

Diversion, Prevention and Youth Justice: a model of integrated decision making

An evaluation of the Suffolk Youth Offending Service
Diversion Programme

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Table 1: Glossary of Terms

Community Resolution	CR	An informal out-of-court disposal used by the police.
Youth Caution	YC	A statutory out-of-court disposal that can be used as an alternative to prosecution for young offenders.
Youth Conditional Caution	YCC	A statutory out-of-court disposal that can be used as an alternative to prosecution for young offenders with conditions attached, where non-compliance could result in prosecution.
Diversion Crime		Diversion Crime referrals aim to divert children and young people away from statutory out of court processes.
Diversion Non-crime		Diversion Non-crime referrals relate to children/young people who may be at risk of offending, below the age of criminal responsibility (10 years old) or were not in the public interest to prosecute.
Suffolk Youth Offending Service	SYOS	The joint commissioner of this evaluation.
Criminal Justice System	CJS	The wide definition of the system of justice in England and Wales, with responsibility for the administration of justice for adult and youth offenders.
Youth Justice System	YJS	The system of justice in England and Wales responsible for the administration of youth justice. It includes the police, youth offending teams and the courts.
First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System	FTEs	National Performance Indicator measured against an annually agreed local target. A young person receiving a formal statutory disposal or outcome for the first time counts as a 'First Time Entrant to the Youth Justice System'.
Restorative Justice	RJ	A means of communication between those affected by a crime and those responsible for a crime to identify ways to repair harm and move forward.
Out of Court Disposal	OoCD	Comprised of statutory and non-statutory disposals. The non-statutory disposal is a community resolution. The statutory disposals are a Youth Caution and a Youth Conditional Caution.
No Further Action	NFA	When the police decide not to charge someone with an offence, usually on the grounds of limited evidence or not being within the public interest.
Suffolk Sexually Appropriate Behaviour Service/ Harmful Sexual Behaviour	SSABS/HSB	SSABS (delivered by SYOS) provides specialist assessment, intervention and advice to other professionals on the topic of problematic or harmful sexual behaviour.
Police Electronic Notification to YOS	PENY	A national form that provides the YOS with information to make an assessment of the young person's case.
AssetPlus		A detailed assessment tool developed by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), and used with Level 2 Diversion Programme cases and statutory disposals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on quantitative and qualitative data gathered as part of an evaluation of the Diversion Programme, undertaken by the University of Suffolk between January and October 2017. The evaluation demonstrates considerable support toward the Diversion Programme and its aims, the dedication of the SYOS practitioners in delivering effective interventions for young people, and the integrated decision-making process across teams.

- ◆ Narratives across all stakeholders portray support for the Diversion Programme and its aims, including YOS practitioners, police officers, early help teams, young people and their parents/carers
- ◆ Young people and parents reported gratitude for the support and personalised approach to intervention provided by SYOS
- ◆ Findings indicate YOS practitioners are highly positive about management's understanding of the Diversion Programme and the efficacy of joint decision making
- ◆ The nature and the structure of the Diversion Programme is designed to be appropriate to level of need and risk of young people, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach
- ◆ A total of 819 referrals were made to SYOS for out-of-court disposals (OoCD) and prevention from October 2016 to September 2017, a 12.7% increase in overall referrals since the previous year
- ◆ The number of referrals received was evenly distributed across regions, suggesting a consistent approach to implementation across the county
- ◆ A total of 468 (56%) OoCD and preventative referrals received non-statutory diversion (crime or non-crime) disposal outcomes. Of these, only 12% went on to offend, thus potentially reducing the number of FTE's into the YJS
- ◆ The young people on the Diversion Programme who completed the intervention or are on an ongoing intervention were less likely to offend after referral than those who declined intervention or received a No Further Action
- ◆ The Centre for Justice Innovation undertook a cost avoidance analysis and estimated that the programme's work with Crime Diversion and Community Resolution, referred young people over the period 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017 that led to approximately £146,741 in costs avoided by the police
- ◆ Based on calculations for approximately 242 young people who avoided criminal disposals and their associated costs the Centre for Justice Innovation estimated that by engaging these young people, the programme avoided approximately £158,415 in justice system processing costs

- ◆ Taking into account the costs of running the programme, the Centre for Justice Innovation estimated it produced a net benefit of around £72,915 over the stated period
- ◆ More than half of police officers who responded to the survey suggested that they felt that SYOS could keep them better updated with the decision-making and outcomes relating to the young offenders. This was also reflected across interviews.

Overall, the evaluation demonstrates that the county-wide Diversion Programme in Suffolk has had a positive impact on many young people and their families' lives, as well as receiving universal support from all stakeholders in its aims to reduce the criminalisation of young people.

Table 2: Summary of main qualitative findings

Young people	Parents/Carers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Very positive about the Diversion Programme. ◆ Understood the voluntary nature of the programme. ◆ Felt listened to and supported. ◆ Liked the flexibility of the programme and felt they had choice. ◆ Felt involved in the decision-making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Felt involved in the decision-making process. ◆ Prior to the Diversion Programme no effective help received. ◆ Very positive about the Diversion Programme. ◆ Often commented that the 'YOS practitioner' went out of their way to help. ◆ Felt the programme was centred on their child's needs.
Police	SYOS staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Positive response to Diversion Programme and its aims. ◆ Positive about communication with YOS. ◆ Felt that further awareness raising of the programme may be useful for frontline officers. ◆ Would like to know more about the young person's progress after referral, particularly Safer Neighbourhood Team officers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Very positive about integrated decision-making with seconded police officers. ◆ Positive about the Diversion Programme and its aims. ◆ Concerned about necessity of AssetPlus as an assessment tool for diversion cases. ◆ Felt that increasing demand was not necessarily addressed by increased resources.

Table 3: Summary of recommendations

1. Increased levels of multi-agency communication	Creating a formal and consistent strategy of providing feedback on young people to key stakeholders.
2. Promoting dissemination	Increasing awareness of the Diversion Programme and its criteria across key stakeholders.
3. Revisiting the data: longitudinal collection and clarification	Collection of longitudinal data to inform causal inferences around reoffending and further clarification of NFA referrals.
4. Further consideration of workload monitoring and resource allocation	There would be value in completing further detailed analysis of workload and resource allocation to sustain the resources required to deliver an effective diversion service.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a mixed-methods research evaluation into the county-wide introduction of the Diversion Programme in Suffolk. The Diversion Programme involves an integrated decision-making process between Suffolk youth offending teams and seconded police officers. Its aim is to avoid formal sanctions against minor delinquency amongst 10-17-year olds, diminish the number of first time entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice system (CJS) and reduce reoffending rates across the county. The programme also incorporates a preventative strand for young people aged eight and above who are at risk of future offending. The county-wide Diversion Programme was introduced in September 2016 following the implementation and successful evaluation of a pilot Enhanced Triage (ET) programme undertaken in Lowestoft in 2015.¹ The evaluation undertaken by the University of Suffolk was jointly commissioned by Suffolk Youth Offending Service (SYOS) and Suffolk Constabulary, and was conducted over the first year of the programme from October 2016 to September 2017.

The cyclical nature of entrenchment into the CJS is both a burden to society and to the offender, generating both budgetary constraints and higher risk of recidivism.² Increased criminalisation of young people is also associated with increased risk of victimisation, including the experience of personal assault. Therefore, preventing the criminalisation of young people is of particular importance in order to improve employment and subsequent life prospects.

In order to prevent 'widening the net' and the unnecessary punishment of young offenders,³ early and informal interventions in response to minor delinquency have received considerable interest. Diverting young offenders away from formal sentencing is important in preventing the potential development of lifelong offending behaviour.⁴ However, the diversion of young offenders away from the formal youth justice system by providing non-statutory alternatives is not a new concept. A shift in the 1980's from formal sanction of youth offenders to diversion saw a decline in youth crime rates⁵ initiating the positive movement toward decriminalisation. Introduction of the Youth Crime Action Plan⁶ (which focused on preventing FTEs into the CJS, limiting the number of young people in custody and reducing reoffending) pushed towards utilising preventative measures.

¹ Manning, M. (2015). *'Enhanced Triage' an Integrated Decision Making Model*. iSEED: Ipswich

² Bateman, T. (2015). *The state of youth justice 2015: An overview of trends and developments*, National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ) Briefing

³ Bateman, T. (2015). *The state of youth justice 2015: An overview of trends and developments*, National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ) Briefing

⁴ McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2010). 'Youth Crime and Justice: Key Messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, Vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 179-209. DOI: 10.1177/1748895809360971.

⁵ Muncie, J. (1999). *Youth and Crime: A Critical Introduction*, London: Sage and Soppitt, S., & Irving, A. (2014). "Triage: line or nets? Early intervention and the youth justice system", *Safer Communities*, Vol. 13 Issue: 4, pp.147-160, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SC-08-2014-0013>

⁶ Home Office (2008). *Youth Crime Action Plan*, Accessed via: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/youth-crime-action-plan.pdf> [04/10/17]

One apparent resolution in response to minor crimes included the introduction of non-statutory community resolutions (CRs) to be used flexibly at police discretion, following the 2012 Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act. In addition to CRs, Out-of-Court Disposal (OoCD) options can be used with under 18s that have committed a low-level offence and include: Youth Caution (YC), Youth Conditional Caution (YCC) and a charge (prosecution through youth courts).⁷ However, unlike CRs, the remaining available statutory OoCD give rise to a formal sanction against the young person, resulting in a police record (although it should be noted that in certain circumstances CRs can be reported via an enhanced DBS check).

Nationally, in addition to OoCD, 'triage' arrangements which result in No Further Action on police records and referral to appropriate services, as well as diversionary and liaison schemes were also developed as additional disposal options or accompaniments to OoCD.⁸ Several diversionary and triage models or initiatives exist at both local and national levels⁹ which aim to tackle the reasons for offending itself, including the utilisation of a restorative justice (RJ) approach.

Several models of diversionary schemes or triage currently exist across England and Wales, such as the Swansea Bureau,¹⁰ the Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion Scheme in Liverpool¹¹ and the Durham Model devised by the County Durham Youth Offending Service (CDYOS). An evaluative review of existing triage schemes by the Home Office (2012) suggests that triage was valued highly across all case study areas for its diversionary approach and the implementation of early intervention strategies. The schemes worked particularly well when there is an established relationship between YOS and police, and both services are working toward a shared goal. Furthermore, triage schemes have resulted in cost savings, specifically the CDYOS Durham Model, which has presented significant cost savings for the Youth Offending Service, the police and the CJS.¹²

Similar to the model developed by CDYOS, the Diversion Programme in Suffolk was designed to provide beneficial outcomes for young people, address underlying offending behaviour, as well as aiming to reduce incurred service and CJS costs. Furthermore, the utilisation of joint decision making between SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary is hoped to reflect the evidence from findings of previous research (as outlined above), subsequently contributing toward better outcomes for youth offenders.

⁷ Youth Justice Board (2013). *Youth Out-of-Court Disposals, Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services*. London: YJB

⁸ Bateman, T. (2014). Where has all the youth crime gone? Youth justice in an age of austerity. *Children & Society*, 28(5), 416-424 and Hart, D. (2014). Pre-court arrangements for children who offend, *National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ) Briefing*: London

⁹ Creaney, S., & Smith, R. (2014). Youth justice back at the crossroads, *Safer Communities*, 13(2), 83-87

¹⁰ Haines, K., Case, S., Davies, K., and Charles, A. (2013). The Swansea Bureau: A model of diversion from the youth justice system. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 41(2), 167-187

¹¹ Wood, S., Eckley, L., Stuart, J., Hughes, K., Kelly, D., Harrison, D. and Quigg, Z. (2011). *Evaluation of the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) in Liverpool*. Liverpool: John Moores University

¹² Ministry of Justice. (2012). *Integrated pre-court disposal programme by County Durham Youth Offending Service*. London: MOJ

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BACKGROUND

1.1 The Evolution of the Diversion Programme

The programme itself is similar to the aforementioned triage schemes, and has evolved over time from pilot versions Challenge for Change (C4C) in 2013 and Enhanced Triage in 2015, to the Diversion Programme in 2016 (see *Figure 1*).

C4C was introduced in 2013 as an initial pilot to determine whether the triage model (to take place within the Police Investigation Centre, Martlesham) would potentially be effective. The C4C programme¹³ was evaluated by University Campus Suffolk,¹⁴ the findings indicated a supportive response from young people, parents, police and YOS practitioners. However, new additional procedures, concerns regarding police knowledge of C4C, as well as some operational deficiencies meant an updated triage model was necessary. Building upon this initial pilot, a second pilot of the programme was introduced in 2015 in the north of Suffolk called Enhanced Triage¹⁵. Enhanced Triage sought to address the concerns reflected in the C4C evaluation, but also to address the perceived issues surrounding the overuse of CRs as a disposal option by Suffolk Constabulary.

