed that those who participated in the mediation process had a 34% lower rate of reoffending than those who did not participate[37]. However, the studies with a longer follow-up period did show a lower effect than those with a shorter follow-up period.

The following were identified as key steps when holding a Restorative Justice Conference[38]:

- The facilitator should have a one-on-one discussion with all participants detailing what will happen at the conference.
- If all parties consent, the conference should be scheduled at the victim's convenience.
- The conference should be held in a private and secure space.
- The facilitator should lead the discussion by inviting the person who committed the crime to explain their offence, followed by the victim(s) and other participants describing the impact the crime had on them.
- Following this, participants should discuss how the harm may be repaired. Once a consensus is reached, the facilitator should write up this agreement and have it signed by the person who committed the crime.
- The agreement should be filed with a court, police unit or other institutional mechanism to encourage compliance with the agreement.

Additionally, another review suggested that the focus of the conference should not necessarily be to determine guilt or innocence, but to consider an appropriate plan of action to move forward[39].

Similarly, a review examining the impact of VOM, found that its success hinged on the premeditation period, where both parties can consider what they want to achieve from the meeting moving forward and where a safe space is provided to explore reparations[40].

New Zealand Family Group Conference

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is used as part of New Zealand's Youth Justice System. They are held when a child or young person under the age of 16 has committed a low-level offence. Echoing restorative justice principles, the conference involves the young person taking responsibility for the offence and exploring its impact with their victim(s), families, facilitators and other professionals. The young person and their family develop a plan which may include community service, substance use counselling or parenting programmes for the child's family.

FGCs are used both as a diversionary technique and at the pre-sentencing stage. A significant feature of the model is to encourage community-based solutions with the aim of reducing the overall number of young people in prison[41].

5 Addressing mental health needs

Another theme of several interventions included in this review, is mental health needs. This section provides a summary of the available evidence.

Therapeutic communities

A therapeutic community is a participatory, group-based approach to treat the effects of mental illness and substance use for both adults and young people. Delivered by professionals and individuals who have previously experienced problems with drugs and/or alcohol, therapeutic communities aim to encourage the development of positive social identities and to promote sustained behavioural change. Therapeutic communities can take place in community and custodial settings and be offered as day or residential programmes. Participants are often expected to be part of a therapeutic community for between nine and 18-months, but drop-out rates are usually high – between 60-80% of residents tend to leave within the first three months. The evidence suggests that longer programmes see better results than shorter programmes, as it takes time for behavioural changes to be fully adopted.

Therapeutic communities have been found to reduce crime. However, statistically significant decreases in re-offending have only been observed amongst adults, and not young people[41].

The reasons why therapeutic communities were considered to have an impact on crime include development of a community, which includes peer support, teaches social norms, effective social skills and builds cohesion, helps to drive increases in personal and social responsibility[42]. Furthermore, the hierarchical nature of the community allows members to respect authority by supporting the process of self-assessment, responsibility, and socialising. For example, residents who demonstrate emotional and/or skill development can increase in status in the community. The emphasis on the individual and their role in changing their behaviour and identity (self-help) rather than substance use has also been highlighted[43].

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for individuals in the criminal justice system targets the thoughts, attitudes and ideas that could contribute towards offending behaviour. By assuming that this 'criminal thinking' has been learnt, CBT highlights individual responsibility and focuses on teaching individuals to understand the thinking processes and choices that result in criminal behaviour. CBT can be delivered in custody and community settings, to both adults and young people. Elements of CBT may include cognitive skills training, anger management, moral development and relapse prevention.

Overall, the evidence suggests that CBT has reduced crime in England and internationally. Specific and significant reductions have been found in both general and violent reoffending amongst adults, young people, and participants of different ethnicities. For example, a meta-analysis of outcomes from 58 studies showed a statistically significant reduction in reoffending of 25% amongst participants who received CBT compared to those who did not[44]. Similarly, another review of eight studies showed a similar statistically significant reduction in general (23%) and violent (28%) reoffending among those who underwent CBT[45]. Usher and Stewart (2014) explored the effect of CBT by ethnicity in Canada and found that there were significant reductions in reoffending amongst Caucasian, Black, Aboriginal and Other ethnic groups, and that there were no significant differences between the levels of reoffending for these groups[46].

