

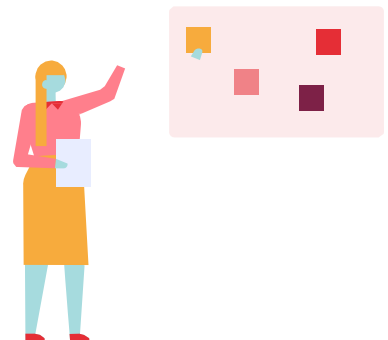
Evaluation of the St Giles Choices Programme

Final pilot evaluation report

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February 2023



- **Youth Futures Foundation** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established with a £90m endowment from the Reclaim Fund to improve employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds. Our aim is to narrow employment gaps by identifying what works and why, investing in evidence generation and innovation, and igniting a movement for change.
- **St Giles Trust** was established in 1962 to support individuals held back by poverty, unemployment, the criminal justice system, homelessness, exploitation, and abuse to build a positive future. The St Giles Trust delivery model and approach has lived experience at the heart of the solution, by training people with experience of these challenges to help others through peer-led support and social action. The Choices programme continues this work, supporting some of the most disadvantaged young people in London into employment.
- The authors would like to thank the staff and clients at St Giles who supported the evaluation and young people who supported the scoping phase to define the evaluation methods; without their time and insights the evaluation would not have been possible. Brendan Ross led programme delivery, was the main point of contact for the evaluation, and was particularly generous with his time and insight. We are grateful to Tyrone Morille, Kamrul Raham, Jamie Loyn, Hezz Sookal, Daniel Chapman, Ganjahnah Williams, Perry Mavrides, Rianna Naraine, Phoebe Kaggwa, Kapree Robinson, and Jacob Ayoade for sharing their knowledge and experiences and introducing us to clients and stakeholders. Our thanks also go to Kevin Taylor who facilitated the team's access to programme data.
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Executive summary

The Choices programme

St Giles Trust was established in 1962 to support individuals held back by poverty, exploitation, abuse, addiction, mental health problems, caught up in crime or a combination of complex issues.

A total of £332,895 was allocated to St Giles by Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to support an 'impact pilot' evaluation of the Choices programme. As part of its first '[What Works Programme](#)', YFF commissioned 'impact pilot' evaluations where programmes were deemed to be high quality, had a good evidence base, and were working at sufficient scale for an impact evaluation. Choices was targeted at young people aged 16-24 in London with experience of or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system.

The programme aimed to work with 150 young people in this group who experienced two or more identified barriers to work. These included challenges such as growing up in a household experiencing poverty, low educational attainment, history of substance misuse, or experience of school exclusion or alternative educational provision.

Choices aimed to support eligible young people to progress towards and into employment, education, or training. The delivery model had lived experience at the heart of the solution, with staff and volunteers often having lived through and overcome the kinds of challenges faced by their clients and those of other services for people facing disadvantage. Case workers often had lived experience as well as volunteers who were trained as peer advisors to provide peer-led support. The support was intended to be bespoke, asset-based¹, and time-unlimited, so that young people could engage at times and in a way that suited their needs and motivation.

Direct funding was used to support the employment of staff to deliver the programme (one programme manager and three case-workers), and fund other components such as an individual client budget of £150. Staff could access other financial support for participants from external sources, such as for training, grants for clothing, household items, food, or emergency accommodation.

Partner organisations made programme referrals (e.g. Youth Offending Services), and provided wider support and interventions for programme participants, such as education and training opportunities. In addition, participants had access to wider support available within St Giles.

¹ Asset or strengths-based approaches seek to build on existing human, social, cultural, and environmental resources when addressing challenges. The approach seeks to move away from models of support which focus primarily on the deficits (i.e. what is going wrong or missing) of an individual.

The evaluation

This report documents the findings from the pilot evaluation of the Choices programme. The main aims of the pilot evaluation were to understand and evidence the theory underpinning the support model for Choices. This includes the mechanisms of change (i.e. the factors that contribute to intended outcomes).

The evaluation took a theory-based approach. A Theory of Change (ToC) was articulated at the outset based on the programme intention and refined at relevant points to reflect actual delivery. St Giles recorded data about participants, their support activities, and outcomes. The data included in this report represent the data set for programme participants enrolled between 4th August 2021 and the end of March 2023, with outcomes collected up to 19th September 2023.

The evaluation consisted of qualitative depth interviews with 11 staff in managerial or case worker roles, and a total of 44 interviews with 36 programme participants.

Summary of study findings

Programme implementation

- The programme exceeded the referral target of 150, with 268 young people referred to Choices over the period of the pilot.
- There was no single dominant referral route to Choices; referrals came from over 20 separate sources.
- The support model was delivered as intended. It had lived experience at its core. The support was participant-centred and led, taking place at the pace young people determined, commonly after an extended period of trust-building. The nature of actions identified and taken were varied and tailored to participant needs.
- The lack of a structured pathway to exit the programme meant that young people engaged on their own terms, and would return dependent on their needs and motivations. For instance, some participants that had moved into education intended to reengage with St Giles after their course completed to access further support to find work. This was enabled by open engagement and a time unlimited support offer.
- Interviews with young people highlighted the range of external support they accessed, including services they were part of before joining Choices and afterwards.