As the only non-statutory disposal option available to police prior to triage,¹⁶ CRs were used frequently to deal with minor offences committed by young offenders. Subsequently, multiple potential contacts between police and youth offenders may have occurred, without necessarily addressing or intervening with the offending behaviour itself. While not

¹³ Bond, E. and Agnew, S. (2013). 'Everyone deserves a second chance' – Findings from a qualitative review of the Challenge for Change (C4C) Intervention programme. Ipswich: iSEED

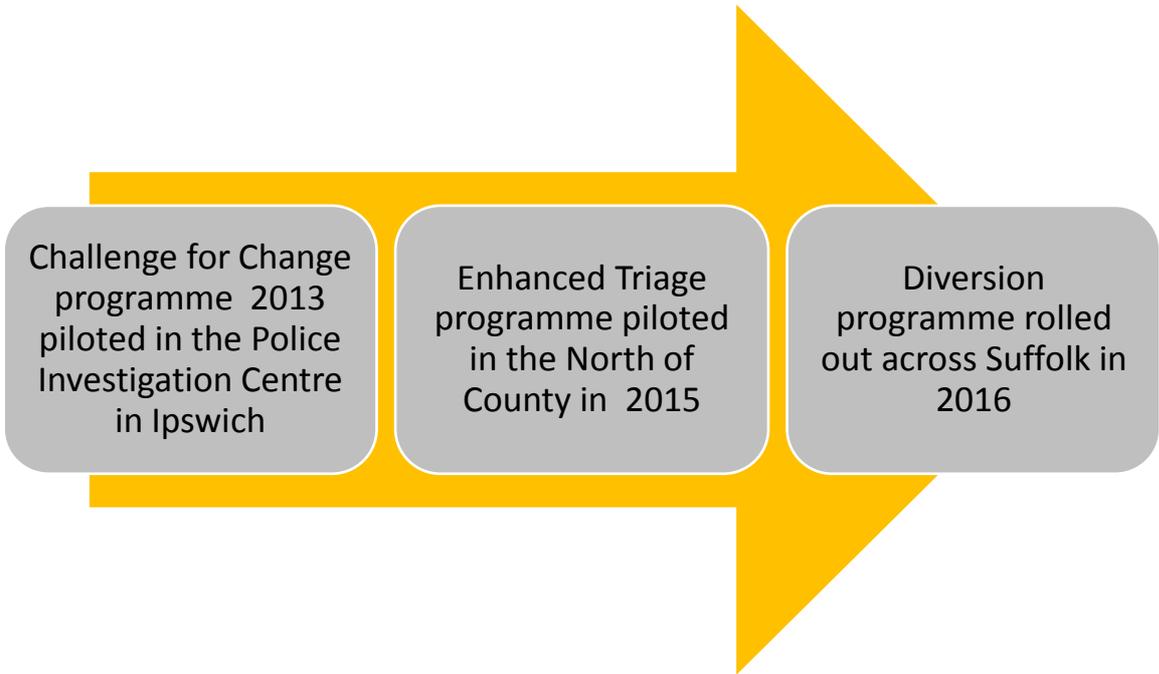
¹⁴ Now University of Suffolk.

¹⁵ Manning, M. (2015). 'Enhanced Triage' an Integrated Decision Making Model. Ipswich: iSEED

¹⁶ Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO, 2012)

necessarily just a local concern,¹⁷ the frequent use of CRs meant that young offenders might remain unidentified for intervention by the SYOS. To prevent young people ‘slipping through the net’ and the use of CRs to resolve problems prior to any intervention,¹⁸ both ET and the Diversion Programme aim to limit the amount of CRs to one per youth offender. Therefore, if police were to come into contact with a young person again and believe that another CR is the solution, the case is referred onto SYOS, so that an integrated decision can be made between seconded police officers and SYOS management on the most appropriate disposal option. Limiting the number of CRs to be administered should in turn improve outcomes for youth offenders, as well as reduce reoffending and subsequent costs for the wider CJS.

Figure 1: Timeline of Development



The successful implementation of ET in the north of Suffolk, which received universal support in principle and practice,¹⁹ led to the county-wide roll out of the Diversion Programme in 2016. As well as diverting young people away from the YJS, the Diversion Programme aims to prevent offending behaviour arising and subsequent police contact by introducing a preventative strand to the referral process. The Diversion Programme went live in the north and west of Suffolk in April 2016, with the south team following soon afterwards during September 2016. Operating the Diversion Programme across differing geographical locations across Suffolk poses new challenges and considerations, such as the levels of deprivation and type of youth crime, which could influence the delivery of the programme.

¹⁷ Bateman, T. (2014). Where has all the youth crime gone? Youth justice in an age of austerity. *Children & Society*, 28(5), 416-424

¹⁸ Home Office (2012). Assessing young people in Police Custody: An examination of the operation of Triage schemes. Available from: <http://www.icpr.org.uk/media/33168/Home%20Office%20Triage.pdf>

¹⁹ Manning, M. (2015). *Enhanced Triage' an Integrated Decision Making Model*. Ipswich: iSEED

The principle aim of the youth justice system, established by Section 37 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is to prevent offending by children and young people. SYOS is committed to youth crime prevention and diverting young people from formal prosecution, whenever appropriate. Evidence suggests that it is possible to change the life-course paths of children and young people by reducing risk factors that may lead to offending behaviour, while building on protective factors that can help prevent offending. The Diversion Programme seeks to prevent children and young people from offending or re-offending, diverting them from coming into the criminal justice system by assessing and delivering targeted interventions at an early stage.

1.2 Suffolk in Context

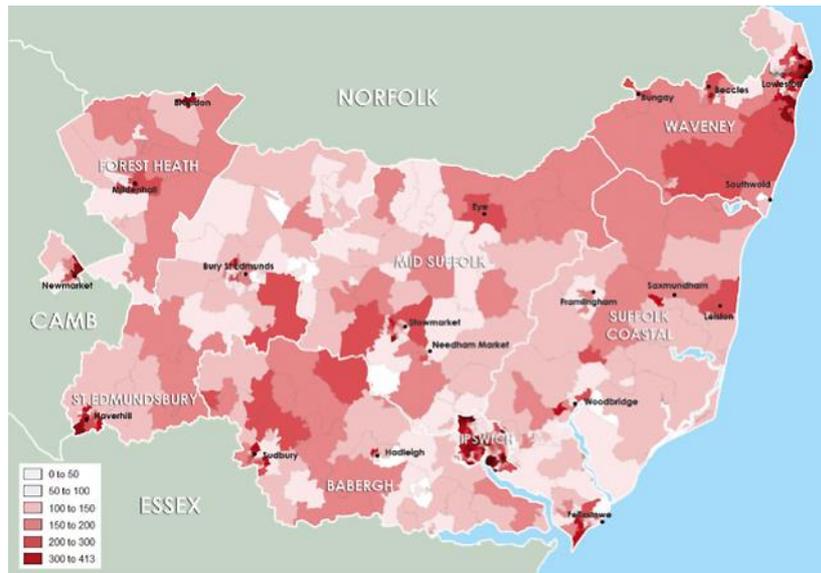
One of the key influencing factors for introducing the Diversion Programme is to ensure a consistent approach to OoCD and decision making across SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary, as well as to provide equal services and outcomes for young people irrespective of their locality, thus putting Suffolk into context is of importance.

An in-depth report published on deprivation in Suffolk²⁰ in 2016 found:

- ◆ Suffolk, on average, has lower rates of multiple deprivation than England even though it includes some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods. Over 14% of neighbourhoods in Ipswich and 12% in Waveney are ranked among the most deprived 10% in England
- ◆ Suffolk is home to almost 20,000 children living in income deprivation (*Figure 2*). Children and young people's life chances are significantly different depending on where they live.
- ◆ According to the Social Mobility Index, there is marked inequality of opportunity for children and young people across Suffolk. Ipswich, Waveney, Babergh and Forest Heath are placed in the least socially mobile 20% of districts in England
- ◆ One of the sharpest increases in deprivation relates to educational outcomes. This includes GCSE results, as Suffolk falls behind the eastern region of England in the proportion of children achieving five A*-C grades. Children from poor households fare worst. Only 33% of children eligible for free school meals attained five good grades compared with 70% of pupils overall.

²⁰ Smith, N. and Dogaru, C. (2016). *Hidden Needs in Suffolk – Five years on*; available from <http://suffolkcf.s3.amazonaws.com/app/uploads/2016/09/Hidden-needs-report-WEB.pdf>

Figure 2: Counts of income-deprived people in Suffolk²¹



There are three youth offending teams (YOTs) in Suffolk based in Lowestoft, Bury St. Edmunds and Ipswich. These teams cover the county in three geographical areas: north; west and south respectively (*Figure 3*). SYOS has a total of 37 case holders: 13 case holders covering the south, 12 covering the north and 12 covering the west of the county. It is important to note that despite the south YOT covering a smaller area geographically, this region encompasses the highest number of children, the highest rate of children in income deprivation as well as being within the bottom 10% of districts in England for social mobility,²² factors frequently associated with youth crime.²³

Figure 3: Areas of Suffolk covered by three youth offending teams



²¹ Source: Smith, N. and Dogaru, C. (2016). *Hidden Needs in Suffolk – Five years on*; available from <http://suffolkcf.s3.amazonaws.com/app/uploads/2016/09/Hidden-needs-report-WEB.pdf>

²² Smith, N. and Dogaru, C. (2016). *Hidden Needs in Suffolk – Five years on*; available from <http://suffolkcf.s3.amazonaws.com/app/uploads/2016/09/Hidden-needs-report-WEB.pdf>

²³ White, R., and Cunneen, C. (2015). *Social Class, Youth Crime and Justice*. In: Goldson, B., & Muncie, J. (Eds.). *Youth Crime and Justice*. (pp.17-27), Sage

1.3 The Diversion Programme

The key strategic outcomes of the Diversion Programme are:

- ◆ More efficient and effective targeting of resources at an early point in the process
 - ◆ An elimination of unnecessary processing of young people through the criminal justice system (First Time Entrants)
 - ◆ Significant improvements in the life prospects for young people involved in offending behaviour, victims of crime and the wider community
 - ◆ Increased use of restorative approaches to reduce conflict and repeat offending.
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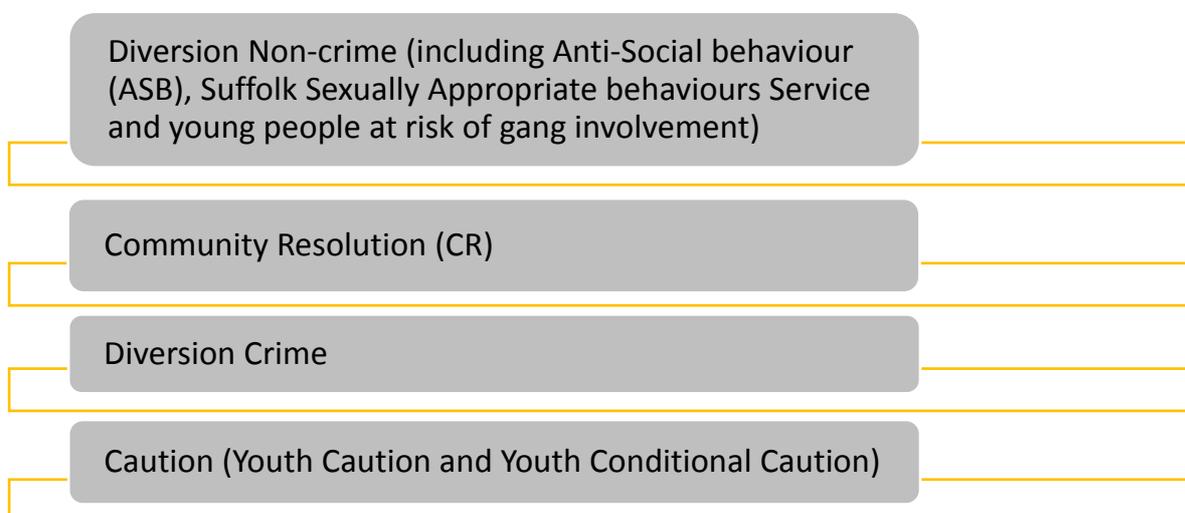
Outcomes and levels of intervention

All young people who are considered for an OoCD by police or a prevention referral (via other services such as school or children and young people's services) should be referred to SYOS for consideration for the following outcomes: diversion non-crime, diversion crime, CR, YC or YCC referral (see *Figure 4*).

Diversion Non-crime: These referrals relate to children/young people who may be at risk of offending, are below the age of criminal responsibility (10 years old), or were not in the public interest to prosecute. Police, Children and Young People's Service (CYPs), education or a parent/carer can all make non-crime Diversion Programme referrals.

Diversion Crime: These referrals divert children and young people away from formal out of court processes. The crime strand is an informal measure and offences with a gravity score of three or below, or with a higher gravity score and mitigating factors, are considered for diversion.