Delivering a greater amount of support to people, providing effective staff training and implementing quality assurance processes are known to increase the likelihood of success in

CBT interventions in the criminal justice system. Existing reviews of CBT interventions in criminal justice settings have been able to identify factors that support greater reductions in reoffending by comparing different delivery models with the outcomes achieved. Those that were most successful delivered a greater amount of support to people (e.g., more sessions per week and more hours of treatment overall), had a low proportion of those receiving the treatment dropping out, and effective staff training and quality assurance processes. Types of support that proved helpful in reducing reoffending include anger management skills and interpersonal problem solving. Lastly, research has demonstrated the benefits of CBT being delivered in a non-custodial environment.

CBT is consistently associated with positive outcomes for young people and young adults when young people are well engaged[47]. This includes better problem-solving skills and reduction in frequency of reoffences.

However, the literature also highlights that CBT is most effective when differences in age/development are taken into account, and when additional support or appropriate adjustments are offered. Studies have shown the need to consider young people's wellbeing when determining their readiness to engage as well as their verbal and expression skills to be able to complete the necessary tasks[48]. For example, an international evaluation showed that younger males had better outcomes with more structured, less interactive forms of cognitive behavioural therapy whilst older males had better outcomes when this was supplemented with more interactive, group-based activities[49].

Together Rotherham

Together Rotherham provided mental health support to vulnerable 18–24-year-olds who encounter the police and emergency services in Rotherham from 2014-16[50]. It worked with individuals at risk of offending or at a pre-conviction stage to respond to their needs as soon as possible. All young women at policing and arrest stage were offered the service, due to the strong links between mental distress and offending amongst this group. The overall aim of the project was to provide young adults with a personal set of tools that will lessen their mental distress, reduce the risk of offending, lessen their dependency on emergency services, and strengthen their informal support networks and relationships.

A mental health practitioner delivered screenings in police custody, following referrals by police, the Vulnerable Person's Unit, mental health services and other local agencies. Based on a holistic assessment, individuals were offered support for around three months, depending on need. This included practical support to manage their mental wellbeing and to access local services to address needs including employment and training, housing, mental health, and substance use. Staff also supported young adults to identify, understand and alter any behaviours that perpetuated their mental distress. They will work with individuals to develop tools that enable them to sustain these changes, for example, emotional awareness, assertiveness, negotiation, and problem-solving skills.

The project was delivered in partnership with South Yorkshire Police, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. It was funded by Barrow Cadbury Trust, the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Some roundtable attendees reflected that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) works well in crisis situations but may not always be the most suitable long-term support option. They emphasised the importance of person-centred and psycho-dynamic approaches. Project Future was discussed as an example of good practice. It is a mental health and wellbeing service that specifically works with young people and young adults who have experience of the criminal justice system.

Project Future[51]

Project Future is a community based holistic and youth-led, mental health and wellbeing service based in the London borough of Haringey. It seeks to transform the delivery of mental health for children and young men aged 11-25 years old who are involved in offending, have experiences of the criminal justice system, and specifically for those exposed to serious youth violence or labelled 'gang-affiliated'. It was initially funded by Big Lottery to support 16–25-year-olds, and Comic Relief have provided funding to extend this to 11–15-year-olds.

The project is a partnership between Mind in Haringey, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Mental Health Trust, and Haringey Council and has been co-produced by the young people who themselves were entrenched in cycles of poverty and offending, and who are not able to access regular services.

The project adopts a multi-agency, integrated approach based on the understanding that no one agency has the solution for the complex needs that these young people present. This approach draws upon principles from the INTEGRATE model, developed by MAC-UK, which views mental health as being heavily influenced by the context in which people live. Mental health and wellbeing support is therefore delivered in a diverse, flexible and accessible way. For example, Project Future can provide services and support at crisis points such as arrest, sentencing, through custodial sentences or at transition points, such as entering or exiting prison.

