

'My Future' - secondary prevention programme for boys at risk of entering the criminal justice system

'My future' was a pilot programme funded by Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence (other)
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Education Local authority Private sector Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is at a pilot stage.
Start date	February 2026
Completion date	March 2026

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

The aim of the pilot was to support boys aged 14-16 years who had been permanently excluded from mainstream education and had some contact with the criminal justice system.

Specifically, the pilot aimed to support them in their pro-social identity development, as well as helping to explore options for employment.

The idea of the pilot came from Gloucestershire's violence prevention plan which prioritised children and young people in its strategic objectives. By utilising the Youth Endowment Fund violence prevention toolkit, and having lived experience discussions with the young people, a multi-agency, community-based programme was developed.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the pilot were to:

- reduce the likelihood of children becoming involved in violence
- improve pro-social behaviour
- improve feelings of safety from children in the community
- improve aspirations and opportunities for employment
- improve knowledge of health and wellbeing

Description

Gloucestershire adopts a public health approach to violence prevention, prioritising a theory of change which looks to identify the "cause of the cause" of issues that affect communities and individuals, and a multi-agency, community-based approach to violence prevention focusing on encouraging pro-social identity development and employment opportunities.

Alongside members of the Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) identified a gap in targeted early intervention programmes for young people in secondary offending cohorts. Gloucestershire's local data provided criteria for selection based on the demographic of children receiving the highest amount of out of court resolutions and disposals. In addition to local data, Youth Endowment Fund Children, Violence and Vulnerability' reports highlighted the disproportionate trend of children involved in the criminal justice system and school exclusion, which prompted conversations with Gloucestershire's alternative provision provider, Altus Schools.

The pilot design process started with discussions with boys who attended the county's alternate provision. These conversations informed which organisations and professionals would be approached to take part. Alongside these discussions, scrutiny of potential activities against the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit further triangulated decision making around what may be the most effective.

Before the delivery of the programme, The Music Works (TMW), a charitable organisation that supports youth justice, delivered a training input for delivery staff on dealing with challenging behaviour. TMW have been recognised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons as a best practice organisation in their adoption of the child first framework, and the support they provide to young people who have been involved in the criminal justice system.

All of the young people selected for the pilot attended alternative provision and had been chosen by their designated safeguarding lead based on the following criteria:

- aged 14-16 years
- been in contact with the criminal justice system or been caught in the possession of a weapon
- had not served a custodial sentence

Once selected, the young people were triaged by Young Gloucestershire, a countywide youth work organisation. Young Gloucestershire assessed the boys' suitability for the pilot and spent time building relationships with them to reduce any anxieties around the programme.

The four-week timetable adhered to their normal school routine; they spent four days on the programme with one day back in their schooling centre on a Wednesday. The programme included deliveries from the following organisations:

- Gloucester Rugby Foundation – delivered classroom and practical sessions working towards a sports award
- Cheltenham Town Community Trust – delivered classroom and practical sessions with an offer of 6-weeks football delivery post-programme to achieve a coaching qualification
- The Music Works – the young people produced and wrote songs based on their experiences working with music leaders
- Wiggly Catering Charity – delivered cooking lessons to support the young people in making 'fakeaways' with a focus on nutrition
- Hollie Gazzard Trust – delivered sessions on reframing masculinity and supporting the young people to recognise pressures placed on young men in society
- SkillZONE – delivered sessions in an 'interactive village', focussing on the realities of county lines and carrying offensive weapons
- Young Gloucestershire – delivered employment sessions helping the young people to craft a CV, explore employment opportunities, and visit Gloucestershire College
- Let's Talk Well – delivered future-focused one to one therapeutic interventions for the young people, with an option for continuation following the pilot
- Youth Justice Team – delivered lived experience sessions highlighting the impact of custody and knife crime

Throughout the four weeks, lunches were provided to the cohort as well as kit for the practical sessions. This included training from both Cheltenham Town and Gloucester Rugby that was personalised for the young people at a reduced cost. Additionally, the pilot received sponsorship from a global shipping company who provided the young people with boots appropriate for the 4G pitch.

Three professionals attended every session with the young people as support, which included a police officer, a senior youth worker and a teaching assistant from the boys' respective schooling centre. In addition, a youth justice worker was available throughout the programme as flexible support for the young people.

