'if you feel like you're being respected you're gonna respect them back'
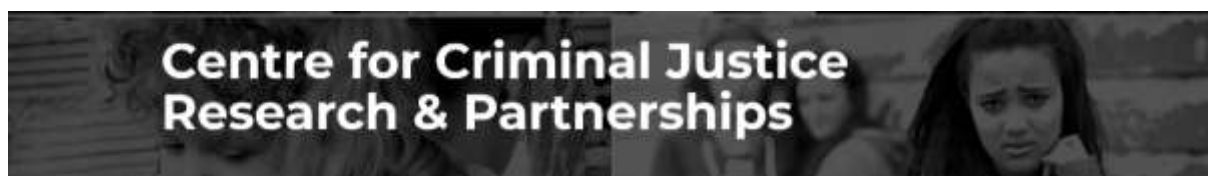
A Child First Pathfinder Preliminary Evaluation– Lancashire Child and Youth Justice Service - Diversion and Alternative Disposals

By

John Wainwright, Rebecca Nowland, Zoe O' Riordan and Cath Larkins

September 2021

Centre for Criminal Justice Research & Partnerships

THE CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

www.uclan.ac.uk/cypp

University of Central Lancashire UCLan

School of Social Work Care and Community

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Four children met the research team as a core group on 3 or 4 occasions to co-design and direct the research. Three were boys and one was a girl.

The children in the core group co-created the interviews for the research and have articulated the important issues and themes in their lives that will be discussed and developed with the wider set of participants.

Children in the core group acknowledged the problems that had led to them engaging with the CYS Diversion service, which were barriers to desisting from offending, the support they felt they needed from their CYJS workers and/ or parents, and the hopes they had for the future.

Some of the issues that were identified by the core group of children were similar to those that emerged from previous research undertaken with Lancashire Youth Offending Service (Larkins and Wainwright, 2014).

However, Covid 19 lockdown, social media, and familial and peer relationship had also had a profound effect on the children's everyday experiences. When these experiences have been negative they have been threatening in a psycho-social and physical sense. For instance, being in a family situation that is difficult that may create arguments between the child and other family members.

All the children that have participated have emphasised and embodied the positive relationships and trust they have with their Child and Youth Justice service workers. This has been evidenced in empathic and listening relationships the practitioners and children have developed together.

The result is a set of themes developed by the core group, to be shared with all the participants in the research and to inform the quantitative standardised measures that will be used with children to assess the distance travelled and improvement of their life opportunities once they have engaged in the diversion or other Child and Youth Justice Service. These themes are:

The Problems – Family difficulties; trouble and conflict with friends and poor decision making/ reacting inappropriately.
Additional Barriers – Lockdown limitations affecting children's relationships and opportunities; social media creating vulnerabilities and pressure to do things; peer pressure; social and economic problems; and some children not ready to get help.
What helps – *workers who* listen are respectful and empathetic; who help children to grow, develop relationships and understand the consequences of their behaviour. This only works if the children want to get help.
Children's Goals – to learn to change behaviour; to have pride in themselves; access to education and training; employment opportunities; to broaden horizons and travel.

1. **Introduction**

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) Child First Pathfinder Projects have been established to develop, evaluate and disseminate best practice in youth justice with children who have been, or are at risk of, coming into contact with the criminal justice system. Their aim, wherever possible, is to divert children from contact with the youth justice system.   This will be achieved by placing children first, focusing on a holistic approach, responding to their specific needs and working with them to fulfil their potential to contribute to society in a constructive way (YJB 2021).   The Youth Justice Board (2019) citing Case and Haines's (2015) on Positive Youth Justice outlined four tenets through which approaches to youth justice should see children as children::

1. Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused and developmentally informed.
2. Promote children's individual strengths and capacities as a means of developing their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
3. Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work promotes desistance through co-creation with children.
4. Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

Lancashire's Child and Youth Justice Service (LCYJS) developed their Diversion service, aligned to the YJB's Child-First tenets, in-line with the evidence base around a child-first approach (e.g. Case and Haines (2015) and *The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime* (https://www.edinstudy.law.ed.ac.uk/) and a rights respecting children's citizenship approach (Larkins and Wainwright 2020). LCYJS describe their Diversion Service as a child-first, trauma informed approach that places co-production and participation with children at the centre. It is because of Lancashire's child-first approach to working with children that they have been awarded Pathfinder status by the YJB to evaluate and promote their Diversion Services' practice. As you will see evidenced in the methodology outlined in this initial report the research is also child-first and promotes active participation with children throughout.

The purpose of this interim report is to describe the co-production work with children who have used Lancashire's Child and Youth Justice diversion service which has informed the development of a quantitative questionnaire and focus for interviews in future phases of the research project.   The report also provides preliminary findings from the service evaluation of Lancashire Children's Youth Justice Child First Diversion Service.

The aim and objectives of the Child First evaluation are as follows:
Aim: To explore the effectiveness of the Child First Diversion programme in comparison to alternative disposals, or being screened out, from a children's perspective and through coproduced outcome measurements.

Objectives

- To understand the experiences of children who engage in these programmes and establish whether they believe it diverts and prevents them from offending, or desisting from offending.
- To identify the various components of interventions and the relative impact they have on diverting children from offending.
- To compare the (non) interventions of the different programmes to establish the outcomes for children
- To identify best practice in Diversion interventions for children
- To establish the benefit, or otherwise, for crime prevention in the wider community
- To establish the efficacy of the CYJS' screening tool and process.

This interim report will provide initial insights into these objectives through an overview of previous literature (section 2); the methodology to be used in the evaluation and details of the cocreation activities to date (section 3); initial findings (section 4); planned evaluation rollout and current state of play (section 5); and

2. Review of previous literature

Scoping searches of existing literature from the period 2010 to the present relating to prevention and diversion services were conducted in March 2021. These scoping searches revealed that there is a vast evidence base in this specific area, with a number of reviews and meta-analyses having been conducted. These reviews and meta-analyses are summarised in Table 1.