It is primarily a wellbeing service in which evidence-based psychological interventions are delivered to young people in accessible ways. The project is accessed by peer referral only, helping create an environment where young people feel comfortable and safe. At Project Future young people are appointed as experts in their own lives and in the community. They are consulted at every level of the project and are responsible for co-producing a service that best meets theirs and their peers' needs.

The project is facilitated by a team of clinical psychologists, specialist youth workers and local young people, 'community consultants'. Together they provide a supportive and nurturing environment for young people to thrive in by addressing their mental health, wellbeing and occupational needs. The service provides bespoke interventions that are tailored to the individual needs of young people, to ultimately improve wellbeing, facilitate rehabilitation and reduce the risk of future offending. The team adopts strengths-based psychological approaches in which young people are not viewed as the 'problem' but rather as capable and resourceful young men. The project recognises how positive wellbeing requires connecting different aspects of a young person's life.

The Centre for Mental Health evaluated Project Future in 2017. The evaluation showed a marked and statistically significant reduction in needs relating to mental health and

wellbeing, with 70% of young people accessing wellbeing support at Project Future[52]. Three-quarters of young people accessed Education Employment and Training support from Project Future, including job searching, job applications, business support and emotional support around barriers to and maintaining work. Two-thirds of young people accessed another service via Project Future, including housing, Citizens Advice, sexual health, primary care, mental health and benefits services. Community and criminal justice stakeholders observed a reduction of offending amongst young people attending Project Future. Young people describe how Project Future reduces offending by providing a safe space, routine, purpose, and opportunities[53].

6 Problematic substance use

There are also interventions targeted at individuals who experience problems with drugs and/or alcohol, which aim to reduce and/or eliminate substance use as a means of reducing reoffending behaviour.

Drug diversion schemes

Drug diversion is used to reduce the harm caused by drug use and drug-related offences, allowing people in possession of small quantities of illegal drugs an opportunity to be offered drug diversion, rather than face prosecution. This trauma-informed approach considers drug possession as a health outcome and therefore aims to address an individual's use of drugs by presenting an incentive to be open and get an assessment about what they are using. Therefore, the intention is to reduce reoffending by offering an out of court disposal such as a community resolution, or an informal disposal, with conditions, and reduce demand on the criminal justice system.

Diversion schemes can be pre-arrest (on the street), or post-arrest with prosecution dropped if the person complies with any conditions. Some schemes also provide in-depth support to examine and address the root causes of the person's drug use and related behaviour.

There has been an increase in the number of drug diversion schemes in England and Wales over recent years. Some are for minor drug possession offences only, while others include minor supply offences[54].

Thames Valley drugs diversion scheme

Two pilots are being delivered in Thames Valley in partnership with the police, a local drug support service, the local authority, the Youth Offending Team and the Police and Crime Commissioner (who has helped fund the scheme). One is in West Berkshire, and a new pilot has begun in Windsor and Maidenhead. The West Berkshire pilot is a voluntary attendance scheme. If a referred individual does not attend, they are no longer eligible for a further diversion if found in possession of drugs again, but they are not reported[55].

In West Berkshire, between December 2017 and January 2019, 62% of the referrals came because of an officer-initiated stop check, and contact was made with all of those referred. Most referrals (76%) were for possession of cannabis[56]. The evaluation found that 84% of those who were sent for treatment would have received a sanction that would not have addressed the reasons for their drug use, had they not been referred to the programme. The intervention reduced the reoffending rates by a third (8.7% in the pilot cohort, compared to a national reoffending rate of 25.7%).[57].

In addition, 40% of adults completed the course, which is 10% more than the national average for community resolutions. The reasons why people did not attend were usually linked to working hours. The youth drug diversion scheme has been particularly successful, with 88% of all young people that were diverted, positively engaging with the service, and a completion rate of over 80% for the six-week course[58]. A motivation for young people engaging with the service is thought to be that the community resolution and diversion is not disclosed in the standard criminal record checks.