Figure 4: The Diversion Programme outcomes



Young people who receive a CR from police should be referred to the Diversion Programme and receive a diversion non-crime outcome if intervention work is considered appropriate. Young people who are referred for a first or second YC may also be eligible, subject to consent, to undergo intervention on the Diversion Programme. Those with a YCC must comply with the intervention plan as part of their conditions, otherwise they may face prosecution. Both YC and YCC are recordable statutory disposals. Those who are deemed suitable for an intervention will undergo a level 1 or level 2 intervention based on their assessed level of risk, apart from those with a YCC who will automatically receive a level 2 intervention (*Table 4*).

Level 1 – Where there is a low risk of offending/re-offending, the intervention will concentrate on a short intervention plan, which may include, among other things, a restorative element.

Level 2 – Where there is a medium to very high risk of offending/re-offending, a risk of harm/serious harm to others and the child/young person presents a risk to themselves or their safety and well-being; requiring a more detailed assessment (*AssetPlus*), followed by an intervention programme to address risk factors and strengthen protective factors.

Table 4: Diversion programme intervention levels and duration

Intervention	Priority Level	Risk level ²⁴	Min. length	Max. length ²⁵	Min. Contacts
Level 1	P1	Low	6 weeks	6 weeks	Fortnightly
Level 2	P2	Medium	8 weeks	12 weeks (3 months)	Weekly
Level 2	P3	High – Very High	12 weeks (3 months)	26 weeks (6 months)	Weekly

The nature and the structure of the Diversion Programme is designed to be appropriate to level of need and risk of young people, rather than a one size fits all approach.

It is important to note that in cases where a risk of gang involvement or harmful sexual behaviour has been identified they should be allocated as level 2 cases, to allow sufficient time for assessment by an appropriately trained practitioner.

²⁴ The risk level is based on risk of harm and/or risk of offending
²⁵ The programme can be extended with the prior agreement from a Manager. Case should continue to be reviewed every three months or where significant change has occurred

Since the roll out of the county-wide Diversion Programme in Suffolk, a rise in gang-related crime during its first year led to an increased need for intelligence related multi-agency working, a higher demand in police resources and increased high risk statutory cases for SYOS. Responding to the complex needs of young people involved in gang-related crime increased workload and demand on resources across both SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary as described below:

“It’s an escalator basically, involvement in gangs and groups isn’t it, so it’s more serious offending faster, so you can have someone starting from a relatively low start and they are developing serious behaviours quite quickly. It involves an awful lot of multi-agency working which is extremely time-consuming and you’ve got staff who are managing multiple risks.” (YOS Management)

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation comprised of two main aims:

1. To provide a detailed relative cost analysis that will consider both financial and time efficiency achieved by both Suffolk Constabulary and potentially the wider criminal justice system. It will consider impact on SYOS in terms of workload and the capacity needed to deliver the Diversion Programme effectively.
2. To provide evidence in relation to how effective decision-making practices and outcomes are for children, young people and their families, as well as victims. This will also include early consideration of how the police understands the Diversion Programme and referrals.

Success indicators included:

- ◆ an increase in the number of Diversion Programme referrals and a reduction in statutory referrals across Suffolk
- ◆ a reduction in further offending after referral to the Diversion Programme
- ◆ a reduction in the number of police records for young people
- ◆ a reduction in the number of FTE’s into the YJS

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach, incorporating a range of data collection tools to ascertain how effective the roll out of the Diversion programme in Suffolk has been. What distinguishes mixed-method evaluation is the intentional or planned use of diverse methods for particular mixed-method purposes using particular mixed-method designs.²⁶

²⁶ Greene, J. C. (2005). Mixed Methods in Mathison, S. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 255

Mixed method evaluations seek to integrate social science disciplines with predominantly quantitative and predominantly qualitative approaches to theory, data collection, data analysis and interpretation. The purpose is to strengthen the reliability of data, validity of the findings and recommendations, and to broaden and deepen our understanding of the processes through which programme outcomes and impacts are achieved, and how these are affected by the context within which the programme is implemented.²⁷ The evaluation framework was developed in partnership with SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary and incorporated a range of stakeholder views through surveys, interviews and focus groups, referrals and offending rates (see Figure 5).

Similar to the previous evaluation conducted by the University of Suffolk in 2015,²⁸ the uptake of young people was initially quite slow, and while every effort was made by the YOS to refer young people and their parents/carers who were willing to participate in interviews to the research team, these individuals sometimes proved difficult to contact. Initially, interviews within YOS offices were deemed appropriate. However, after discovering the difficulties young people and parents had visiting the sites (including travel difficulties and inconvenience in visiting the YOS) home interviews and telephone interviews were adopted as alternatives.

2.1 Ethical considerations

Young people who were interviewed as part of the evaluation and had been involved in the Diversion Programme in Suffolk volunteered to participate. Both the young people and their families were written and spoken to about the evaluation being undertaken by the University of Suffolk, as well as how the findings would be circulated. Consent was obtained from both young people and parents and they were informed about their rights to anonymity, confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the evaluation study. The research team are highly experienced in working with young people, have enhanced DBS certificates and have all undergone appropriate safeguarding training.

The evaluation was subject to University of Suffolk's ethical scrutiny and approval, and it complied with the British Sociological Association and the British Psychological Society's Guidelines. Adherence to guidelines set out by the United Kingdom Research Integrity Office's Code of Practice for Research ensured that the research followed the principles of the Singapore Statement of Research Integrity:

- ◆ Honesty in all aspects of research
- ◆ Accountability in the conduct of research

²⁷ Bamberger, M. (2012:1). *Introduction in Mixed Methods in Impact Evaluation*, available from <https://www.interaction.org/resources/training/guidance-note-3-introduction-mixed-methods-impact-evaluation>

²⁸ Manning, M. (2015). *'Enhanced Triage' an Integrated Decision Making Model*. Ipswich: iSEED

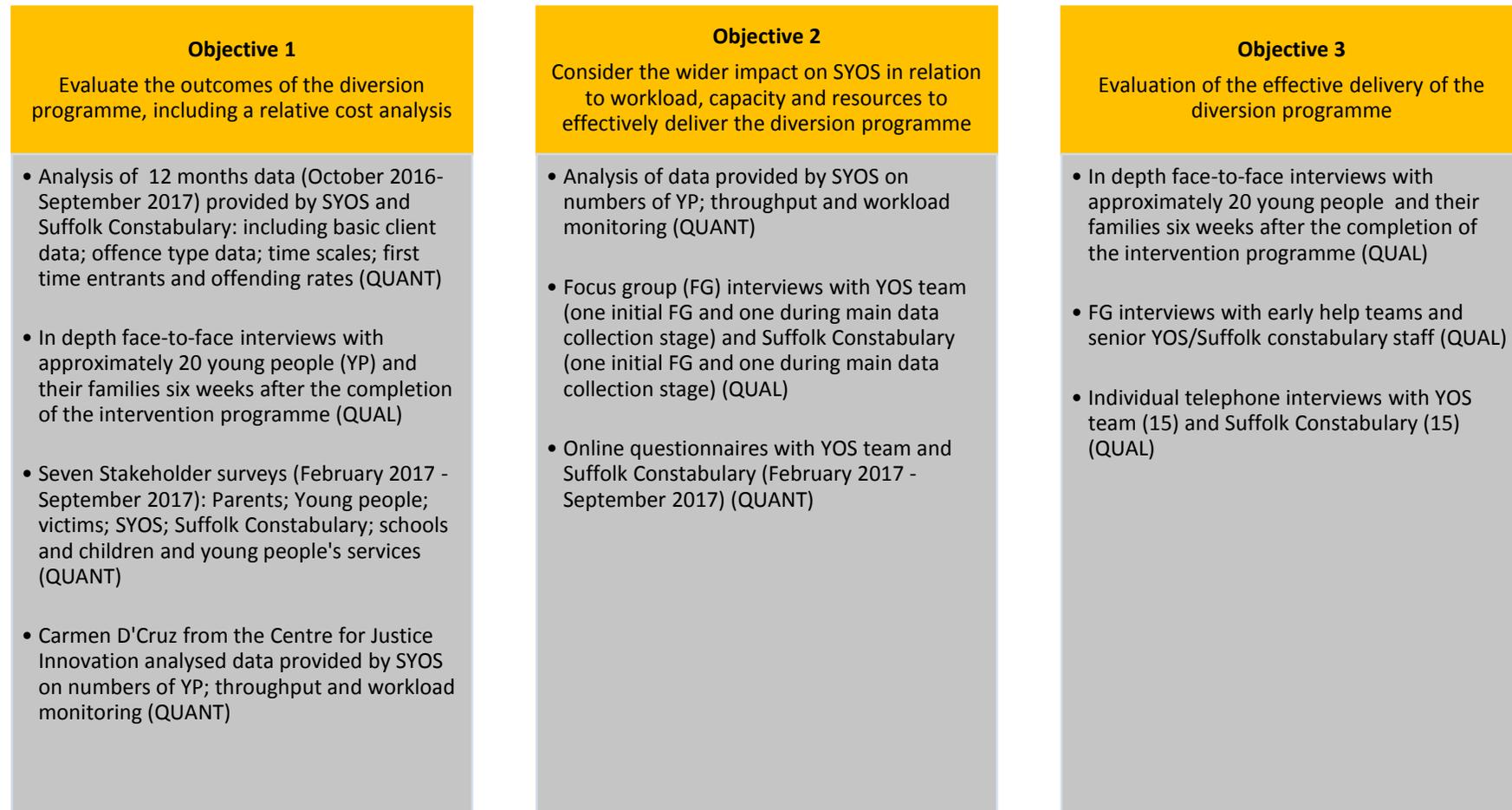
- ◆ Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others
- ◆ Good stewardship of research on behalf of others.

All interviews were audio recorded, with the participants' consent, and the verbatim data was subject to thematic framework analysis as devised by the National Centre for Social Research.²⁹

The quantitative data consisted of both survey responses as well as data collected by SYOS. This included basic demographics, referral outcomes, offence categories and interventions received. Quantitative data analysis was carried out within the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences, with a focus primarily on descriptive statistics and some inferential statistics. A cost avoidance analysis was also carried out by Carmen D'Cruz at the Centre for Justice Innovation to determine the cost-effectiveness of the Diversion Programme model within Suffolk.

²⁹ Richie, J.; Lewis, J.; McNaughten-Nicholls, C. and Ormston, R. (2014). *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage.

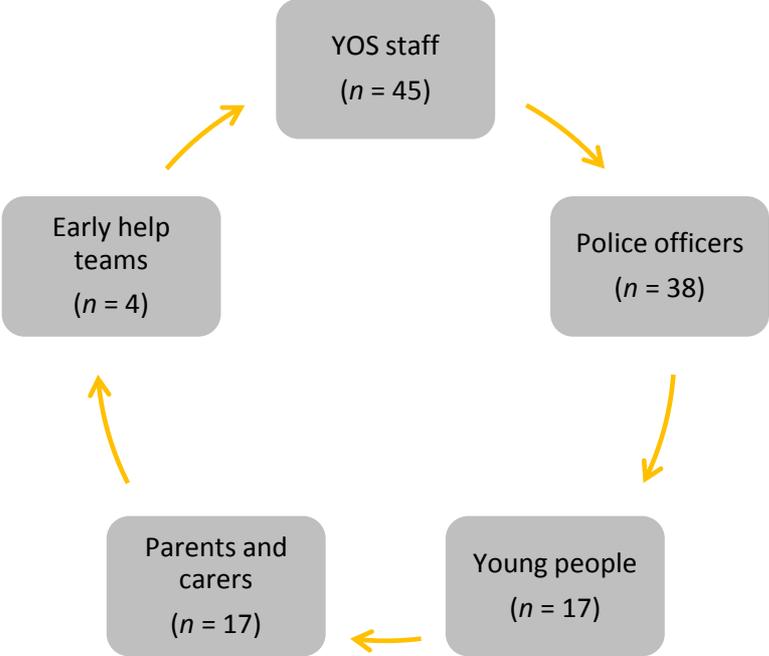
Figure 5: Mixed-method Evaluation Framework



2.2 Participants

The evaluation team undertook one-to-one interviews, focus groups and online surveys with a total of 121 stakeholders.

Figure 6: Participants



Police officers interviewed included, but were not limited to, detective sergeants, frontline response officers and safer neighbourhood team officers. Youth offending staff interviewed included practitioners, restorative justice officers, YOT seconded police officers and YOS management.

A total of 17 young people ranging from 10 to 17 years of age were interviewed with their parent or guardian.

FINDINGS

3.1 The outcomes of the Diversion Programme during the first year (2016/2017).

This section of the evaluation report presents the outcome data in relation to the success indicators defined in the evaluation framework:

- ◆ a cost avoidance analysis by the Centre for Justice Innovation
- ◆ an increase in the number of Diversion Programme referrals and a reduction in statutory referrals across Suffolk
- ◆ a reduction in offending after referral to the Diversion Programme
- ◆ a reduction in the number of records for young people
- ◆ a reduction in the number of FTE's into the YJS.

The following presents an analysis of a 12-month dataset for referrals received between October 2016 and September 2017, provided by both SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary. This dataset included basic client data; offence type data; time scales and offending rates after referral. All statistical analysis is based on a total of 819 referrals to the Diversion Programme across SYOS teams.