These existing reviews have tended to have a focus on American practices/services. Where systematic reviews and/or meta analyses have been inclusive of other countries, studies predominately have been in the US, Canada, Australia or the UK (in this order of highest number of studies). Existing reviews have focused on examining the effectiveness of interventions and/or key elements of successful programmes by reviewing literature that focuses on changes in children's behaviour and/or re-offending. Reviews tend to find effectiveness across programmes with some variation in effectiveness relating to type of programme. Family centred programmes or those that involve an element of work with families show the most effectiveness (see Table 1). There have been no reviews that focus exclusively on UK- based literature and there are no reviews of children or staff's opinions, thoughts and perspectives on what works.

To inform the work on this research project we will plan to conduct a review focussing on published reports and papers focused on UK services and practices and provide a summary of the findings. We also plan to conduct a review of the qualitative findings (i.e. children, staff, families' opinions thoughts and perspectives on what works). Work on these detailed reviews will commence in September and will be summarised in the final report.

Table 1: Selected reviews on Prevention and Diversion

Author	Date	Type of review	Country	Review focus	Summary of findings
EvansChase & Zhong	2014	Quantitative	US	Juvenile justice intervention studies conducted in the United States, utilizing a control group, reporting quantitative outcomes from 1996 to 2009	Of the 141 studies, 120 failed quality review, mostly due to fidelity issues. Of the 21 articles that passed, 76% used a therapeutic approach (vs. behavioural control) to behavioural change, with the treatment group outperforming the control group in 88% of the therapeutic intervention studies.
Evans Cuellar et al.	2006	Narrative	US	Examines policy issues around youth mental health diversion programs and evaluates the effect of a mental health diversion program for youth that was implemented in Texas.	Mental health diversion can be used effectively to delay or prevent youth recidivism.
Farrington et al.	2016	Review of systematic reviews	various	Identify systematic reviews of the effects of developmental prevention programs - defined as communitybased programs designed to prevent antisocial behaviour, targeted on children and adolescents, and aiming to change individual, family, or school risk factors. Only evaluations that reported effects on the outcomes of delinquency, offending, violence, aggression, or bullying were included.	50 systematic reviews were assessed: five general reviews, 11 reviews of individually focused interventions, nine reviews of family-based programs, and 25 reviews of school-based programs. It was possible to calculate effect sizes from 33 reviews. Every summary odds ratio effect size was greater than 1, indicating that all types of programs were effective.

Greenwood	2018	Narrative	US	Discusses effectiveness of prevention and intervention programmes for Juvenile Offenders	The most successful community programs emphasize family interactions and provide skills to the adults who supervise and train the child. Progress in implementing effective programs is slow. Although more than ten years of solid evidence is now available on evidence-based programs, only about 5 percent of youth who should be eligible participate in these programs.
Hamilton et al.	2007	Review of programmes	US	Examines variations in outcome for ten program sites of the New York State MH/JJ Diversion Project. Program and youth predictors were evaluated on two outcomes: out-of-community placement and recidivism.	Program variations were found to have a significant impact on youth outcomes. Specifically, sites providing direct (or ''in house'') care had significantly reduced rates of placement. Age, prior placements, significant mental health and substance abuse problems, and use of wraparound funds also were found to be significant predictors of out-of community placement.
Matjasko et al.	2012	Review of systematic reviews and metaanalyses	various	Reviews the meta-analyses and systematic reviews published prior to 2009 that synthesize evaluations of youth violence prevention programs, coded on measures of the social ecology, prevention approach, program type, and study design.	A majority of the meta-analyses and systematic reviews were found to demonstrate moderate program effects. Meta-analyses yielded marginally smaller effect sizes compared to systematic reviews, and those that included programs targeting family factors showed marginally larger effects than those that did not. In addition, there are a wide range of individual/family, program, and study moderators of program effect sizes.

Schwalbe et al.	2012	Meta-analysis	various	A meta-analysis of experimental studies testing juvenile diversion programs and to examine the moderating effect of program type and implementation quality.	Recidivism was the most common outcome reported across all studies. Overall, the effect of diversion programs on recidivism was non-significant. Of the five program types identified, including case management, individual treatment, family treatment, youth court, and restorative justice, only family treatment led to a statistically significant reduction in recidivism. Restorative justice studies that were implemented with active involvement of researchers led to statistically significant reductions in recidivism. Other outcomes, including frequency of offending, truancy, and psychosocial problems were reported infrequently and were not subjected to meta-analysis.
de Vries et al.	2014	Quantitative	various	Combines findings of previous studies by examining the effectiveness of programs in preventing persistent juvenile delinquency and by studying which particular program, sample, and study characteristics contribute to the effects. Only (quasi) experimental studies and studies that focused on adolescents at risk for (persistent) delinquent behaviour were included.	The overall effect size was significant and small in magnitude. Behavioural-oriented programs, focusing on parenting skills training, behavioural modelling, or behavioural contracting yielded the largest effects. Multimodal programs and programs carried out in the family context proved to be more beneficial than individual and group-based programs. Less intensive programs yielded larger effects.

Wilson & Hoge	2013	Quantitative	various	Examine whether diversion reduces recidivism at a greater rate than traditional justice system processing and to explore aspects of diversion	Forty-five diversion evaluation studies reporting on 73 programs were included in the meta-analysis. The results indicated that diversion is more effective in reducing recidivism than conventional judicial interventions. Moderator analysis revealed that both study- and
				programs associated with greater reductions in recidivism.	program-level variables influenced program effectiveness. Of particular note was the relationship between program-level variables (e.g., referral level) and the risk level targeted by programs (e.g., low or medium/high).
Wilson et al.	2018	Quantitative	various	Examines the effects police-initiated diversion programs on delinquent behaviour, compared to traditional system processing.	The general pattern of evidence is positive, suggesting that police-led diversion reduces the future delinquent behaviour of low-risk youth relative to traditional processing. Assuming a 50 percent reoffending rate for the traditional processing condition, the results suggest a reoffending rate of roughly 44 percent for the diverted youth.
Wong et al.	2016	Quantitative	various	Meta-analysis of the effectiveness of restorative justice programs on juvenile recidivism	Programs were found to be overall effective at reducing recidivism. Subgroup analyses indicate strong evidence that study and treatment characteristics play a role in evaluation results, such as strength of research design and racial/ethnic mix of program participants. Overall quality of the literature is relatively weak, with the large majority of studies derived from non-peer-reviewed sources and a lack of detail presented on treatment characteristics.