Drug substitutes

Drug substitution programmes are designed to control the amount and/or type of drugs consumed by individuals who have offended and are found to be dependent on drugs. Some drug substitution programmes focus on substituting illegal drugs for legal alternatives (such as methadone), while others legally prescribe drugs such as heroin to prevent users from acquiring them illegally.
A reduction in the use of drugs increases the individual's quality of life, for example by reducing the risk of overdose and contagious diseases by controlling the drugs that they access. Managing drug use in this way also intends to decrease offending, as the participants do not need to pursue illegal activities, such as drug dealing or theft to sustain their addiction.

Overall, the evidence suggests that drug substitution programmes can reduce crime, but the evidence is mixed and dependent on the drug used as a treatment.

Egli et al. (2009) reported that heroin prescription was associated with greater reductions in offending compared to methadone prescription[59]. While studies tend to evidence on improvements on health and wellbeing outcomes, systematic reviews by Egli et al. (2009) and Perry et al. (2013)[60], found no significant reduction in criminal behaviour when methadone or buprenorphine were used as a substitute compared to non-pharmacological interventions or other drugs.

Although significant reductions in criminal behaviour were identified when naltrexone was prescribed, compared to counselling or behaviour therapy, this reduction was based on a small number of studies. In addition, Gibson (2007) highlighted the greater likelihood of death in those treated with naltrexone, when compared to methadone[61]. This also requires increased community supervision for its administration.

7 Complex trauma and multiple needs

Young adults aged 18-25 need a distinct approach to address their complex and intersecting needs. However, while addressing specific needs around mental ill-health and substance misuse, services must acknowledge that these are likely to be set against the backdrop of profound poverty, experiences of trauma and recognise the consequences of these on a young adult's life course.

Evidence shows that crime, as well as the most intensive policing efforts, tends to be concentrated in the most deprived localities. Revolving Doors' research on experiences of poverty and trauma[62] found that the vast majority of people with multiple health and human needs have experienced profound levels of poverty, such as not being able to adequately heat their homes or live in a home in a good state of repair. As children they had to go without one or more things that are deemed essential by most of the population, such as a warm winter coat, three meals a day, or books and toys of their own. Almost none of them had access to hobbies or social activities such as school trips. These hardships were not exceptional one-off incidences, instead they persisted from early childhood into adulthood.

Additionally, we know that children and young adults living in deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to suffer traumatic incidents, like witnessing or being the victim of violence, and parental neglect or abuse, and multiple and often traumatic losses and bereavement[63]. Factors associated with deprivation such as community violence and daily hassles, alongside racial discrimination, also occurred regularly. These experiences happened in the context of the daily stresses of living in poverty – not being able to afford to feed the family, facing high levels of school exclusions, and persistent unemployment.

It is crucial that services recognise the impact that poverty and trauma may have on a young adult's life and tailor their response accordingly. Evidence indicates that when services respond to these needs, and provide more holistic support, the intervention tends to be more successful.

Principles emerging from the practice review on trauma and poverty responsive diversion include:

Flexibility on the point of diversion: Services aimed to support individuals with multiple unmet health and human needs typically introduce a flexible approach to referrals. For example police services can make a pre-arrest referral for an individual who has previously come to the police attention as a victim or a perpetrator, as well as referring others who come into the criminal justice system for relatively minor offences. Self and community-based referral routes are also employed to reduce the reliance on a formal disposal.

A harm reduction framework which focuses on wellbeing: The diversionary intervention aims to build long-term relationships with participants so that they can address the underlying issues (such as trauma and poverty) and presenting needs even if they were to relapse into drug-use, or come back into the criminal justice system.

Long-term individualised support: Participants are diverted into community-based services where they work with a keyworker to identify and address their needs for housing, treatment, counselling, education, training, childcare, or other services. Examples we have seen in North Yorkshire, South Wales and LEAD all highlight the importance of voluntary (i.e. non-mandated) engagement with this long-term support.