It should be noted that the 819 referrals do not necessarily represent unique young people; some young people appear twice or more in the dataset if they were referred more than once during the 12-month recording period. Of the 819 referrals received, there are a total of 710 unique young people. The analysis is based on data from October 2016 to September 2017, to get a more consistent comparison across all teams due to the delayed start date within the south YOT.

3.1.1 Cost Avoidance Analysis

The Centre for Justice Innovation works to reduce crime by building a justice system that is and feels fair, that holds people accountable, and that addresses the underlying problems which bring people into contact with it. The Centre is an initiative of the New York-based non-profit, the Centre for Court Innovation. The Youth Justice programme works with practitioners and policymakers who seek to create a youth justice system that works with young people to prevent their future involvement in crime.

The Centre for Justice Innovation undertook a Cost Avoidance Analysis and estimated that the programme's work with Crime Diversion and Community Resolution (referring young people over the period 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017) led to approximately £146,741 in costs avoided by the police.

Based on calculations for 242 young people who avoided criminal disposals and their associated costs, they estimated that by engaging these young people the programme avoided approximately £158,415 in justice system processing costs.

Taking into account the costs of running the programme, the Centre for Justice Innovation estimated the Diversion Programme produced a net benefit of around £72,915 over the stated period.

For the full Cost Avoidance Analysis produced by the Centre for Justice Innovation please refer to the separate report produced by Carmen D'Cruz (2017)³⁰. For more information on the methodology behind this approach, as well as broader background information on the value of youth diversion, please see the Centre for Justice Innovation's Valuing Youth Diversion toolkit.³¹

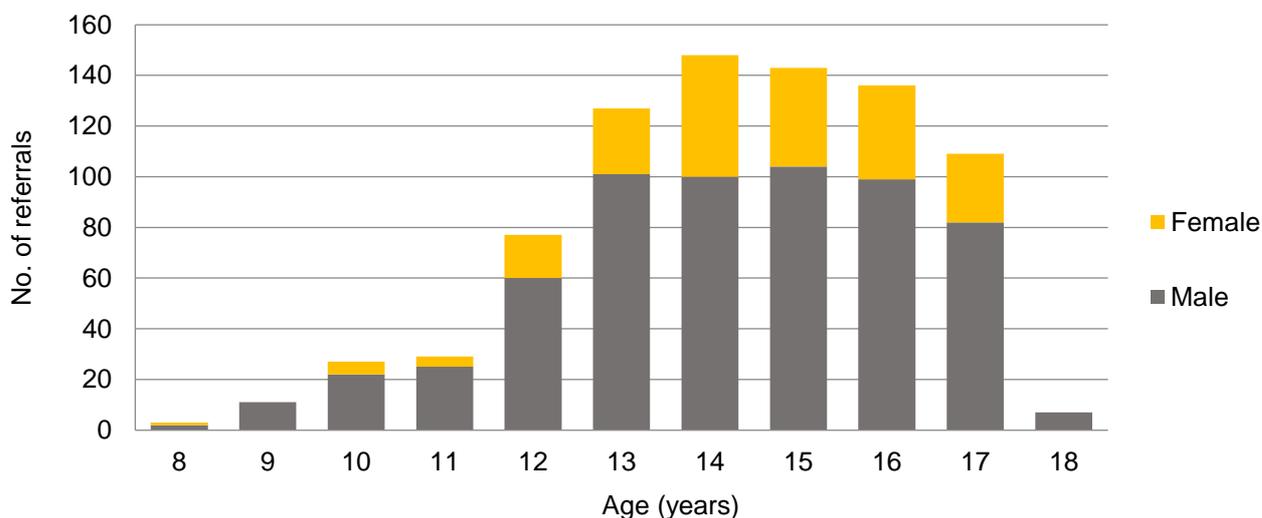
³⁰ D'Cruz, C. (2017) *Suffolk Diversion Programme: Summary Cost Avoidance Findings*. Centre for Justice Innovation, London.

³¹ Centre for Justice Innovation's Valuing Youth Diversion toolkit: <http://www.justiceinnovation.org/youth-diversion/valuing-youth-diversion-toolkit>

3.1.2 Referral Profiles

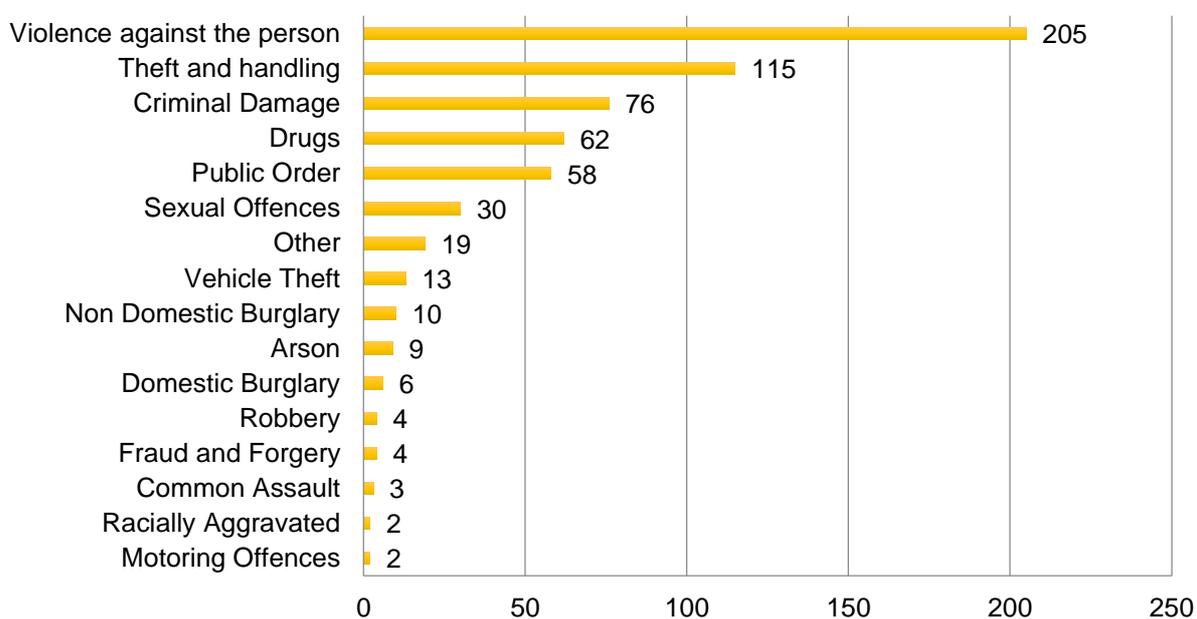
A total of 819 referrals (710 young people) were made to SYOS from October 2016 to September 2017, an increase of 12.7% from the previous year (715). Young people were aged between 8-18 years (mean = 14 years). The majority of referrals were males (male = 75.1%, female = 24.9%) and white British in ethnic origin (86.1%). (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7: Number of young people by gender and age across SYOS referrals (2016/17)



Of the 819 referrals, 192 (23.4%) were prevention referrals. As depicted in Figure 8, the most common serious offence committed by young people was violence against the person (33.2%), followed by theft and handling stolen goods (18.6%) and criminal damage (12.3%). Type of offences committed are based on diversion-crime, CR and caution (YC, YCC) referrals only.

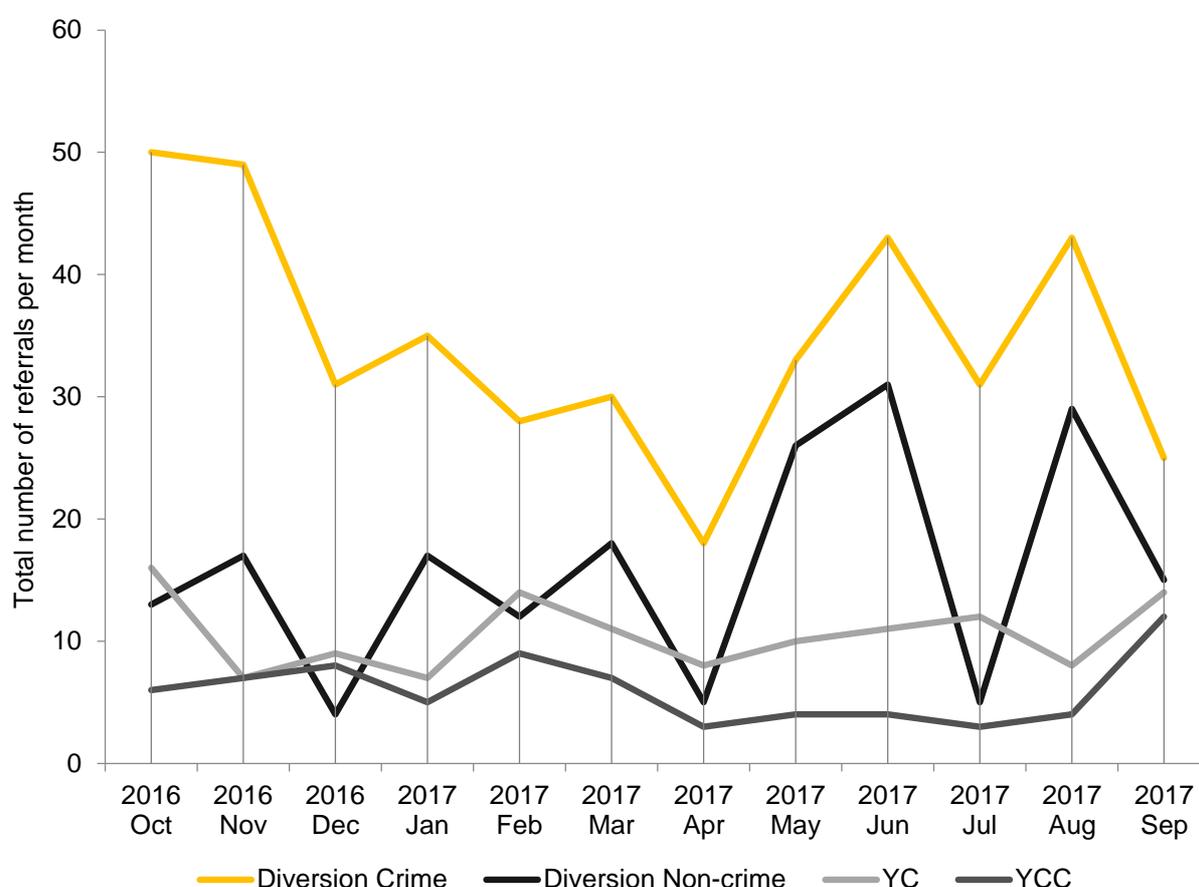
Figure 8: Types of most serious offence committed by youth offenders (2016/17)



3.1.3 Referral outcomes and intervention

With regards to the referrals, the majority were non-statutory, either diversion crime or non-crime at 57.1% ($n = 468$), or community resolutions at 18.6% ($n = 152$). Statutory referrals were far fewer with Youth Cautions at 15.5% ($n = 127$) and Youth Conditional Cautions at 8.8% ($n = 72$). As evident in *Figure 9*, the number of referrals resulting in intervention for diversion crime or diversion non-crime is generally increasing. The apparent decrease in diversion referral activity around April and July could be linked to the abstraction of seconded YOT police officers at the time or reduced resources within SYOS; however causal inferences cannot be made.

Figure 9: Outcomes received after referral by month



Of the 819 referrals, 416 received an intervention for a diversion crime, while 192 referrals resulted in an intervention for diversion non-crime. The majority of referrals resulting in diversion crime were for theft and handling and criminal damage also, whereas slightly more young people receive cautions for drug related crime or public order offences. Those young people who receive a CR from the police and are referred to SYOS will receive an outcome of diversion non-crime or NFA (No Further Action), depending on assessed risk and whether the police have already carried out some intervention work. Non-crime diversion referrals to

SYOS are also received from a range of agencies including educational institutions, social services and the police.

In terms of intervention level, a total of 45.4% ($n = 372$) of referrals received a level 1 intervention and 30.2% ($n = 247$) received a level 2 intervention, thus there were slightly more young people assessed as lower risk (*Table 5*). A total of 5.5% ($n = 45$) referrals had an unknown level of intervention and 18.9% ($n = 154$) of referrals level of intervention was missing from the data. Most referrals with intervention level information missing, likely did not receive an intervention as the referral was considered to be low risk, and thus received NFA, or may already be on a programme of intervention ($n = 6$). For example, the majority of referrals with intervention level information missing were associated with a CR ($n = 88$) or a diversion referral (crime or non-crime) ($n = 37$), however 29 referrals for YC were associated with missing intervention level information and NFA, and thus may require further consideration by SYOS.