<p>Short-term outcomes: personal development; skills, knowledge and experience; and work-readiness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was emerging evidence with insights from multiple sources that Choices made a positive contribution to participants' wellbeing. • There was some limited evidence that Choices positively contributed to improving the relationships of participants, alongside improving their skills, knowledge and job search. • There was some limited evidence that the support helped to reduce wider barriers to work such as housing and finance. • There was little or no evidence that the support changed participants' motivation to work. • The accessibility and relatability of case workers with their lived experience of the challenges faced by programme participants were key enablers to outcomes. • Staff sought to create agency among participants to determine their own path. For example, providing them with choice in whether to focus on employment or education, which job roles to apply for, and when and how to engage in the support. This approach facilitated engagement.
<p>Intermediate outcomes: Employment, education, and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One third of participants (33%) had an employment outcome recorded. There was some limited quantitative and qualitative evidence that the support positively contributed to these outcomes although there was no comparison group. • One third of the cohort (32%) had a recorded education or training outcome. There was some limited quantitative and qualitative evidence that the support positively contributed to these outcomes, but no evidence from a comparison group. The programme used education and training to provide participants with pathways to meaningful employment.
<p>Refinement of the Theory of Change (ToC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ToC was refined during implementation to take account of the changing context. Staff reflected that the pandemic increased young peoples' support needs and decreased their readiness for work. Young people were isolated during the pandemic, and overcoming this required more support from case workers to build their confidence to engage and act.

- Implementation was affected by changes in how statutory services were delivered during the pandemic. There was an increase in services offering telephone or web-based interaction and support which changed young people's expectations of how they would engage with services. It was important to demonstrate the benefits of meeting in person to young people, which included getting out of the house, and meeting new people face-to-face.
- Personal development outcomes, such as improved confidence and wellbeing, were described as the foundation for other outcomes because they helped to create stability and readiness in mindset for change.
- The intermediate outcome measures identified at the outset (entry into employment, education or training) were still considered to be relevant and to appropriately reflect the different stages and potential barriers to progression faced by participants.
- The emphasis on employer engagement increased during delivery and was added to the ToC as a new activity. The team created more links with employers and hosted a monthly Jobs Fair with employers open to recruiting participants.

1. Introduction

Background

There are multiple risk factors for young people becoming (further) involved in crime at the individual, familial, social, community and societal level. These include poor mental health and disengagement from education at the individual and family level, living in a community where criminal activity is prevalent, and a lack of positive activities and opportunities for young people at a community level (See Depth Qualitative study infographic for more details). Several of these risk factors were exacerbated by the pandemic, the effects of which increased the vulnerabilities of young people. For example, through increased mental health needs and reduced access to protective factors (such as school) during lockdowns.

One-third of young offenders reoffend within one-year (ONS, 2023). Young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) are more likely to be convicted of a crime (Barrow Cadbury, 2011). Employment is a proven factor in reducing the likelihood of reoffending (MoJ, 2013). However, people with a criminal conviction face discrimination when seeking work. The percentage of employers who say that they would, hypothetically, recruit someone with a conviction has increased in recent years, but is still below half (now 45%, compared with 25% in 2010)(Working Chance, 2022).

The Choices programme

St Giles Trust was established in 1962 to support individuals held back by poverty, unemployment, the criminal justice system, homelessness, exploitation and abuse to build a positive future. The delivery model and approach have lived experience at the heart of the solution, by training people with experience of these challenges to help others through peer-led support. The Choices project continues this work.

A total of £332,895 funding was allocated to St Giles by Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to support an 'impact pilot' of the Choices programme. As part of its first ['What Works Programme'](#) YFF commissioned 'impact pilots' where programme were high quality, had a good evidence base, and were working at sufficient scale for an impact evaluation.

Choices was targeted at young people aged 16-24 in London with experience of or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system. These formed the programme's eligibility criteria. The programme aimed to work with 150 young people in this group and who experienced two or more identified barriers to work. These included challenges such as growing up in a household experiencing poverty, low educational attainment, history of substance misuse, or experience of school exclusion or alternative provision.