Consider using peer outreach workers to enhance the programme's effectiveness: Decades of research demonstrate that peer-based interventions are a highly successful way to intervene with

disenfranchised people. These peer outreach workers stay connected to participants, provide important insight into the ongoing case management process, serve as community guides, coaches, and/or advocates, while also providing credible role models for success.

Restorative engagement with victims and local business: Repeat shoplifting, linked to poverty and problematic substance use is common among this population. Using restorative justice principles and developing relationships with the local business community can help to establish the principles behind this approach and influence support for greater use of long-term support as a diversionary option.

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)[64]

LEAD is a pre-arrest and at-the-point of arrest diversion approach, specifically designed for people who commit repeated low-level and non-violent crimes, often driven by a combination of mental ill-health, problematic substance use, homelessness, trauma and poverty. It is a whole system approach to harm reduction and law enforcement.

An evaluation by the University of Washington[65] looked at LEAD's success and compared the results of people on LEAD to those who experienced the traditional justice system. They found that LEAD participants had 60% lower odds of arrest during the six months following; and both a 58% lower odds of arrest and 39% lower odds of being charged with an offence over the longer term period.

Policing role

Police officers exercise discretionary authority at the point of contact to divert individuals into a community-based, harm reduction intervention. As LEAD relies on this discretion, it is essential that they document why they have taken the decision to, or not to use diversion for eligible offences.

The value of allowing for referral via a social contact route has also been well demonstrated. The model allows some flexibility for the police officers not to rely on arrest as the sole means of referral, as this can be counter-productive and can delay engagement.

Case management (non-police)

Participants are assigned a case manager who works with them to address and understand underlying psychological trauma. The case managers meet the participant 'where they're at', meaning that they are not penalised or denied services if they do not achieve abstinence, engage in specific services, seek stable housing, or cease involvement in sex work.

Case management is also tailored to the needs of different racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and other key populations to ensure the support provided is culturally competent.

Peer outreach and support is also core to the programme so that individuals can engage and deal with people they view as knowledgeable about their situation and reliable.

Once the acute needs have been addressed, the case manager works with each individual to design an Individual Intervention Plan which may include assistance with housing, treatment, education, training, job placement, licensing assistance, childcare, or other services.

The length of intervention can vary between 6-24 months, but LEAD does not officially close a case until the participant has specifically asked them to.

Checkpoint Plus (Surrey)[66]

Checkpoint is a deferred prosecution Scheme funded by the PCC's Office in partnership with Surrey Police and Surrey County Council. Deferred prosecution means that conditions are imposed, allowing individuals the opportunity to address the causes of crime and reduce their risk of reoffending in place of formal prosecution.

The Checkpoint Scheme has been evolved from a model first developed in Durham, and provides specialist navigators to direct support for individuals who have committed low level offences, by providing the opportunity to engage in a four month long process that includes targeted interventions to tackle the reasons behind their offending.

Checkpoint Plus refers to the enhanced scheme in Surrey, that has introduced a process that will support people with multiple disadvantage with a more flexible criteria. Most importantly, the eligibility criteria has been widened to include people who have had previous convictions and the restriction only using the Checkpoint outcome once in a 12 month period has been removed.

Also key to Checkpoint Plus, is actively engaging victims to ensure the conditions of individual cases are appropriate, with the option for further support around restorative justice actions, such as receiving a written or in person apology.

8 Harmful practice

We were also interested to see whether any interventions had been found to be unsuccessful in diverting people away from the criminal justice system and reducing reoffending.

Scared Straight

Scared Straight involves organised visits to prison facilities by young people who have committed minor crime or children at risk of entering the criminal justice system. It has been delivered in the United States. It aims to discourage individuals from undertaking activity that would put them in prison, by showing them the reality of this, and is therefore based on deterrence theory that states that the choice of committing criminal behaviour can be made less attractive by implementing policies that heighten the cost of illegal activity (e.g., longer sentences).

Scared Straight programmes have varied in their approach. For example, some have included confrontational methods such as adults in prison sharing graphic stories whilst others have used 'softer' methods such as tours of the prison and educational sessions where adults in prison discuss their lives and the decisions which led to them getting arrested. Studies have also shown that the length of sessions varied considerably, with some taking a few hours and others lasting a whole day.