Table 5: Number of referrals by intervention and level

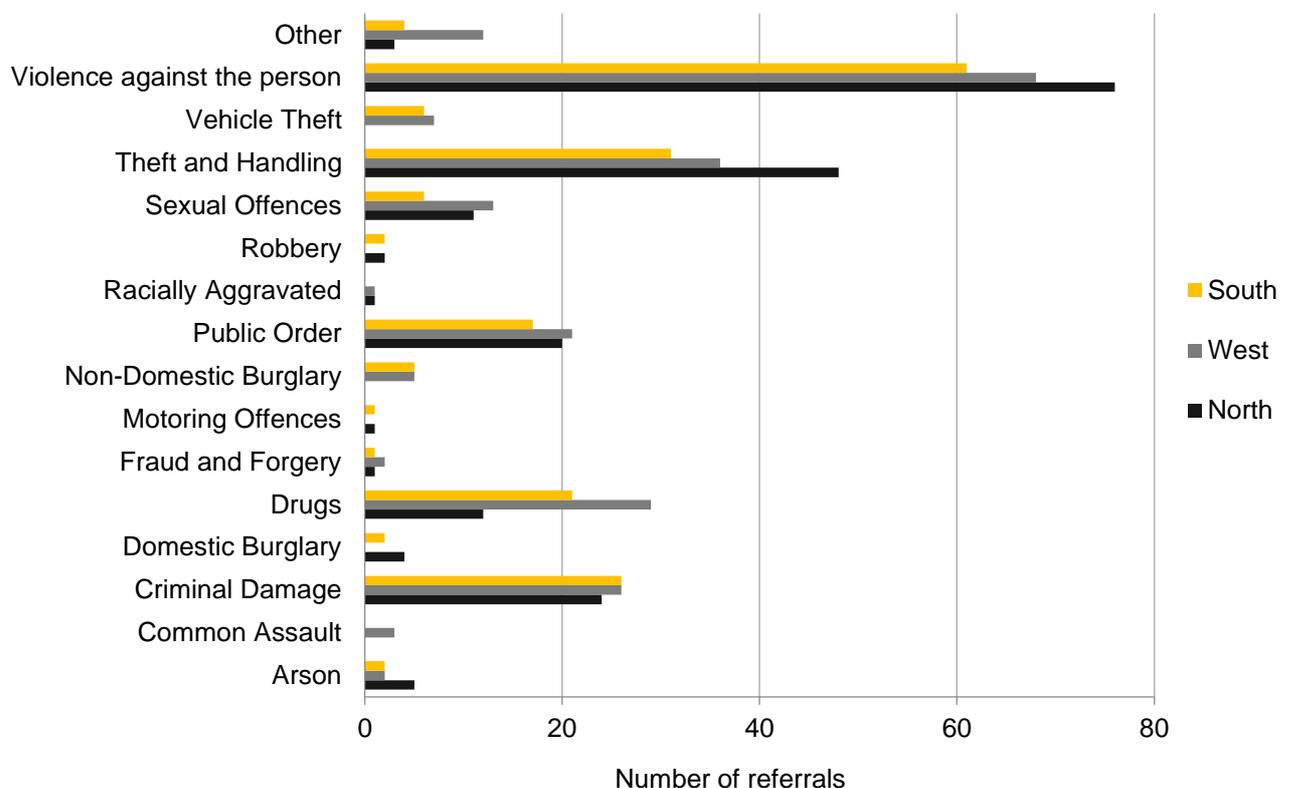
Intervention Level			
Intervention Type	Level 1	Level 2	Not Recorded
Diversion Crime	212	83	19
Diversion Non-Crime	95	69	16
Youth Caution	41	48	9
Youth Conditional Caution	24	47	1

3.1.4 Comparisons across teams

Demographics across referrals remain similar across the three teams, with mean age at 14 years old across north, south and west Suffolk. Additionally, young people remain predominantly male when comparing area teams (north = 67.5%, south = 79.7%, west = 77.6%).

The most serious offences committed across regions were also similar, with slightly more referrals regarding violence against the person and theft offences received by the north team, and more drug related offences received by the west and south (*Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Type of most serious offence committed by youth offenders referred to SYOS Diversion Programme: Area team differences



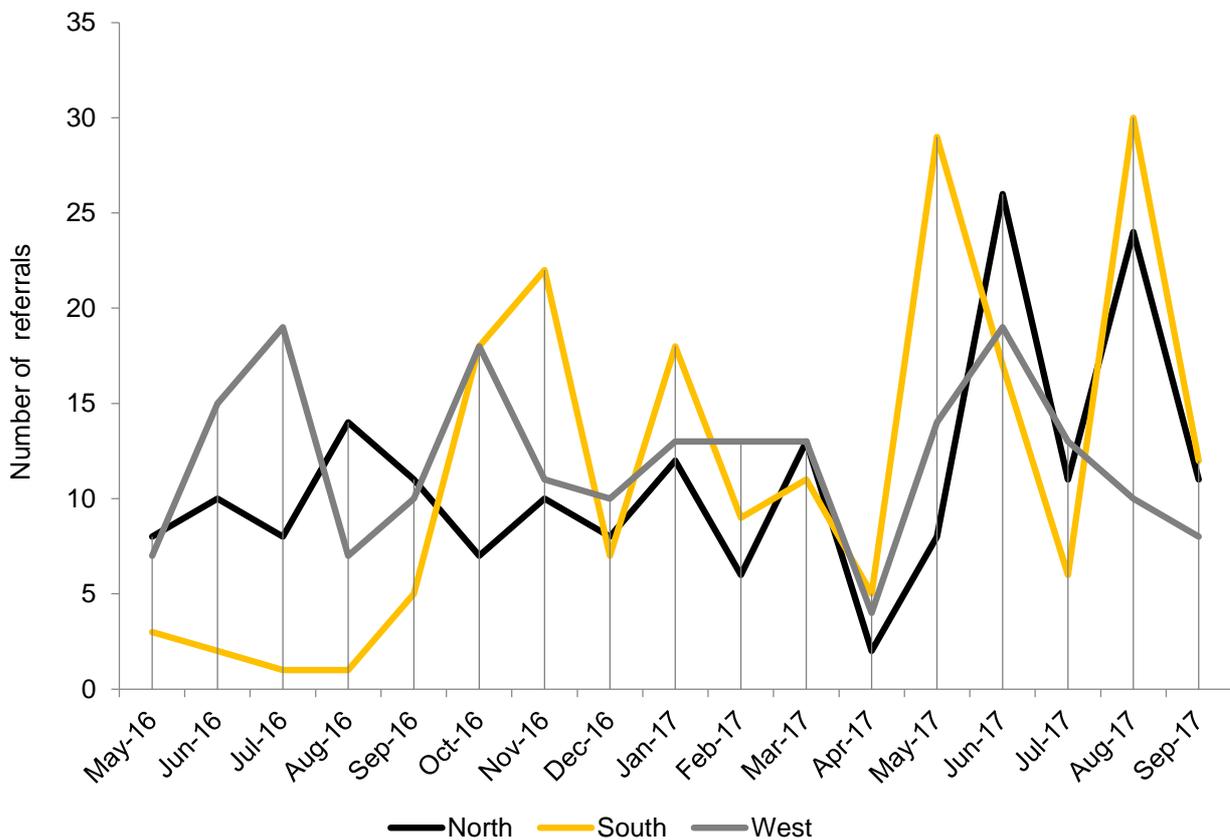
The SYOS has a total of 37 case holders; 13 case holders covering the south, 12 covering the north and 12 covering the west of the county. Of the 819 referrals received between October 2016 and September 2017, the south SYOS team received 35.5% ($n = 291$), the north 32.4% ($n = 265$) and the west 32.1% ($n = 263$). This finding demonstrates consistency and an even distribution of referrals to the Diversion Programme across the county.

Of the 819 referrals from October 2016 to September 2017, the SYOS received on average a total of 68 referrals to the Diversion Programme each month. The average length of

intervention lasted around 12 weeks (range = 1-43 weeks), with length of intervention being slightly higher in the west (M = 13 weeks), compared to the north (M = 12 weeks) and south (M = 11) respectively.

Figure 11 shows the number of referrals received per month across each SYOS team from May 2016 to September 2017. The timescale within this graph starts from May 2016 due to the different launch dates for the Diversion Programme across teams. The Diversion Programme was introduced in the north and west of the county on the 25th April 2016, the south team followed on 26th September 2016. The number of referrals to the Diversion Programme fluctuates over time, with increasing levels of referrals between April 2017 and September 2017.

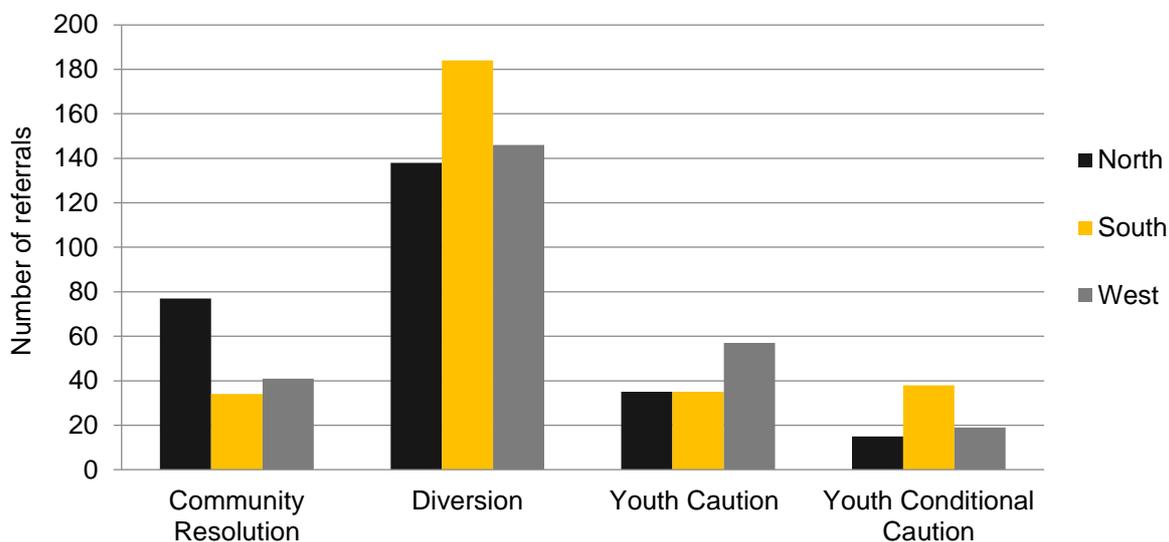
Figure 11: The number of Diversion Programme referrals received monthly across SYOS teams (May 2016 - Sep 2017)



3.1.5 Comparisons across teams: Referral outcomes

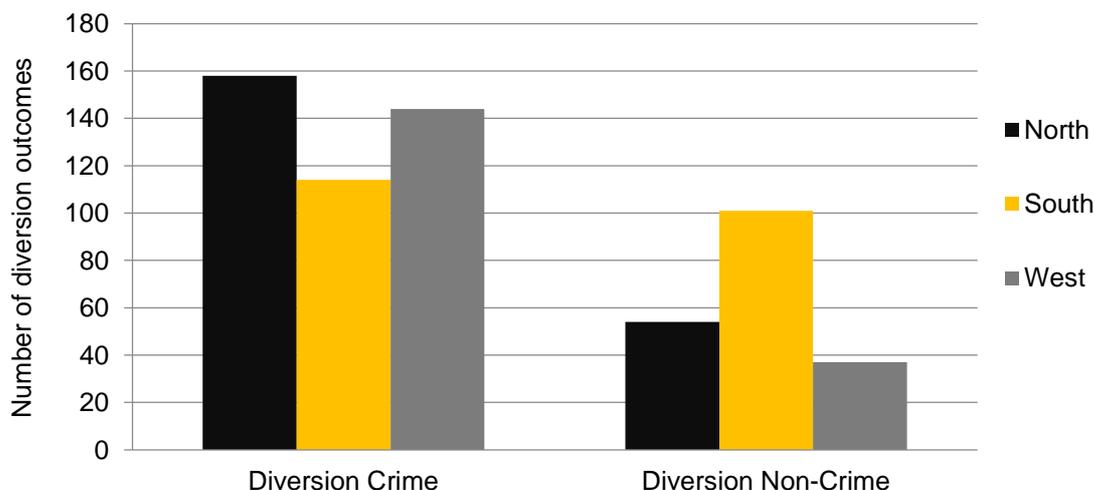
With regards to the type of referral outcome, there appears to be slightly more referrals receiving an outcome of diversion across the south YOT and more CR referrals across the north YOT (*Figure 12*).

Figure 12: Total number of different referral types by team (2016/17)



For diversion referrals (crime or non-crime), the type of outcome received also varies slightly across regions, with more referrals receiving an outcome of diversion crime in the north and west, and more diversion non-crime in the south (*Figure 13*). The south and west YOT's are also more likely to have a higher number of referrals receiving level 1 diversion (crime/non-crime) (58.4% and 70.1% respectively), compared to the north YOT (48.3%).