3. Methodology

This section describes the methodological approach used, the work of the steering group, and the access and engagement with the core group of children co creating the evaluation.

3.1 Approach

The methodological approach that will be used throughout this research comprises of three components:

a. A participatory, co creative approach to user engagement, planning, data collection and analysis, that seeks to engage the children in the aim, objectives and process of investigation and makes full use of their knowledge and their perspectives. We have also drawn on approaches of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al, 2008) and Participatory Action (Freire, 1973) to facilitate positive engagement between the children and the research team. The research team have a strong track record and expertise in these particular approaches and both are appropriate to the current research project. This methodology is in complete accord with the values of and practice of Lancashire's CYJS Child First approach.

b. The conceptual framework used in this research project draws from Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) which focuses on understanding how **mechanisms** operate in **contexts** to produce **outcomes**. This approach is particularly suited to this project because we want to explore surface understandings in depth, to develop greater appreciation of the experiences of children in the different prevention services. The research process will continue through analysis into actionplanning to enable focused recommendations for achievable strategies for improvement in the outcomes for preventing children from becoming involved in offending behaviour

c. A co-produced risk reduction/ outcome measurement tool quantitative data capture questionnaire (using co-production methodology successfully trialled with high risk children in care, Larkins et al, 2015) will be developed for this research project. The measurement tool will use themes from engagement activities with a core group of children early on to develop measures, ultilising and/or adapting existing standardised measures where appropriate and relevant. This will be administered either through families, children, or workers depending on advice from the core and steering groups.

3.2 Steering Group

A steering group has been established and meets on a weekly basis to oversee the governance and to manage the recruitment and engagement of children as co participants in the project. The group consists of Lancashire CYJS managers and practitioners and the research team.

3.3 Access and Engagement - Core group work

A core group of children have been engaged in the initial stages of this study to ensure that children play a meaningful and active role throughout the design, direction, content and momentum of the co-participatory research.

Although intended to be conducted face to face, the first part of this research with children has taken place online due to COVID-19 restrictions.   It is envisaged that with COVID-19 restrictions now lifting, in person, face to face, research will commence for future phases of the research following this initial interim report in September 2021. Adhering with COVID19 restrictions and in line with ta strategy developed with the Steering Group, we have worked online with an initial core group of four children on an individual basis for 3 to 4 sessions each.

Rather than working with the children in a discrete group sessions, it was decided to have one to one discussion as prior to this project they did not know each other and bringing them together could have been detrimental to their own safety, compromise confidentiality and be in breach of the then government rules on covid. CYJS diversion service managers worked with practitioners to identify children who had been, or were still in contact with the diversion service.

Each online one-to-one session with the researchers took place via Microsoft Teams in the presence of a CYJS diversion practitioner. The practitioner's role was to facilitate an introduction between the researcher and the child, to be supportive by explaining anything the child did not understand. In most cases this practitioner was the child's regular social work contact with the service.   Whilst, it is acknowledged that there was a potential conflict of interest with the presence of the CYJS practitioner, these were not evaluation interviews – they were co-research sessions. The children's responses indicate no evident detrimental effect on the child's confidence, or openness, in their answers to the questions and feedback from children about the online process was positive. Yet, working with the children online in a virtual space, may have caused challenges in building a lasting rapport and developing team work between the research team and the children. In other words, whilst the children seemed comfortable to talk online, the ability to develop and *build* on a co-productive working relationship with the children was somewhat hindered by the virtual nature of the relationships.

The initial core group sessions introduced the purpose of the research and the importance of the research team ensuring the children felt that they were at the centre and were co– creators of the research design and analysis and of value throughout the whole process. The initial sessions were guided by the following questions/themes to try to establish a picture of the child's understanding of their life developed in previous research (Larkins et al, 2014).

- What it is like for children and young people where you live?

- What would it look like if things were going well and the future looked brighter?
- What gets in the way of things going well for some young people – what are those clouds getting in the way?
- How do you think we can measure how well CYJS workers and other professionals are helping?

The questions were designed to help children to articulate their understanding of their lives and perspectives regarding how they were referred to the diversion services and their subsequent experiences of their contact with this service. From this understanding they were encouraged to generate their own themes to look into these issues for further and deeper investigation. Each session reviewed findings from the previous week in an attempt to enable them to develop deeper insights or opposing perspectives.

This process of reflection and review was, for some, facilitated by a card game with the children which enabled them to identify and articulate the issues in their lives that brought them to the CYJ Diversion services and that are most important to them. This methodology contributes to enabling the children to consider these issues and questions regarding their own experiences and the circumstances in their families and their communities, at their own pace and enables them to provide direction and ownership of the task. The methodology has been successfully utilised with children attending (the then) Lancashire Youth Offending Service to enable participatory action research with them (see Larkins and Wainwright, 2014) and the cards game used the themes that emerged from this previous research.

The core group of children were identified and purposively sampled to all be current (or past users) of Lancashire CY Diversion service. All the children that contributed to these sessions, were given a £10 gift voucher as an acknowledgement of their central contribution to the research process. However, as the four children in the core group will in due course have at least five or six contacts with the research team, it was agreed with them that they would receive another gift voucher at the end of the project to acknowledge their double contribution in co-production of the research. The group consisted of three boys and one girl, of white British heritage and all were between 14 to 16 years old.

The themes developed in the sessions with children in the core group were used to inform the interviews and co-produce the measurement tool.

4. Results

This section presents the themes that have emerged from the core group of children and how they have informed the co- creation of the questionnaire.