Although there is little recent evidence about Scared Straight, available evidence suggests that it has increased crime. For example, Petrosino et al. (2013) estimated that reoffending was 68% higher amongst young people who participated in the programme, compared to those who did not[67]. Similarly, the College of Policing found that reoffending was higher amongst individuals who had taken part in Scared Straight compared to individuals who did not in seven out of nine studies they reviewed. It is not clear why these negative effects have taken place and whether any specific factors have encouraged behaviour that has led to imprisonment. It has also been highlighted that because studies have only followed participants for between three and 24 months, longer term impacts are not known, and could show different outcomes.

Lastly, a cost-benefit analysis of 10 studies of Scared Straight programmes in the US conducted in 2006 found that although delivery costs were low (c.$50 per person) the net cost to the taxpayer was estimated to be $14,667 per participant[68]. This was because of the additional costs to society associated with the additional crimes committed by the young people who participated in the programme.

9 Emerging evidence

As outlined in Chapter 1, young adults aged 18-25 have specific needs and unique circumstances. They also create a significant demand on the criminal justice system. Despite this, interventions covered in this review were mostly delivered to young people under 18 or to eligible adults over 18. Young adults have often been overlooked in both practice and research.

Neurodiversity

In December 2020, the government commissioned a review to explore how many offenders have neurodivergent conditions such as autism and learning difficulties in recognition that greater understanding and support from the police, prison and probation service will help people with such conditions engage better with rehabilitation and reduce contact with the criminal justice system[69].

The prevalence of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) has been described as a 'silent epidemic' amongst people in contact with the criminal justice system, as TBI is frequently not recognised, screened for, or understood by frontline staff[70]. To address this, a pilot was delivered in collaboration between academics at the University of Exeter and Devon & Cornwall Police where training and a screening tool were introduced, in the context of a public health approach to crime reduction.

Pathfinder & Integrated Offender Management Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Project[71]

This project was delivered across two police teams that facilitate engagement with rehabilitative services to address factors associated with offending behaviour – the Pathfinder deferred caution and charge team and the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) team.

The pilot aimed to establish the prevalence and severity of TBI in those in contact with Pathfinder and IOM teams, and to determine whether TBI was associated with increased likelihood of additional identified needs that are associated with crime (e.g., substance use, housing problems, physical and/or mental health problems etc.) It also sought to understand staff experiences to assess whether TBI screening is helpful/feasible alongside usual vulnerability screening for these police teams going forward and to identify whether further staff training/support is needed.

The pilot involved police staff attending three workshops to learn about TBI and associated behavioural, cognitive, and emotional problems and what can be done to support those with TBI in contact with the criminal justice system Staff were taught and supported to use the Brain Injury Screening Index (BISI), as well as a validated tool developed within the criminal justice system by The Disabilities Trust Foundation for use by frontline staff. The BISI was then used to screen individuals in contact with the pathfinder and IOM teams for a history of TBI.

The pilot results indicate that the BISI is an effective and useful screening tool for police teams working with populations with complex needs. Nearly 60% of those screened had a mild or moderate TBI at some point in their lifetime.

Interviews with staff showed that they found the training interesting and helpful, and that using the BISI helped them to understand the people they were working with better. Staff reported an increased awareness of the lifetime debilitating impact of TBI, and how TBI could impact on ability to engage with rehabilitation programmes. The BISI was a useful way to open conversations and gain insight into someone's history.

Culturally competent services

Evidence shows that Black and minority ethnic young adults aged 18-25 are less likely to have access to diversion services, are more likely to receive a caution or conviction for a low-level and non-violent offences compared to White young adults and have the highest reconviction rate of any ethnic group. This evidence highlighted the increasing interest in developing practice that addresses both racial disparities in the criminal justice system, as well as culturally competent support to address additional barriers Black and minority ethnic young adults face in accessing housing, mental health treatment education, and employment.