In addition to the follow up therapeutic intervention sessions offered by Let's Talk Well, the boys were also offered post-programme support from Young Gloucestershire, where they could sign up to programmes such as the transition chat programme to identify training and employment opportunities.

In relation to the sporting interventions, Cheltenham Town offered the young people an additional six weeks of sessions to achieve a coaching qualification, and Gloucester Rugby Foundation supported the young people in signing up for their local clubs and offered match day work experience.

Evaluation

An evaluation is taking place this year with the support of Gloucestershire University, with the results expected in January 2027.

Data collection has included the following methods:

- practitioner reflections on the process of designing and building the programme
- practitioner reflections on the delivery of the programme
- triage Data
- post-pathway data
- child voice reflection
- six-month post-pilot interviews with schools and support organisations

The evaluation will be structured using the QUALIPREV framework to evaluate the design quality, theoretical foundation and effectiveness of the crime prevention pilot.

A couple of early findings observed include:

- increased attendance for all of the boys during the pilot timeframe
- two students have been given work experience opportunities with Gloucester Rugby
- one student who was previously not attending school, and was being mentored, has since attended his centre following the programme
- two students who were previously at risk of being NEET (not in education, employment or training) have signed up to college to do courses in construction and multi-skills
- feedback from the young people has been mainly positive

Overall impact

The pilot results will be presented to executives in Gloucestershire Constabulary and Gloucestershire County Council who will work with the alternative provision provider to embed the

programme as business as usual. The design and implementation of this project has taken a full public health approach, placing value and importance on local, community and place-based intervention.

Relationships between the providers that delivered on the course and statutory agencies have improved as a result of their deliveries, and some are working on separate projects that they can deliver together.

The staff within the alternative provision have all provided positive feedback, and some have utilised their relationships with the agencies to further support students in the school. For example, the youth engagement police officer is now in regular contact with the school.

Gloucestershire OPCC is in the process of scoping a similar pilot for a female cohort. The lived experience part of the project has commenced with focus groups of girls. The learning from the 'My future' pilot is already being applied to the plans for the female cohort. This programme will differ in its delivery due to the existing evidence base of violence prevention. The Youth Endowment Fund identified that violence prevention for males works best in activity-based sessions such as sport and music, whereas female violence prevention is most effective through building relationships with mentors and professionals.

Learning

- Having an organisation such as The Music Works deliver training on how they work with children was beneficial to enable other organisations to understand appropriate boundaries and discipline. However, this session highlighted that some organisations were not fully understanding of the concept or the experiences of the young people. Further conversations with these organisations may have been beneficial before the programme started to ensure enough support was offered to facilitate the aims and objectives of the programme.
- Those who had more contact with youth workers during the triage phase before the pilot (two months) settled and performed the best throughout the programme. During the triage process, organisations were offered the opportunity to meet the boys and talk about their delivery to reduce any anxieties and barriers during the programme. The organisations that went in to speak to the young people faced less challenging behaviour in the early weeks. For future practice, an increased triage time is recommended to give the youth workers, and other resource support, the opportunity to build relationships with the young people.

- Following the school day structure ensured that the young people had appropriate transport to and from the programme. Those who were being mentored were offered a taxi or were driven by their mentor. Additionally, the provision of food and equipment benefitted the delivery as the young people had consistent routine and logistical barriers were removed.
- The practical elements were all preferred by students, specifically the sport, music and cooking. The theoretical sessions that involved lived experience inputs were identified as the most engaging and impactful by the young people.
- The therapeutic intervention was scheduled during other activities on the programme. This meant that one or two individuals would be in their future-focused therapy session while another activity was taking place. For future programmes, the therapeutic intervention should be scheduled either during the day off, before the programme or as a post-programme support option so that individuals do not miss key inputs from delivery partners.
- There was extensive resource support throughout the programme, however reflections highlighted that not all resource staff were trying to build relationships with the young people or taking part in the activities. It is important that all resources provided by the organisations are invested in the values and purpose of the programme. Notably, the relationship built between one of the students and a teaching assistant at his centre supported him in returning to school after being mentored.
- The size of the groups ended up being too large, with two cohorts of eight children. On the days with almost 100% attendance, disruptive and challenging behaviours became more frequent.

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