4.1 Themes from Core Group

The themes identified by the core group of children echoed those raised by young people in previous research (Larkins and Wainwright, 2014) with a strong emphasis on the relationships they have with their CYJ workers, which would help them to:

- cope with family and relationship issues;
- manage their friendships and influence of peers,
- help them to deal with their emotions and to make better decisions;
- guide them towards opportunities in education and employment, as well as leisure activities.

Interviews explored four core areas of the children's lives:

- The problems for the children as individuals – what were the reasons for engagement with the CYJS?
- Additional barriers for children – what else do they think contributes to children becoming involved with the CYJS?
- How can CYJS workers (and others) help?
- Where are they trying to get to – what are their goals?

Their responses are summarised in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Core group themes

The Problems	
	• Family issues – illness, substance abuse, relationships • Issues with friends – being led into trouble/getting into fights • Making poor decisions/reacting inappropriately

Additional barriers
 	
	• Lockdown limitations:
	  o stuck at home unable to escape conflict; o not allowed to see friends; o unable to do normal activities;
	  o problems with online communication creating issues with friends.
	
	• Social media:
	  o creating vulnerability (bullying, location trackers);

	o poor communication leading to misunderstandings;
	   o pressure to do things (e.g. image-sharing) negative comments ('*It's hard to block them when you think that what they are saying is true*').
	
	• Peer (and non-peer) pressure (on and offline) o pressure by peers to take alcohol and drugs o '*Children change who they are to be what they think other people want them to be*'
	   o influence of older people, getting children to take drugs, carry weapons, be involved in crime.
	
	• *Social and economic problems:*
	   o knife crime and gangs; o alcohol and drug cultures; o lack of positive activities; o lack of money and opportunity.
	
	• Some children are not ready to get help

What helps?	Workers who: • Listen • Are respectful and trustworthy • Are empathic, understanding how we feel without us having to tell them Who help children to: • Learn how to deal with difficult feelings • Manage their friendships, making good choices in who to hang around with • Understand the consequences of offending behaviour (what is prison really like?) • Build better relationships at home They do this by: • Shared activity • Group work/peer to peer involvement • Building relationships with families and being a mediator • working out what help you need and giving it to you, being aware that different children need different things But this will only work if: • Children are willing to get help. Workers need to make sure they have plenty of time to work with children who are ready to engage with help. The workers don't have loads of time.
Our goals	Changes to self/behaviour: • *'To learn from my mistakes'*/knowing how to avoid trouble; • No *'drama and kick-offs'* at home; • Pride in yourself; • Knowing where you want to go: *'You can't control everything that happens in life, but you should have a plan for what you can control'*; • Not being known to the police. Opportunities: • Access to relevant education and training; • Longer term: employment opportunities; • Travel – *'there's an excitement to doing stuff that's unplanned'*.

4.2 Co-Development of the questionnaire

Findings from the core group interviews were combined with themes arising from previous work with children (Larkins and Wainwright 2014) and mapped onto existing standardised measures with the aim to have meaningful and relevant measures co-produced with children. Table 3 displays the themes from previous work and arising from the interviews with core group children and measures that the themes map onto. This was used to create a draft questionnaire focusing on measures that were important to children. The draft questionnaire was shared with the core group children and with CYJS workers for feedback and adaptations were made. The questionnaire was also reduced to ensure that it was at a reasonable length for completion.

Table 3: Development of the Risk Reduction Questionnaire for Adolescents

Theme from Larkins & Wainwright 2014	Description	Links to standardised measures or specific questions to be developed*			Themes from meetings with young people - YOT work		
		In relation to the child themselves	In relation to the YOT worker	In relation to practical issues/resources	Barriers	What helps	Goals
Respectful, empathic relationships between YOT workers and young people	Positive relationships with YOT workers, built by spending time with young people, engaging in activities with young people and developing trust through clarity about roles and confidentiality.	Social support (Child & Adolescent social support scale, CASSS; Malecki & Demaray, 2002), interpersonal trust (Rotenberg et al., 2005)	Psychological Availability and Reliance on Adult (PARA) questionnaire (Schuengel & Zegers, 2003), youth adult partnership measure (Zeldin et al, 2014), the CASSS and interpersonal trust measure may also be useful here	Specific questions about activities engaged in together; time spent; and, responsiveness/availability		Being listened to Trusting relationships Empathic practitioners	Children who are ready to engage with help have enough worker time. Different young people need different things

Engaging with family	Quality of YOT workers relationships with young people's family, positive relationships can be built with families where workers		Specific questions about quality of relationship of YOT with YP's family		Difficult family relationships Parental	Building relationships with families and being a mediator	
	help families to manage emotions, stress and boundaries, where workers communicate openly, are friendly and relaxed. In some cases a mediation approach may be useful. It is also essential that young people should be able to influence how (and whether) these relationships with wider family members are built.				alcohol abuse		

Structure, Routine & Hobbies	Support from YOT to establish structure and routine to provide a focus and purpose to their daily lives, helping them establish a positive pattern of behaviour on a daily basis, e.g. Fixed appointments, activities and offence focused programmes or help with developing hobbies	Guide for creating self-efficacy scales (Bandura, 2006), questions from the youth empowerment scale may be useful here (Walker et al, 2010)	Specific questions about YOT support with structure and routine	Specific questions about whether have hobbies/links to local clubs and leisure resources and presence of these resources in their communities	Lack of positive activities Lockdown limitations		
Practical Help	Practical help with housing and money - YOT workers could provide assistance by having a good knowledge and network of available housing in the area for young people who have offended.	Guide for creating self-efficacy scales (Bandura, 2006) and financial selfefficacy (Lown, 2011)	Specfic questions about YOT knowledge about local resources for housing and finances and YOT support for the YP with finances/housing	Specific questions about whether practical help given/any practical needs left unaddressed	Lack of money and opportunity		