While the need for culturally competent services is clear, the evidence on their contribution to rehabilitation, particularly at the diversionary stage is limited. Most of the research on the issue comes from its early implementation in prison settings, particularly from Identity, Esteem, Competence, Resilience[72] Framework (often abbreviated as IECR) which is a model devised to consider identity based upon family, culture, tradition and background and support Black and minority ethnic people to overcome prevailing issues they face.

Our review of practice also suggests that cultural competence in diversionary programmes is also about meaningful involvement of young adults with relevant lived experience in the design, implementation, and evaluation of schemes. We saw examples of this approach emerging internationally in LEAD, and locally in North Yorkshire, South Wales, and Gwent.

Pro-social identity

Previous research has found that when a young person at risk of offending finds a new pro-social identity, it can replace the need to maintain status and peer respect through negative behaviour. For example, becoming 'a construction worker' by finding a labouring job may provide status and security that replaces the need for a young man to prove their masculinity by getting involved in crime[73].

Therefore, a more positive, or pro-social, identity will provide a framework in which the young person or young adult is empowered to make the right choices in their behaviour and with wider life decisions, including relationships. The young person recognises that they can gain status and security from these positive choices. They are more future-oriented in their motivations and choices. The positive identity provides the potential for individuals to exercise agency over their future behaviour, notwithstanding the structural hardships and vulnerabilities of their past[74].

The Beyond Youth Custody (BYC) programme was designed to challenge, advance and promote better thinking in policy and practice for the effective and sustainable resettlement of young people

after custody. As part of the programme, a framework has been developed to support effective and sustained resettlement. The programme argues that to do this, young people need to shift their identity away from one that is conducive to offending to one that promotes a crime-free life and social inclusion.

The framework includes five key characteristics for support to enable this shift in identity to happen:

1. **Constructive:** Centred on reinforcing a positive identify, and is future focused and strengths based as well as motivating and empowering.

2. **Co-created:** Inclusive of the young person and their supporters.

3. **Customised:** Individual wraparound support that recognises the range of diversity in young people's support needs.

4. **Consistent:** Delivering seamless support that focuses on resettlement from the start and which bridges the divide between custody and the community, is enhanced at transitions and includes formal stable relationships.

5. **Co-ordinated:** Managed widespread partnership across sectors

10 Summary

This review has sought to explore the evidence around different interventions that could support young adults aged 18-25 away from the criminal justice system, either by being an alternative to a sentence or reducing the likelihood of reoffending

Table 1 below summarises the different interventions included in this report and the evidence in relation to these.

Table 1: Summary of the evidence review findings

Intervention	Evidence that this works for young adults (18-25-year-olds)	Evidence that this works for adults	Evidence that this works for young people under 18
Pre-charge diversion			
Pre-court diversion			
Mentoring	(Under 21)		
Multisystemic Therapy			
Restorative Justice and Victim-Offender Mediation			
Therapeutic Communities			
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy			
Drug diversion schemes			
Drug substitutes		(Depending on drugs used)	
Scared Straight			

Significant evidence Promising evidence

To summarise through this review, we have learnt that:

As many studies have highlighted, people experience interventions differently based on their age, and related learning needs and circumstances. Therefore, it is important that young people and adults are not seen as a homogeneous group; interventions should be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups and research should focus on specific experiences to support this process.

1. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy has the strongest evidence base and has proven successful for young people, young adults and adults more generally. The only other intervention that has systematic evidence of effectiveness for young adults in particular is mentoring.

2. There is a need to better understand the different options that young adults can be diverted into, and good practice and challenges within this. There is a much greater array of literature focusing on crime prevention and reducing reoffending, compared to research about diversion. Although we uncovered evidence on numerous interventions, this was rarely focused on 18-25-year-olds. Furthermore, many studies included in this report were international – there was less available research for England and Wales.

3. However, the lack of evidence should not lead to a lack of action. Although there is a need for more research and evidence, the need to divert young adults remains key, so that their needs can be addressed to prevent them from entering the revolving door of crisis and crime.

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