Figure 13: Types of diversion outcome by team (2016/17)



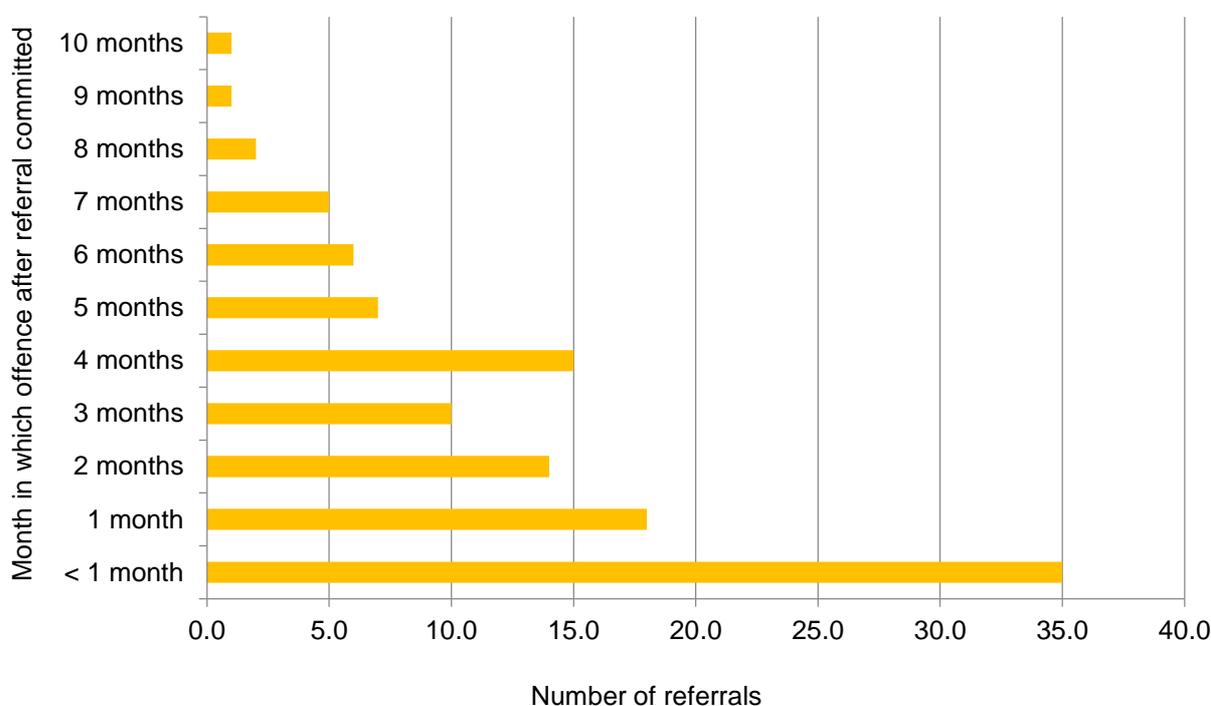
3.1.6 Offending after referral

Within the present dataset provided by SYOS, offending after referral was counted if an offence is committed within 12 months of the initial referral, recorded anytime during the time-frame studied (October 2016 to September 2017), and resulted in a CR, diversion crime or a statutory outcome. The tracking time for an offence after referral is not a set time period, and can range from anything between two weeks to 12 months. Due to the short tracking period in most cases, the following information regarding offending after referral can only be indicative and should not be considered statistically significant at this stage.

Of the 819 referrals recorded, 116 (14.2%) were followed by an offence. There were little to no differences in offending after referral when comparing on demographic data. Males seemed slightly more likely to commit a further offence than females, with 15% of males, (compared with 11% of females) offending after their initial referral. There were no differences by ethnicity or by age. The regions seem to differ slightly in terms of the number of offences after referral, 10% ($n = 27$) of north YOT referrals included a further offence, compared with 16% in either south ($n = 47$) or west ($n = 42$) YOTs.

Of those young people who offended after referral during the recording period, the majority offended within a month of the initial outcome date (*Figure 14*).

Figure 14: Month in which offence committed after initial referral outcome



3.1.7 Offending after referral: Outcomes and intervention

When comparing by the type of outcome, level of intervention, or participation in intervention, there were some interesting differences in rates of offending after referral. About 20% of referrals for which an initial statutory outcome was decided (youth caution/youth conditional caution) were followed by an offence, compared with 12% of non-statutory outcomes being followed by an offence within the time-frame studied (*Table 6*). When breaking down diversion outcomes, 12.5% ($n = 53$) of referrals with an outcome of diversion crime were associated with a further offence, compared to 12% ($n = 23$) of diversion non-crime.

Table 6: Rates of offending after referral

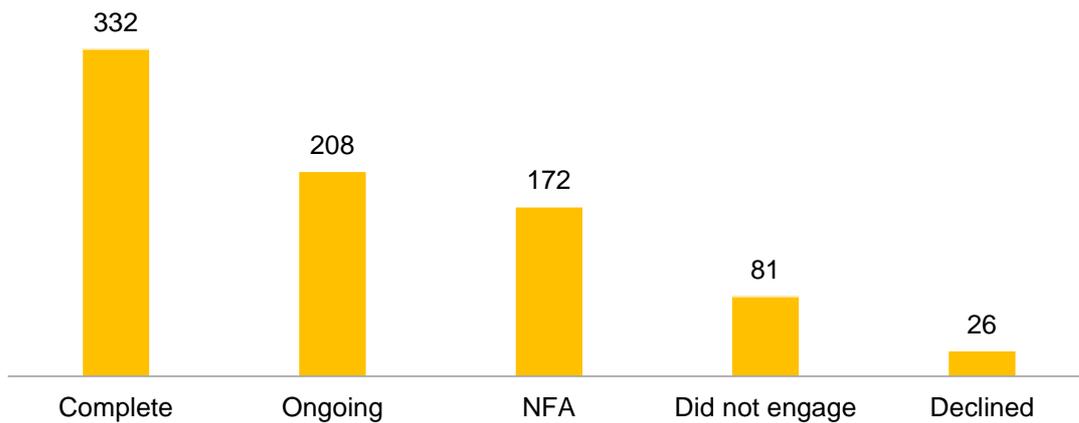
Offence after referral	Community Resolution ($n = 152$)	Diversion (Crime or Non-crime) ($n = 468$)	Youth Caution ($n = 127$)	Youth Conditional Caution ($n = 72$)	Total ($n = 819$)
No	133 (87.5%)	412 (88.0%)	101 (79.5%)	57 (79.2%)	703 (85.8%)
Yes	19 (12.5%)	56 (12.0%)	26 (20.5%)	15 (20.8%)	116 (14.2%)

Receiving an outcome for the Diversion Programme did not always necessarily equate to participation in the associated intervention. A total of 332 outcomes were followed by an intervention that was completed by the end of the recording period (October 2017), with 208 interventions still ongoing.

In 81 referrals receiving intervention the young people did not engage, while 172 referrals were not followed by an intervention and instead classed as NFA. A referral may receive NFA when SYOS has established that there is no further risk identified, the police has already delivered intervention as part of a CR or the young person is already on an order or intervention. Further, in 26 cases the young offender and/or their family or carers declined the intervention.

In brief, 621 referrals (76%) led to an intervention that was completed, was ongoing or in which the young person did not engage but some intervention work was delivered. And in 198 cases (24%) there was no intervention either because the team made a decision of NFA, or because the young person declined the intervention.

Figure 15: Intervention status



The rates of offending after referral were significantly different among the levels of intervention status: 23% of cases where the intervention was declined were followed by an offence being committed, compared with 16% who completed the intervention. Of those referrals which received NFA, 19% committed an offence after referral.

Of those who did not engage, 11% committed an offence after referral, while only 8% committed an offence during an ongoing intervention. Referrals leading to disengagement refer to cases in which a young person is receiving an intervention but then stops engaging prior to completing the intervention. Referrals resulting in no intervention are subsequently more likely to be followed by an offence.

There were also significant differences depending on the intervention level; 19% of outcomes with a level 2 intervention offended after referral, compared with 13% of outcomes with a level 1 intervention. This finding might suggest that young people who are considered higher risk (and are therefore placed on a more intense, level 2 intervention) are more likely to offend after referral due to their own characteristics and/or situational factors.

To get a more complete picture of the factors that might be related to offending after referral, we ran a more advanced statistical analysis to investigate the potential influence of various factors upon likelihood to offend after initial referral to the Diversion Programme. We included age, gender, number of previous outcomes, diversion outcome, intervention status, and the level of intervention.

Of these, the number of previous outcomes and the intervention status emerged as significant predictors of offending after referral in the period studied. Those with a single previous outcome were twice as likely to commit an offence compared to those with no previous outcomes, while those with three or more previous outcomes were four times more likely to offend after referral.

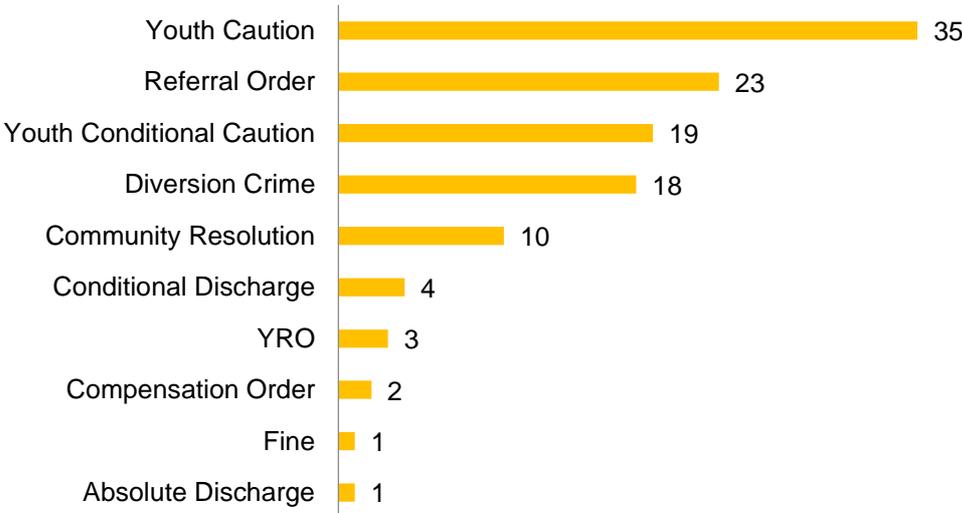
Based on the intervention status, those who declined intervention were eight times more likely to offend after referral, while those who had completed an intervention were twice as likely compared to those ongoing. Those referrals which received NFA were six times more likely to offend compared with those still ongoing an intervention.

Those who declined and did not engage includes referrals where the young person or their family declined to engage with the Diversion Programme before any intervention work took place and referrals where some intervention work was delivered before the young person stopped engaging. NFA includes referrals where either the young person was assessed and no further offending risks were identified, intervention was delivered by the police as part of the CR, or where the young person was already working with SYOS on another order/referral.

Ongoing includes referrals that are likely to be at the very start of intervention work and will have been tracked for the shortest amount of time, reflected in the low percentage of offending after referral. Some of these young people may also end up not engaging as the intervention work progresses. The percentages above are only an early indicator and the referrals would need to be tracked for a longer period of time in order to establish if these trends continue.

Of the 116 referrals followed by an offence, 35 cases (30%) were followed by a YC, a Referral Order in 23 cases (20%) and a YCC in 19 cases (16%), suggesting offences made after initial referral tend to be associated with more serious outcomes (*Figure 16*).

Figure 16: New outcomes for offences committed after referral



In summary, the quantitative data suggests that there has been an increase in referrals for OoCD to SYOS from the previous year, leading to a subsequent increase in workload, which is consistent across the YOS teams. There has also been an increase in referrals receiving a diversion outcome (crime or non-crime), as well as a reduction in community resolution referrals across Suffolk.

Of the 819 referrals received by SYOS during the time period, a total of 468 (56%) were dealt with via non-statutory diversion (crime or non-crime) disposal options. Of these, only 12% went on to commit an offence, thus potentially reducing the number of FTE's into the YJS, where these individuals could have been dealt with using statutory outcomes. Early indicators also suggest that those who received a diversion outcome are less likely to commit an offence following referral than those who receive a statutory outcome.