Health and Emotional Wellbeing	Reducing drug and alcohol misuse and support with therapy and/or counselling or informal support through praise and motivation from YOT worker	Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS),	Specific questions about YOT praise and motivation	Self-reporting on drug and alcohol misuse and receiving help with drug and alcohol use (Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use amongst Young People in England surveys, SDD)	Drink and drugsKnife crime and gangs		
Education, Training and Work	participation in education and training, Engagement in learning could be encouraged by focussing on young people's aspirations	guide for creating self-efficacy scales (Bandura, 2006) and Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale– Short	specific questions about YOT worker support on Education etc	Participation in education/training, selfreporting about school/college attendance.			Education and training Employment Travel
	and hopes for a better future.	Form (CDSES-SF; Gaudron, 2011),		AND availability of relevant learning and work opportunities			

Role models	mentoring or group meetings with exoffenders, seen as a way of increasing motivation or hope, and ending isolation, but needed to be selfdirected not forced activities	social support (Child & Adolescent social support scale, CASSS; Malecki & Demaray, 2002)		self-reporting on participation in mentoring programmes. Presence/absence of a role model		Understanding of consequence (what prison is really like)	
					Social media Peer pressure (on and offline)	Shared activity Group work/peer to peer involvement Advice on managing friendships, making good choices in who to hang around with	

Prison, Restorative Justice and Community Work	Meeting their victim had made them think about the impact of their offending behaviour AND made them feel they can contribute to community	Feeling possible to contribute to community benefit (to develop), e.g. Community Service Self-efficacy scale (CSES, Reeb et al, 2010)		Participation in restorative justice			Not being known to the police
Participatory Strengths-Based Approaches	Being asked what help you need and being given that help would reduce re-offending. Some described being enabled to take a lead in identifying their problems and solutions.	Guide for creating self-efficacy scales (Bandura, 2006)	Specific questions relating to being supported to identify their own problems and solutions by YOT	Specific questions on whether opportunities to feed into design of service have been offered.	Not being ready to get help	Willingness to get help working out what help you need and giving it to you	Pride in yourself
Life satisfaction		Student Life satisfaction scale (Huebner, 1991)					

*where standardised measures are mentioned these will be used as a stimulus for the discussion with YP and adapted, adopted or discarded by the YP in the development of the questionnaire

As shown in Table 3, children discussed the importance of having pride in themselves and how peer influence were important factors for not getting in trouble again, so questions relating to these have been included to ensure measurement of change in these factors can be examined in the evaluation using the questionnaire.

Also questions for factors that are known influencers of effectiveness of intervention programmes such as economic and social factors (e.g. family having enough money for food and bills and having support they need for problems they are dealing with) have been included. Including such factors will enable these to be controlled in the analysis of the questionnaire data so that effectiveness in promoting change can be demonstrated where there are and are not economic and social challenges experienced at family or community levels. This is important because often intervention programs do not show effectiveness when these factors are not controlled for.

The final questionnaire to be used for the evaluation includes the following measures:

- Questions about CYJ worker
- Questions relating to aspects important to make change/not getting into trouble again
- Questions relating to getting where you want to be (ability to make decisions, knowledge about ambitions, progress towards ambitions, family resources)
- Youth empowerment in relation to mental health (adapted for this population)
- Generalised self-efficacy
- Peer influence

Further details and references for each section of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

5. Plans for the evaluation rollout

This section outlines the plans for the evaluation going forward with a particular emphasis on the methods that will be used, the timescale and ongoing focus of co-creating the evaluation with the children in the core group and wider cohort.

5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be offered to all children who commence with the service. Those agreeing to take part in the evaluation will complete the questionnaire at 6 weekly intervals. Baseline data will be compared to data at 12 weeks and 18 weeks to examine change in selfefficacy, empowerment relating to goal setting and aspirations, empowerment in gaining

support with mental health and well-being, pride and peer influence and compared across the different services (i.e. prevention, diversion and alternative disposals), where sufficient data. Factors known from the literature and core group work will be controlled in the analyses (i.e. using ANCOVAs) to examine effectiveness with and without those factors, thus, enabling a better picture of effectiveness of the service to be assessed. Data about reoffending will be shared so that this outcome can also be examined and factors influencing this identified by combining with questionnaire data. Specific data about children's reports about their CYJ worker and the programme will be summarised using descriptive statistics (i.e. frequencies) and change over time examined using inferential statistics (i.e. ANOVAs).

Responses to questions about factors influencing getting into trouble in the future will be analysed using thematic analysis and will also be used to develop the questionnaire (i.e. as new themes are identified by children) and interview questions.

5.2 Interviews

The interviews and co-creative work with the children that have taken place constitute the preliminary findings for this report. However, the co-creative work with the children will be ongoing and iterative with the themes from the core group of four children being rolled out and shared through interviews with a wider cohort of at least 20 children who

a) are in contact with the diversion service, or have been in the past,
b) have received an alternative disposal and/ or
c) have been screened out of the system and avoided contact with the CYJS.

Anonymised summaries of data from this cohort of children will be discussed with the children in the core group and this will inform how they co-create the interview themes to be rolled out again to the participants. The process of re visiting the core group with the wider cohort of children's participatory contributions will take place on at least four occasions.

The themes generated by the core group and the wider cohort of at least 20 more children will be used to inform the interviews with the other participants in the study that have some experience and/ or relationships with the children, and these are

a) the children's parent's/guardians,
b) the CYJS practitioners who work with children and
c) those who at some point have been on the receiving end and are named as 'victims' of an offence a child has committed.

It is envisaged that between 5 and 10 participants from each of these cohorts will be interviewed.   Again, anonymised summaries of these participants' perspectives will be discussed with the core group of children and contribute to their ongoing co participation in the research.

The interviews with the wider cohort of children will also use other co -creative methods to encourage them to shape and lead the process. In particular, the research team will make use of mobile methods to encourage the children to walk around the places and spaces that are important to them and to share their understanding and appreciation of their significance in their lives (Roy, 2016). To complement this method, if the children feel creative, the research team will work with them to draw maps to illustrate their world, the challenges, barriers, threats, opportunities and possible golden horizons (Froggett et al, 2015). This will help build a broader understanding of the contexts in which the interventions are taking place.

