

Avon and Somerset Police early intervention research project

Project examining two early intervention programmes currently being delivered by Avon and Somerset Constabulary to divert young people away from engagement in serious violence.

Key details

Lead institution	Bath P-ACE
Principal researcher(s)	Dr Haydn Morgan and Dr Andrew Manley, University of Bath hjm23@bath.ac.uk
Police region	South West
Collaboration and partnership	• Avon and Somerset Police • Empire Fighting Chance
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	July 2026
Date due for completion	May 2027

Research context

The aim of the project is to examine two early intervention programmes currently being delivered by Avon and Somerset Police to divert young people away from crime and prevent engagement in serious violence. The two programmes are the Counterpunch Project, a non-contact boxing programme delivered by Empire Fighting Chance, and the Motocross Diversionary Programme, offered to young people across Bristol. Both of these programmes specifically aim to engage young people who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation, using the programmes as a diversionary activity to establish pro-social relationships (social capital), build resilience and confidence (psychological capital), and create pathways into education, training and employment (human capital). While the

programmes are offered to young people between the ages of 10 and 24, priority is given to young people who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation between the ages of 12 and 16.

Research methodology

We are undertaking a qualitative study involving in-depth case study research on the two identified early intervention programmes. This will involve interviews with programme staff, and co-produced activities (for example, mentor facilitated interviews) with current and previous programme participants, over a period of six to eight months. Interviews will be conducted with members of the Early Intervention Team at Avon and Somerset Police and delivery staff at both Empire Fighting Chance and the Motocross Diversionary Project.

Interviews will also be conducted with the young people who are participating in the programmes together with key staff (for example, coaches/mentors at Empire Fighting Chance, Engagement Officers from the Early Intervention Team) so that the young person's reflections on their experience of the early intervention programme can be co-produced and facilitated in a supportive and safe environment.

As with all research conducted by the University of Bath, the research will be approved by one of the University's Research Ethics Committees, ensuring that the research adheres to strict guidelines in relation to informed consent, data protection, confidentiality and safeguarding. Such processes will be reinforced to take account of the fact that the research will involve 'minors' and/or potentially vulnerable young people as research participants.

Research participation

Participants will be members of the Early Intervention Team at Avon and Somerset Police and delivery staff at both Empire Fighting Chance and the Motocross Diversionary Project. Young people who are participating in the programmes will also be involved as research participants.