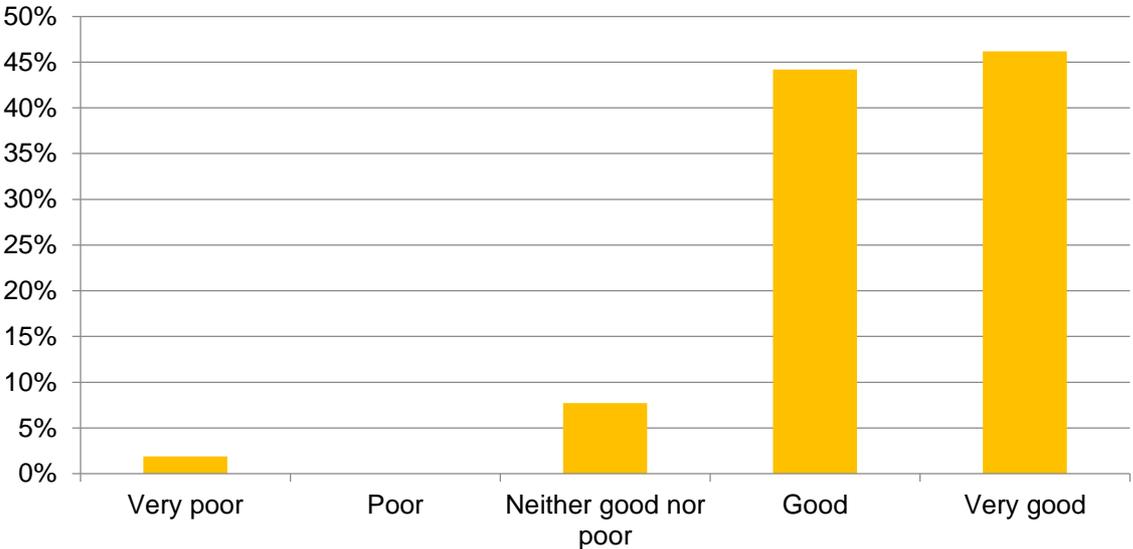
Additionally, recipients of level 2 interventions were associated with a higher likelihood of offending after referral compared to those on a level 1 intervention. It is likely that these findings are also related to the complex needs and characteristics of the young people themselves. Referrals in which an intervention was declined resulted in young people who were more likely to offend after referral compared to those who completed the intervention. Referrals which resulted in NFA were also highly likely to offend after initial referral to the Diversion Programme, suggesting either a need for consideration around assessment of risk for referrals considered as NFA, a review of the way NFA referrals are categorised within the data collected by SYOS, or whether further analysis is required to consider workload and resourcing allocation within SYOS in order to respond to increasing diversion referrals.

3.2 The wider impact on SYOS – workload, capacity and resources

The following data presents descriptive statistics for the online survey sent to SYOS teams, police officers within Suffolk Constabulary and practitioners within Suffolk’s Children and Young Peoples Services.

A total of 55 survey responses were collected from SYOS (Male = 40%, Female = 59%, Neither = 1%) most of which were case holders (61.8%) or management (21.8%). The majority of YOS staff suggested that they had a very good (58%) or good (27%) understanding of the diversion process, when to use it and which young people are eligible. Nearly all YOS practitioners suggested it is important to offer a young person an alternative to a charge (94%). However, only 22% felt they were able to meet timescales once receiving a referral, with many suggesting that this is a consequence of increasing workloads, location plus availability of the young person and family, working part-time or reduced staffing availability. Even so, despite many suggesting they were unable to meet timescales, the majority of YOS staff suggested that the operational practice of the Diversion Programme within their area was very good (*Figure 17*).

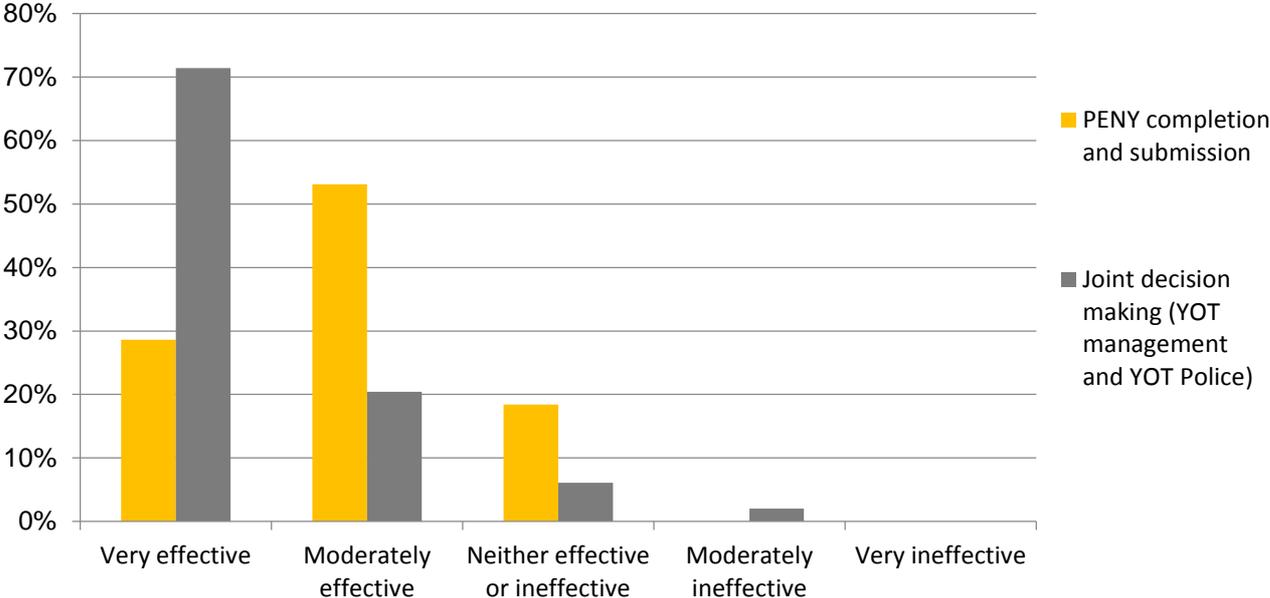
Figure 17: Ratings for the operational practice of the Diversion Programme within respondents’ YOT geographical area.



In terms of YOS management, the majority YOS staff agrees that management have a good understanding of the Diversion Programme (88%) and felt they were able to provide effective guidance on practical issues (92%). Most YOS staff also rated their contact with seconded police officers within the team as very good (78%), and the joint decision-making between police and YOT to be very effective (*Figure 18*). PENY (Police Electronic Notification to YOS) completion and submission was also considered to be moderately effective by most YOS practitioners. The PENY is a national form which provides the YOS with information to make

an assessment of the young person’s case. The form is completed by the police and submitted to the YOT via email.

Figure 18: The effectiveness of the diversion programme with regards to joint decision-making and PENY completion and submission



A total of 93 online survey responses were collected from police, most of which being police constables (55.9%) on neighbourhood response (35.9%) or safer neighbourhood teams (22.8%). Of the 70 police officers who responded to the question, 44.3% had direct experience of the Diversion Programme in Suffolk.

Of the 31 officers who suggested they had made a referral to YOT, less than half (41.9%) felt that SYOS kept them updated with the decision-making and outcomes for the young. However, the majority of these officers suggested that the Diversion Programme met their expectations (58.1%). In terms of reducing demands on police time, it was evenly split with 48% of police officers suggesting that the Diversion Programme reduced demand. Of the 31 officers who had made a referral to SYOS, 83.9% would recommend the programme to other police officers and staff.

A total of 78% of police officers were confident in their understanding of who to contact when considering a diversion referral, with the majority also suggesting that they have not experienced any difficulty communicating with SYOS (78%). If the police officers had contact with SYOS, they generally rated this contact as good (36%) or satisfactory (38%).

A total of 18 online survey responses were collected from individuals within CYP services, all of which were either within social care services (66.7%) or early help services (33.3%). A total of 81% agreed that it was important that a young person is offered an alternative to a

criminal charge. However, only 37.5% of CYP practitioners suggested that they had a very good understanding of when to use the Diversion Programme and which young people are eligible (37.5% had some understanding, 18.8% had no understanding).

Of the five individuals who answered the following questions and had direct experience of referring young people to the Diversion Programme, three felt as if SYOS kept them updated with outcomes for the young person. The majority of CYP respondents felt that their experience of the Diversion Programme didn't necessarily reduce demands on their time ($n = 4$), however they would recommend the programme to other staff within CYP services. In terms of contact with the YOS, the majority of CYP practitioners (63.6%) suggested they had not had any difficulty communicating with YOS, with the majority rating the contact they have had with the YOS as good (46%).

3.2.1 Victim Satisfaction Questionnaires

Victim satisfaction questionnaires, including questions regarding their experience and satisfaction with the restorative justice process, were selected at random from each region across Suffolk. A total of 23 victim satisfaction questionnaires were collected and analysed.

The majority of victims ($n = 17$) received a letter from the young person as part of the restorative justice element of the Diversion Programme. When victims were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 whether they perceived the RJ process provided by SYOS has helped them in any way, the mean rating from victims was six, with responses across the range of 1-10.

All victims strongly agreed or agreed that the RJ practitioner gave them clear choices about what they were to be involved with and they were happy with the information provided to them, for example:

'I didn't know what to expect, but how (RJ Officer) explained what to expect over the period prior to the meeting was really helpful. The period of time it took was just right.'
(Victim)

All victims, bar one, suggested that they also strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident that the information shared was confidential and were happy with the level of support provided by SYOS. This is displayed below in one of the comments provided by a victim:

'I was pleased. My concerns were listened too and [I] appreciated the phone updates these past few months. I'm left with a positive impression enough not to delay contacting the police again with similar matters should they arise in future.' (Victim)

In terms of the overall satisfaction of the service received from SYOS, the majority of victims suggested they were very satisfied ($n = 10$) or satisfied ($n = 12$) with the service provided.

3.3 Evaluating the effective delivery of the Diversion Programme

The following sector presents the main findings from the interviews and focus groups with the young people who had been on the Diversion Programme in Suffolk, their parents/carers, YOS staff and police officers (see Table 2 for a summary of the main findings).

Police officers interviewed included, but were not limited to, detective sergeants, frontline response officers and safer neighbourhood team officers. Youth offending staff interviewed included practitioners, restorative justice officers, YOT seconded police officers and YOS management.

Police and YOS practitioners engaged in in-depth hour-long focus group discussions as well as individual telephone interviews. A total of 17 young people and their parents/guardians engaged in in-depth case study interviews with the research team, to share their personal stories and perceptions around their individualised experience of the Diversion Programme.

3.3.1 Perceptions of Young People and Parents

The Diversion Programme is voluntary, and this along with the aims and principles of the programme should be explained clearly to children/young people and their parents/carers by both police officers and YOS practitioners. Keeping both parents and young people well-informed of the voluntary nature of the process was a recommendation in the previous evaluation. All the young people we spoke to and their parents said that the options and voluntary engagement with Diversion was clearly explained to them from the outset.

“They [police] explained to me that it was an option, that it was the best thing for me, they advised me to be on it, and I didn’t feel like I didn’t have a choice, I felt like I have a choice but it was the right thing to do.” (Young person, 13 year old)

“She explained everything, she gave [YP] a choice you know, she said you don’t have to be going along with this but if you do, you know it’s completely up to you but if you want to go ahead with it and see how you feel each time I visit etc.” (Parent)

The majority of the young people and families we spoke to felt they had been trying to find help for some time but had been unable to access what they felt was effective support until the young person came to the attention of SYOS and was offered the Diversion Programme.

“I think without this, I don’t know where we would be with [YP], because we were actually at a point where we were considering having [YP] removed, because we just couldn’t handle him. None of the family could handle that and that was where we were at, so it was very desperate. I don’t think without [YOS practitioner] and that programme we’d be where we are now, well I don’t know where we’d be, it was getting bad to worse if you like.” (Parent)

The early intervention from SYOS was crucial in improving the prospects for many of the young people interviewed, supporting the inclusion of preventative referrals (diversion non-crime) into Diversion Programme in addition to crime referrals. A key influencing factor in effective engagement of young people was the dedication, support and individual characteristics of the YOS practitioner. Young people and their parents/guardians described the YOS practitioner as providing individualised support using a child-centred approach. Some parents also describe YOS practitioners going above and beyond their perceived means, providing a reliable point of contact, involving other services and assisting in school arrangements.

“[YOS practitioner] was really good, she was always at the end of the phone, text, yeah she was really good and really supportive through the whole thing, and did a lot to actually help us, probably more than she actually needed to do in her job criteria, which was nice and really good of her.” (Parent)

This engagement on an individual level led to positive outcomes for many young people, some suggesting that working with SYOS enabled them to change their perceptions around the initial behaviour or crime committed, as well as diverting themselves from further offending behaviour. The development of a respectful and empathetic relationship between the YOS practitioner and the young person, in addition to positive relationships with family members are central in effective engagement and progression.³²

“It’s made me, I don’t know, like I’m more open to that kind of stuff and open-minded, like before I wouldn’t think about things. It was a wake-up call and made me realise how it’s affecting me and the relationships around me, and that. It was really helpful.” (Young person, 15 year old)

“It went from me just coming downstairs and shouting, throwing kicking and smashing things to the point where mum had to call the police. Whereas now I feel like if I get pissed off yes I’ll probably be very unpleasant and you won’t really want to be around me but I’m not doing anything which is harming anybody, including myself, whereas I definitely was back then.” (Young person, 17 year old)

³² Larkins, C. and Wainwright, J. (2014). *Just put me on the right track. Young people’s perspectives of what stops them offending.* University of Central Lancashire.