Table 4: Evaluation project timeline
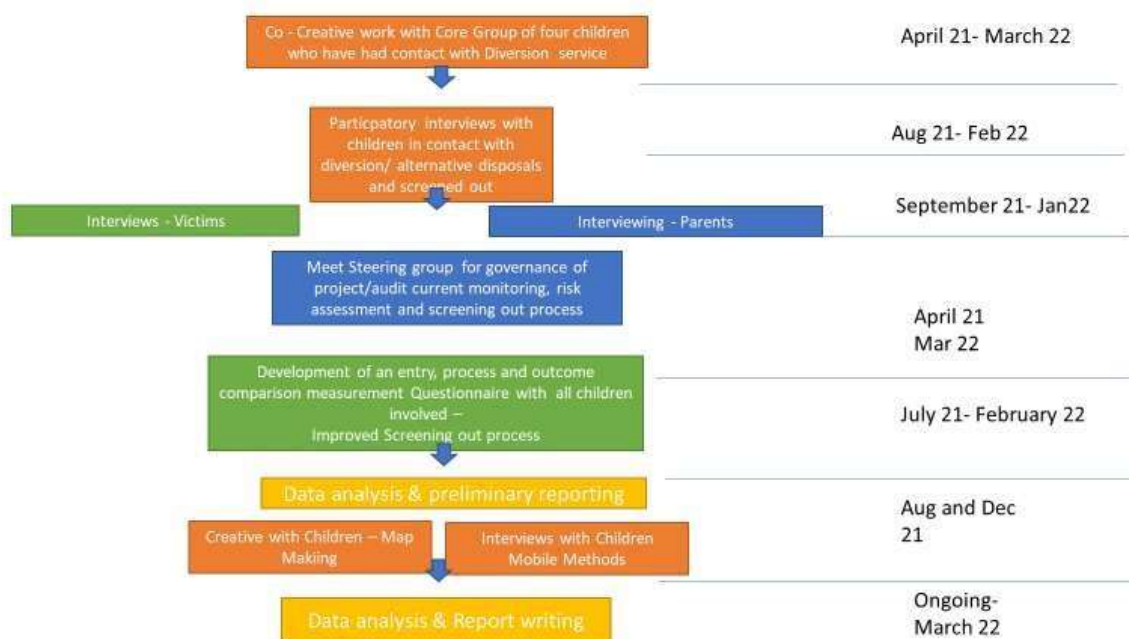
The themes from the core group have also, in part, informed the development of the standardised outcome measurement questionnaire. This will inform the ongoing evaluation of the screening out tool and process and development of a more effective screening model.

5.3 Core group work

In addition to the cocreation of the questionnaire and interview themes already described, the children in the core group will discuss findings from the questionnaire and will be supported to explore further ideas regarding barriers, ways of working with CYJS practitioners and possible opportunities.

Discussions with the core group will encourage the children to look at the wider cohort's themes to analyse and prioritise the most important ones.   These priorities will be used to analyse the full data, and then used as a basis for further discussion with the children about

what are the mechanisms, including the particular interventions, that help them avoid offending, and what contexts in their psycho-social world need to change to provide better outcomes, including possibilities, opportunities and horizons in their lives (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

To enable this fuller analysis to be grounded in an understanding of context, along with the wider cohort of children they will be invited to explore their own communities using mobile methods (Roy, 2016) and be creative in map making if they wish to participate (Froggett et al, 2015).

5.4 Current state of play in the rollout of the evaluation

As of August 2021, recruitment of children for the interviews and questionnaire has commenced and a total of 11 (four in the core group and seven subsequently) children have been interviewed and two questionnaires completed.   The seven children who have contributed to further exploring the themes are of white British heritage, six are boys and one girl ranging from ages 14 to 16 years. Analysis of these interviews is still in process, but initial readings suggest that the themes from the core group are being reiterated, with new themes emerging in relation to sexual relationships, multi-agency working and panel decisions.

6. Discussion – Barriers and Opportunities

The four children in the core group established the direction of the Lancashire CYJ Diversion service evaluation by identifying the themes that were important to them in their lives and the support they found most helpful in enabling them to desist from offending and aspiring to achieve their goals in life. The children were able to articulate their experiences and feelings about every aspect of their lives in what has been arguably the most stressful and difficult time they have experienced as a consequence of the covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Some of the themes, or important ideas, that they identified reflect previous research with children who had attend Lancashire CYJS in the past (Larkins and Wainwright 2014).   This may in part be because the thematic cards that were developed with children on the (Larkins and Wainwright 2014) study, were provided as prompts for some of the children to explore issues and important themes in their lives for this evaluation.

The issues that led them becoming involved in the CYJ Diversion service included difficulties with their relationships with their families, problematic friendships and/ or association with peers that contributed to them getting into trouble, or they found threatening to their own physical, or psycho-social wellbeing.   Likewise, they identified barriers to avoid getting into trouble which included a lack of positive opportunities, knife crime and gangs, not enough money or resources, difficult familial relationships, alcohol and substance misuse for them, their peers and/ or their parents. However, the children in the core group also identified that, for some, not being ready to accept or seek help to desist from anti-social or offending behaviour was identified as an additional barrier to engagement with services and seeing a change in their behaviour.

In our initial analysis, four opportunities and barrier have emerged as significant.

6.1 Co–Creation

The children have quickly understood and engaged in the co–creation and participatory focus of this research and have been keen to articulate their experiences, issues and hopes in relation to what is important to them, and to other children in similar situations. When exploring their hopes and ambitions for the future children were able to identify creative, educational and past times/ hobbies. Some of them aspired to make lots of money and have grand holidays, others of them demonstrated a desire to be happy in their lives, and to be safe with their families, in their local environment and communities and to be able to enjoy the company of their peers and friends without being threatened by and/or obliged to join the company of young people who may get them into trouble.