3.3.2 Perceptions of Professionals

Both police and YOS felt that they were involved in integrated decision-making and that they worked effectively together in the Diversion Programme. In particular, police officers and YOT practitioners felt that having a seconded police officer within the team brought invaluable knowledge, enabling increased service understanding from both sides. This is a positive finding and to be commended as Diversion schemes have worked well elsewhere when there is an established relationship between YOS and police:³³

“I think we work closer together with our YOT officer and have more knowledge of youth offending themselves, because we used to just put a notice to youth offending officer that you would probably never see in a face-to-face. There were never any dynamic interactions between you, and you would send them a notification and then you would just wait for something to come up saying yes we’ve done a home visit, they’re suitable or they’re not and when it came back as suitable it’s like well what does that mean? Whereas [name] and his team now can actually say well this is what this means, you know there is more understanding for us about what their end-game is and what they’re trying to achieve...” (Police Officer)

“The decision-making process, actually being able to have that discussion with the police, or the police in the team has been really useful as well.” (SYOS Management)

Not only this, but the Early Help Practitioners discuss the importance of having links with the youth offending team and also police officers within the team, increasing their access to resources and specialist knowledge.

“Having that agency that have that specialist knowledge around that, that we can then closely work with I think makes a huge difference. And in terms of multiagency working in our area, I found in my role that works extremely well. And we’ve that closer link with the police so if you know there are concerns that arise and you want advice and what to do with certain information and things like that, we’ve got professionals there that we can speak to.” (Early Help Practitioner)

According to police officers, the implementation of the Diversion Programme did not have too much influence upon the workload and resourcing within the service, with some officers suggesting that they had noticed a reduction of youth offenders. Most YOT practitioners also suggest that there has been a reduction in referral orders and court attendance, considered to be attributable to the Diversion Programme itself.

³³ Ministry of Justice. (2012). *Integrated pre-court disposal programme by County Durham Youth Offending Service*. London: MOJ

However, according to YOS practitioners, the workload has increased as a result of higher number of referrals to the Diversion Programme – in addition to various confounding factors, such as an increase in gang-related crime, abstractions of seconded officers from YOT for a time period and the introduction of AssetPlus for the assessment of level 2 diversion cases.

A lot of discussion across all SYOS practitioners was based around the AssetPlus and its perceived applicability to a voluntary diversionary programme, particularly for medium risk level 2 diversion cases. Most YOS practitioners describe frustration and anxiety when receiving a level 2 case due to the perceived lengthy assessment process which takes away time from working quickly with that young person. This is increasingly pertinent as the intervention is of a limited duration (8-12 weeks). The initial resistance against AssetPlus had also led to concerns by YOS practitioners that some young people may have missed out on the preferred length of intervention as a result of time and resource restrictions. However, we are aware that further training is currently addressing this issue. Furthermore, there were additionally some concerns raised by some YOS practitioners and officers that the chance for a ‘short and sharp’ intervention may have been compromised by a delay in PENY submissions by some police officers.

“I think that’s what makes people feel anxious about being allocated to things: it’s not the young people or the complex cases, it’s the fact that you have to pull it all together in that assessment.” (SYOS Practitioner)

“Yeah you can move them up. But you’ve got to remember right, I’ll be honest, if you’re thinking about moving them up you’re then saying, right if I move this up to level 2, I don’t mind working with a kid for longer, but I’ve now got to do the assessment...” (SYOS Practitioner)

“We’re getting referrals coming through for offences that have happened months ago in some cases, and I’m not disrespecting the police for that...” (SYOS Practitioner)

On the other hand, police officers suggested that updates about the young person’s progress after submission of a referral may be beneficial. This was considered particularly important for officers working within Safer Neighbourhood Teams, who come into regular contact with young people and their families. Increased updates from SYOS could improve police confidence in the diversion process,³⁴ and was reflected as an area for attention across police survey responses. It was also brought to the research team’s attention that not all officers were aware of the Diversion Programme, thus continuing to raise awareness may be necessary to ensure consistency and understanding of the programme as an alternative disposal option for youth offenders across all regions covered by Suffolk Constabulary.

³⁴ Wood, S., Eckley, L., Stuart, J., Hughes, K., Kelly, D., Harrison, D. and Quigg, Z. (2011). *Evaluation of the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) in Liverpool*. Liverpool: John Moores University

“Actually just a bit of communication that when they are picking up a young child that is involved in, or is going to go through the Diversion Programme, that they can actually feedback into the SNT to say we’re now dealing with this child, they’re on the Diversion Programme can you link in somewhere, or anything like that really, or just to make us aware.” (Police Officer)

“I would say it’s probably invaluable to know about that because we’re coming into contact with youths constantly, and I would probably hasten to add that I don’t reckon any of the PCs that I supervise know about that.” (Police Officer)

It is important to note that the implementation of the Diversion Programme was also accompanied by the abstraction of seconded police officers from YOS teams, as well as an increase in gang-related criminal activity which placed extra strains upon the police force as well as SYOS and their ability to take on lower risk cases and stretching resources further.

“...we’re getting to a point where we can only accept SSABS and gangs diversion referrals, because 10/11 year olds who are not at risk of gang involvement but are involved in risk of offending just won’t meet our threshold. The young people that are becoming linked to groups and gangs, by the time they’re coming to us on a statutory basis are already well entrenched in that activity and the man hours that are spent on those cases are phenomenal.” (SYOS Management)

Therefore, while the Diversion Programme was considered positively in theory, in practice YOS practitioners and seconded police officers felt increasing resources and timescales within YOT’s did not necessarily address the increasing demand.

“...Diversion is a resource intensive programme and unfortunately resources are going in the opposite direction on all sides, so it's frustrating, because you sometimes feel that you’re perhaps not giving them exactly what it says on the tin. You know what I mean? You want to give them things but actually we’re being pulled from pillar to post. Everyone is really busy and there's just not enough... you know, we're trying to give them this really good programme and perhaps we haven't got enough people to do it...” (SYOS Practitioner)

Despite this, narratives of both YOT practitioners and police display universal support toward the Diversion Programme and its aims, discussing its ability to reduce the criminalisation of young people, increasing future prospects and ‘nipping offending behaviour in the bud’ before young people become entrenched in the youth justice system. Most police officers

also supported the idea of addressing the offending behaviour as opposed to issuing a CR or caution for low level offence. The use of multiple CRs by police for low risk offending was part of the initial reason for the implementation of the enhanced triage³⁵ and Diversion Programme, and frontline officers across all regions positively received having diversion as another disposal option (or 'tool in the toolbox').

"I think the Diversion Programme is a brilliant way of engaging young people who are taking the first steps into the life of crime. It's a brilliant tool. It's a brilliant programme in a sense, level 1s level 2s they both work, because you find that you can divert them from taking leading life events, and it takes longer for them to enter the Youth Justice System - it's worthwhile doing it." (YOS Practitioner)

"I think it's also good from the point of view that some of the work they do with them for diversion is get them away from the CJS, trying to understand their ways and really learn from it, and I think that early intervention is really important to stop anything spiralling later on, so I think it's time well spent." (Police Officer)

In summary, the aims of the Diversion Programme as well as the dedication of SYOS practitioners are universally supported across young people, parents, police officers and early help practitioners. Most young people suggest that by engaging in the Diversion Programme their perceptions around offending behaviour have changed.

Furthermore, parents suggest that without the assistance from SYOS, their child's risk of engaging in further criminal activity or offending behaviour would have escalated beyond their control. Both YOS practitioners and police describe the integrated decision-making between YOS management and YOS police officers as a positive aspect of the process. However, police officers would like to improve communication across services as well as receive updates upon outcomes for young people. YOS practitioners believe that a number of barriers and increasing workloads have influenced their ability to deliver the programme effectively.

³⁵ Manning, M. (2015). 'Enhanced Triage' an Integrated Decision Making Model. iSEED: Ipswich.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the evaluation has demonstrated universal support for the Diversion Programme in its aims to reduce the criminalisation of young people by reducing the number of juvenile offenders and young people displaying criminogenic behaviours entering the youth justice system. YOS practitioners and police officers display considerable support toward the joint decision-making process between seconded YOT police officers and SYOS management. Police officers, YOS and early help team practitioners greatly value communication with the YOT police officers as it provides access to the service and specialist knowledge. Most victims of youth offending find the restorative justice process to be positive and supportive. Young people and parents' narratives display gratitude to SYOS for providing a personalised, child-centred service.

The number of referrals to the SYOS has increased by 12.7% since the previous year. A total of 468 referrals were dealt with via non-statutory diversion (crime or non-crime) disposal options (56%). Of these, only 12% went on to commit an offence, thus potentially reducing the number of FTE's into the YJS, where these offences may have been dealt with using statutory outcomes prior to the Diversion Programme. Furthermore, the increase in referrals resulting in diversion outcomes as opposed to community resolutions depicts a deviation from the use of multiple CRs by police described in previous evaluations.

Early indicators suggest that those who have completed an intervention or ongoing intervention are less likely to offend further than those who declined intervention or those who received an NFA. The findings also suggest that young people who received an outcome of NFA are six times more likely to offend after referral, suggesting there is a need for consideration of assessment criteria, categorisation of data collected or workload and resourcing allocation within SYOS in order to respond to increasing diversion referrals.

Police officers, particularly those within Safer Neighbourhood Teams, describe a desire for improved communication with SYOS, including regular updates about the young people referred to the Diversion Programme. YOS practitioners raise concerns around numerous barriers and confounding factors, such as completion of the AssetPlus, increasing workloads and rise of juvenile gang-related criminal activity, which has impacted their ability to meet timescales and provide the desired level of service.

Despite concerns around increasing workloads, referrals received were evenly distributed across all three SYOS teams, demonstrating how consistent and effective the countywide roll out of the Diversion Programme has been. Not only this, but it can be inferred that the consistent approach and evenly distributed referrals means young people are receiving equal access to personalised and holistic intervention services provided by SYOS, despite differences in locality across the county.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings drawn from this evaluation present universal support across stakeholders for diversionary and preventative approaches for young people in conflict with the law or at risk of offending. Early indicators suggest that young people who are currently engaged or have completed an intervention on the Diversion Programme are less likely to offend after referral, compared to those who declined intervention or received NFA. The narratives of young people and parents, who express high levels of satisfaction toward the individualised intervention and their overall experience of the Diversion Programme also support this finding. Nonetheless, as with any evaluation of this nature, some factors needing further consideration were identified during the research process. The research team has therefore devised the following recommendations to guide future development:

1. Increased levels of multi-agency communication

Police officers, particularly those within Safer Neighbourhood Teams, described a desire to be informed by SYOS more regularly about the outcomes and progression of each young person after referral, as evident in qualitative interviews and survey data. Developing formal and consistent strategies to provide feedback about a young person to police officers may be beneficial to further establish positive working relations, as well as increase trust and confidence in the Diversion Programme^{36,37}. Creating a formal strategy of feeding back information into Children and Young Peoples services may also prove beneficial, particularly with the introduction of the preventative strand to the Diversion Programme.

2. Promoting dissemination: The Diversion Programme and its criteria

During some of the qualitative interviews it was suggested that potentially, some police officers did not know about the Diversion Programme. Continued promotion of the programme as a disposal option for officers by SYOS is thus recommended. Raising awareness of the Diversion Programme and its criteria for referral may enable more proportionate responses by police officers in terms of investigation. This can lead to quicker interventions by SYOS, but also more effective information transfer between police and young people/families around their suitability for referral to the Diversion Programme. Currently, police officers are able to issue one community resolution prior to referral to the Diversion Programme; so increased awareness may also assist in encouraging police officers to refer the young person to SYOS prior to the issuing of a first community resolution.

³⁶ Wood, S., Eckley, L., Stuart, J., Hughes, K., Kelly, D., Harrison, D. and Quigg, Z. (2011). *Evaluation of the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) in Liverpool*. Liverpool: John Moores University

³⁷ Home Office (2012). *Assessing young people in Police Custody: An examination of the operation of Triage schemes*. Available from: <http://www.icpr.org.uk/media/33168/Home%20Office%20Triage.pdf>

Some practitioners within children and young people's (CYP) services also noted a need to increase awareness of the Diversion Programme and its criteria for referral. A limited understanding of when to refer a young person was reflected in the survey responses from some CYP practitioners. So raising awareness of the Diversion Programme criteria for these services further should improve multi-agency working, as well as assist in managing possible expectation, particularly with the introduction of prevention referrals.

3. Revisiting the data: Longitudinal collection and clarification

The research team suggests that SYOS should continue to follow the current cohort of young people, which would be beneficial so that accurate and causal inferences can be made with regards to reoffending rates. Collection of longitudinal data would also enable more accurate conclusions to be formed in relation to the influence of the Diversion Programme upon FTEs and the number of young people receiving statutory and non-statutory disposal outcomes compared to those in the previous year.

Revisiting the dataset may also enable clarification around the referrals receiving NFA. The finding that young people who receive No Further Action (NFA) are significantly more likely to offend after referral compared with those receiving intervention suggests that it also may be useful to investigate the reasons why these young people received NFA within the dataset. Further investigation will enable more clarification around whether a review of the way data is collected and categorised, the screening processes, resource allocation, or if all three is necessary, or even whether other possible explanations can be identified.

4. Further consideration of workload monitoring and resource allocation

It is recommended that further detailed analysis of workload and resource allocation, to sustain the resources required to deliver an effective diversion service, should be undertaken by SYOS.

APPENDIX 1: SYOS Process for Diversion Referrals



*Allocations may be adjusted and are at the discretion of the manager