When discussing the idea and concept of co-creation and participatory research the children, albeit through individual sessions, were keen to engage and begin to shape the research project going forward.

6.2 Authentic Enabling

The authenticity of relationships that the CYJS practitioners had established with children in the core group were cited by them as critical to reasons for them engaging effectively with the CYJ Diversion service. The children placed a significant amount of trust in the CJYS practitioners that they had been working with, or were in contact with regularly, as a consequence of being referred to the diversion service, and they felt this was reciprocated. They valued workers who they felt "*connected*" to and who they got to know as people: "*when you know about a person you can just be yourself around them".* The trust they had in their workers, and their ability to work effectively with them was also built on respect and being listened to: "if you feel like you're being respected you're gonna respect them back, *and if you feel like you're being listened, you're gonna open up with them*".

But the children went further, they did not just want their workers to listen to them, they wanted them to understand them, sometimes without them having to articulate their feelings. For some, this related to recognising when they needed to stop talking about something, or were not ready to talk about it, for others it was about recognising their feelings: "*If they're sad, but they didn't really wanna tell anyone, like, they want someone to notice it really*". The closeness of the working relationship with the CYJS workers also provided an emotional space for some of the children to have the confidence to articulate their issues in the past, concerns in the present and aspirations for the future.

It is apparent that irrespective of the focus or type of intervention, diversion, or other disposals, an authentic, empathic and consistent working relationship was central to enabling the children to explore ways to develop resilience against the problems they experienced, and strategies to overcome (some of) the barriers that they experienced. The

initial findings reported here indicate that children value LCYS practitioners who provide a service for them based on empathy, reaching out to children who are hesitant to engage, and underpinned by a commitment to co-working with children to enable them to gain increasing access to opportunities and better futures.

6.3 Social Media

Children highlighted social media as having a profound effect on their childhood, as many studies have suggested (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020; Orben, 2020) and as providing both opportunities to broaden their horizon's regarding education and to make social connections. Yet, paradoxically, it was named by some of the children in the core group as an ongoing threat regarding being pulled into social situations by their peers, or their associates, that were either psychologically/ emotionally and/ or physically threatening. This involved being drawn into situations with older children and young adults that could potentially lead to the threat of violence. Social media affected the everyday milieu of some of the children's experiences that often led to them being obliged to engage in activities that were counter-productive and could lead to offending behaviour. All the children who talked about social media described it not only as a device to communicate, but also a means of comparing themselves with others, in their behaviour and appearance in a way that was undermining and debilitating.

6.4 Covid 19 and Lockdown

The impact of Covid was discussed by children as having a profoundly detrimental effect. In particular, the Covid pandemic has had an all-encompassing debilitating effect on the children's every day psycho-social experience in their family (or institutional care) life, their (in)ability to socialise with their peers, the stop-start impact on their education, their mental and physical health and on limiting their horizons to participate in the activities or hobbies they enjoyed and found life enhancing. Children articulated a world where their opportunities to embrace everyday challenges and freedoms had become restricted. Covid and lockdown temporarily constrained their worlds, exacerbated their difficult familial relationships, and made friendships more challenging to manage, leading them to face issues they may not have had to deal with otherwise: "*maybe if lockdown hadn't been there and we would have been able to still see each other and nothing would have been said on text or anything*". They longed for the ending of restrictions: *"I want to be free again"* and felt that the gradual ending of lockdown may begin to open up their horizons in the future.

7. Conclusion and Next Steps

In sum, the children that have constituted the core group have co- designed and directed the research with the key themes to share with all the other participants, children, parents/carers, practitioners and victims. The have set out the challenges they face when engaging with Lancashire's CYJ Diversion service, the barriers and problems they have experienced over the last eighteen months, what helps them to avoid or desist from getting into trouble and their hopes and aspirations for their short and long term future. The children have depicted a world where family, friend and peer relationships and opportunities for learning, employment and travel are pivotal to their sense of worth and (un) happiness. They describe how lockdown had affected them. They have reflected on whether and when their relationships with their CYJS workers enable them to enjoy their childhood, and build on their strengths. The children in the core group and other children interviewed have begun the initial conversation that can be shared and co-created with other children who have either been in contact or screened out with the CYJS service. This rolling process of cocreated evaluation will help us build a picture of through which mechanisms and in what contexts interventions may support children to be diverted from offending behaviours.

To develop this work further, the preliminary research findings are helping to shape the direction and focus of the participatory work going forward. A baseline of themes have been established by the ten children who have participated and this has informed the standardised outcome measurement questionnaire that all the children in the research project will be asked to complete. This will include an evaluation and development of Lancashire's SYJS screening out tool. A thorough literature review of children and youth justice diversion services including a focus on qualitative studies will be undertaken in the next few months. Parents/Guardians, those who are victims of children's offending behaviour and practitioners will engage in the co-participatory discussion regarding the themes that are that being shaped by children in the core group. Further co-creative work will take place with children in the core group and the wider population of children participating in the research, with those that are interested co designing maps of their world and engaging in walking tours of the places in the community that have resonance with them. As the findings emerge, themes develop and the children's shaping of good practice becomes apparent there will be another interim report provided at the end of December and a final one in March.

References

Case, S. and Haines, K. (2015) *Positive Youth Justice.* Policy Press. Bristol

Cooperrider D. L., Whitney D., Stavros J. M., (2008) *The Appreciative Inquiry handbook: For leaders of change.* Berrett-Koehler. San Fransisco

Evans-Chase, M. and Zhou, H., 2014. A systematic review of the juvenile justice intervention literature: What it can (and cannot) tell us about what works with delinquent youth. *Crime & Delinquency*, *60*(3), pp.451-470.

Evans Cuellar, A., McReynolds, L.S. and Wasserman, G.A., 2006. A cure for crime: Can mental health treatment diversion reduce crime among youth?. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management: The Journal of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management*, *25*(1), pp.197-214.

Farrington, D.P., Gaffney, H., Lösel, F. and Ttofi, M.M., 2017. Systematic reviews of the effectiveness of developmental prevention programs in reducing delinquency, aggression, and bullying. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *33*, pp.91-106.

Freire, P., (1973) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Seabury Press, New York.

Froggett L., Wainwright J., Manley J., and Roy A., (2015) Creative Social Enterprise with young people for mental health and well-being. Psycho-Social Research Unit. Preston.

Greenwood, P., 2008. Prevention and intervention programs for juvenile offenders. *The future of Children*, pp.185-210.

Hamilton, Z.K., Sullivan, C.J., Veysey, B.M. and Grillo, M., 2007. Diverting multi-problem youth from juvenile justice: Investigating the importance of community influence on placement and recidivism. *Behavioral sciences & the law*, *25*(1), pp.137-158.

Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: the influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *25*(1), 79-93.

Larkins C., and Wainwright J., (2014*) 'just putting me on the right track.' Young people's perspectives on what helps them stop offending*. UCLan. Preston. Lancs.

Larkins, C., Bracewell, K., Charfe,L., Farrelly,N., Lloyd, J. and Moxon, D. (2015) *Evaluation of New Hub: A Leaving Care Service Final Report* UCLan. Preston. Lancs.

Larkins, C. and Wainwright, J. (2020) 'If rich people gave more money to poor people': Children's perspectives on reducing offending and implications for social citizenship. *Child and Youth Services Review.* 110(March)

Larkins, C ., Satchwell, C., , Davidge, G. , Carter, B., and Crook, D., (2020) *Working back to the future: strengthening radical social work with children and young people and their perspectives on resilience, capabilities and overcoming adversity. Critical and Radical Social Work .* Online First.

Matjasko, J.L., Vivolo-Kantor, A.M., Massetti, G.M., Holland, K.M., Holt, M.K. and Cruz, J.D., 2012. A systematic meta-review of evaluations of youth violence prevention programs: Common and divergent findings from 25 years of meta-analyses and systematic reviews. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *17*(6), pp.540-552.

Orben, A. Teenagers, screens and social media: a narrative review of reviews and key studies. *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol* **55,** 407–414 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-019-01825-4

Pawson R., and Tilley N., (1997) Realistic Evaluation. Sage. London

Roy A. (2016) Learning on the move: exploring work with vulnerable young men through the

lens of movement. *Applied Mobilities.* 1 (2) 207-218.

Schwalbe, C.S., Gearing, R.E., MacKenzie, M.J., Brewer, K.B. and Ibrahim, R., 2012. A metaanalysis of experimental studies of diversion programs for juvenile offenders. *Clinical psychology review*, *32*(1), pp.26-33.

de Vries, S.L., Hoeve, M., Assink, M., Stams, G.J.J. and Asscher, J.J., 2015. Practitioner review: effective ingredients of prevention programs for youth at risk of persistent juvenile delinquency–recommendations for clinical practice. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *56*(2), pp.108-121.

Wilson, H.A. and Hoge, R.D., 2013. The effect of youth diversion programs on recidivism: A meta-analytic review. *Criminal justice and behavior*, *40*(5), pp.497-518.

Wilson, D.B., Brennan, I. and Olaghere, A., 2018. Police-initiated diversion for youth to prevent future delinquent behavior: a systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *14*(1), pp.1-88.

Wong, J.S., Bouchard, J., Gravel, J., Bouchard, M. and Morselli, C., 2016. Can at-risk youth be diverted from crime? A meta-analysis of restorative diversion programs. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *43*(10), pp.1310-1329.

YJB (2019) Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan 2019-2021. Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802702/YJB_Strategic_Plan_2019_to_2022.pdf

YJB (2021) *Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan 2021-2024.* Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

Appendix 1: YOT questionnaire

Measures used in the questionnaire with references

Question 1: About you

Series of demographic questions: age, gender, ethnicity, special needs/disablities

Question 2: About the place where you live
Series of context based questions: opportunities for education/training, future work and travel and success/barriers to accessing these (Larkins et al 2020)

Question 3: How is your CYJ worker helping?
Created for the purposes of this questionnaire. Questions created relating to having a good relationship with CYJ worker, feeling listened to and understood, being able to trust CYJ

worker, getting praise and motivation from CYJ worker, being supported to find the answers to problems, CYJ worker having a good knowledge of things in the area, CYJ workers building positive relationships with child's family.

Question 4: Where do you stand?

Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale - Kilpatrick, F. P., & Cantril, H. (1960). Self-anchoring scaling: A measure of individuals' unique reality worlds. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, *16*(2), 158.

Questions using this scale relating to confidence, life satisfaction, satisfaction with hobbies and activities, having people that care, having people that understand, having friends that encourage to behave in a positive way, having someone to depend on, education or work fitting with interests, pride, likelihood of getting into trouble in the future.

Open ended questions with free text responses:
- What do you think leads you to get into trouble?
- What do you think would help you not get into trouble again?

Question 5. Do you feel like you can manage your emotions and mental health?

Youth Empowerment – MH Scale - Walker, J. S., Thorne, E. K., Powers, L. E., & Gaonkar, R. (2010). Development of a scale to measure the empowerment of youth consumers of mental health services. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *18*(1), 51-59. Question wording adapted to suit this population based on discussion with CJY workers, children in the core group and speech and language therapist.

Question 6. Do you feel like you're getting to where you want to be?

Created for the purposes of this questionnaire. Questions relating to knowledge about future life plans, progression towards life plans, being able to make decisions about life, getting help from others to not get into trouble in the future, family having enough money for food and bills and getting support they need for problems they are dealing with.

Question 7. How to you feel about your ability to get to where you want to be?

General self-efficacy scale - Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs (pp. 35-37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON.

Single item created for the questionnaire about confidence to make changes in life.

Question 8: How do you feel about your friends?

McConchie, J., Hite, B. J., Blackard, M. B., & Cheung, R. C. M. (2019). With a little help from my friends: Development and validation of the positive peer influence inventory. *Applied Developmental Science*, 1-20.