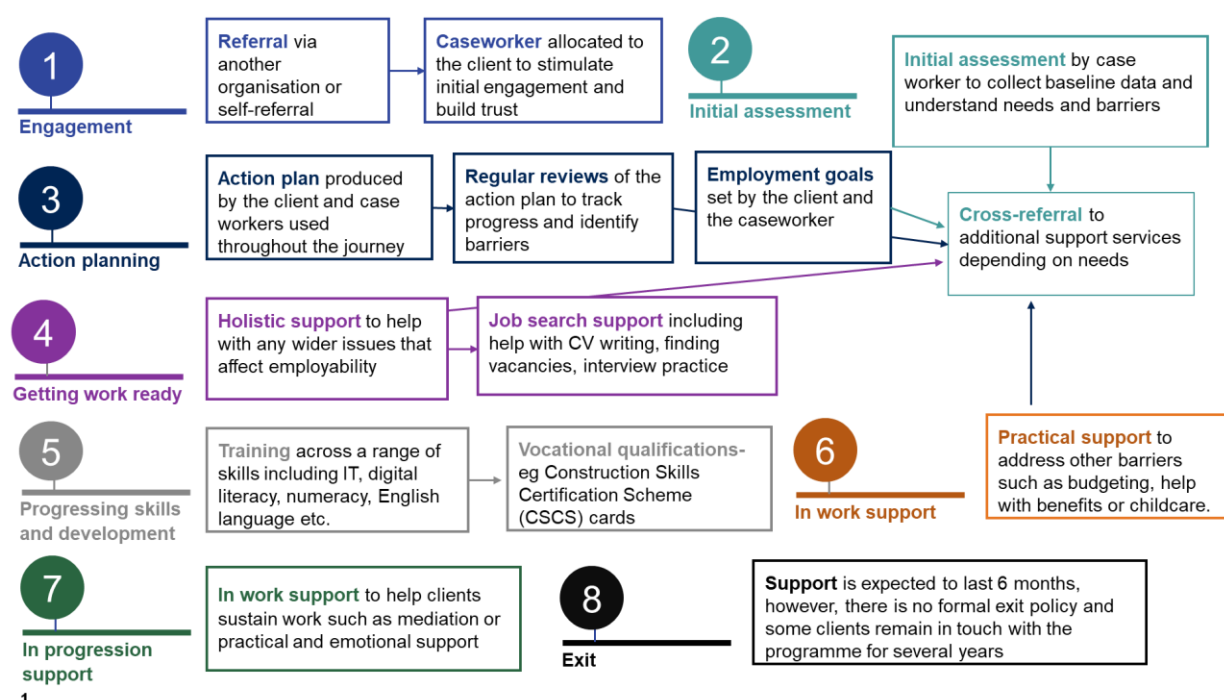
Choices aimed to support eligible young people to progress towards and into employment, education, or training. Education and training outcomes related to the completion of training courses and the skills and qualifications gained from these. Employment outcomes related to progression into work, then once in work, to progression to more skilled or highly paid work. The programme aimed to ensure that work was well-matched to participants' skills and interests to support sustainment.

Direct funding was used to support the employment of staff to deliver the programme (one programme manager and three case-workers), and fund other components such as an individual client budget of £150. Clients could also be supported by peer advisors who were trained volunteers. St Giles could access wider financial support for participants from external sources, such as for training, grants for clothing, household items, food, or emergency accommodation.

The programme pilot received additional financial support from Credit Suisse when in January 2022, St Giles transferred two case workers funded by Credit Suisse to deliver another similar programme (“Flip the script”) to Choices along with their clients. The model of support offered through the Credit Suisse case workers was the same as Choices and they were therefore included in the pilot evaluation.

Partner organisations made programme referrals (e.g. Youth Offending Teams, Local Authorities), and provided wider support and interventions for programme participants, including education and training opportunities. In addition, participants had access to wider support available within St Giles. This included up to ten sessions with an in-house counsellor, an employment and skills tutor and training sessions covering topics such as CV building, interview techniques and digital skills. The participant journey map for the Choices programme is outlined in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Choices participant journey map



Source: Ipsos, 2023

The nature, type and dosage of support was intended to vary between participants driven by their individual needs. Some participants joined Choices when they were close to or ready to start work whereas others had additional support needs that needed to be resolved before they could consider work. The programme was voluntary. It was therefore important that participants were motivated to engage with the support.

Evaluation aims and objectives

Ipsos, in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), was appointed by YFF to evaluate Choices. There were three stages to the study: a pilot evaluation to understand and evidence the theory of the support model, including and how and why participants did or did not achieved outcomes; a depth qualitative study to explore in detail the views of young people and stakeholders of the support needed by this group of young people; and an impact feasibility study to explore options for future impact evaluation.

This document reports the findings from the **pilot evaluation**, the key aims of which were to:

- Fully understand the programme theory of the Choices support model and the mechanisms of change.
- Evidence the ToC to understand the pathways and drivers of outcomes, the elements of the model that were most effective, the impact of contextual factors, and outputs and outcomes.
- Capture a rich understanding of how and why participants achieved outcomes and the mechanisms that resulted in outcomes.

The aims of the **depth qualitative study** (see depth qualitative study infographic for more details) were to:

- Explore the individual, community, and systemic reasons/risk factors for youth offending.
- Gain insights into the experiences of young people encountering the criminal justice system and understand the challenges they experience in attaining education, training, and employment outcomes.
- Explore effective support pathways for reducing barriers and improving outcomes for young people.

The aims of the **impact feasibility study**, which was used to inform YFF's funding decisions, and was not published, were to:

- Understand the intervention feasibility of Choices, assessing the extent to which it was delivered as intended and could be replicated to produce and evidence the intended outcomes.
- Assess the feasibility of Choices for an efficacy study and provide recommendations about potential approaches for a future impact evaluation.

Structure of this report

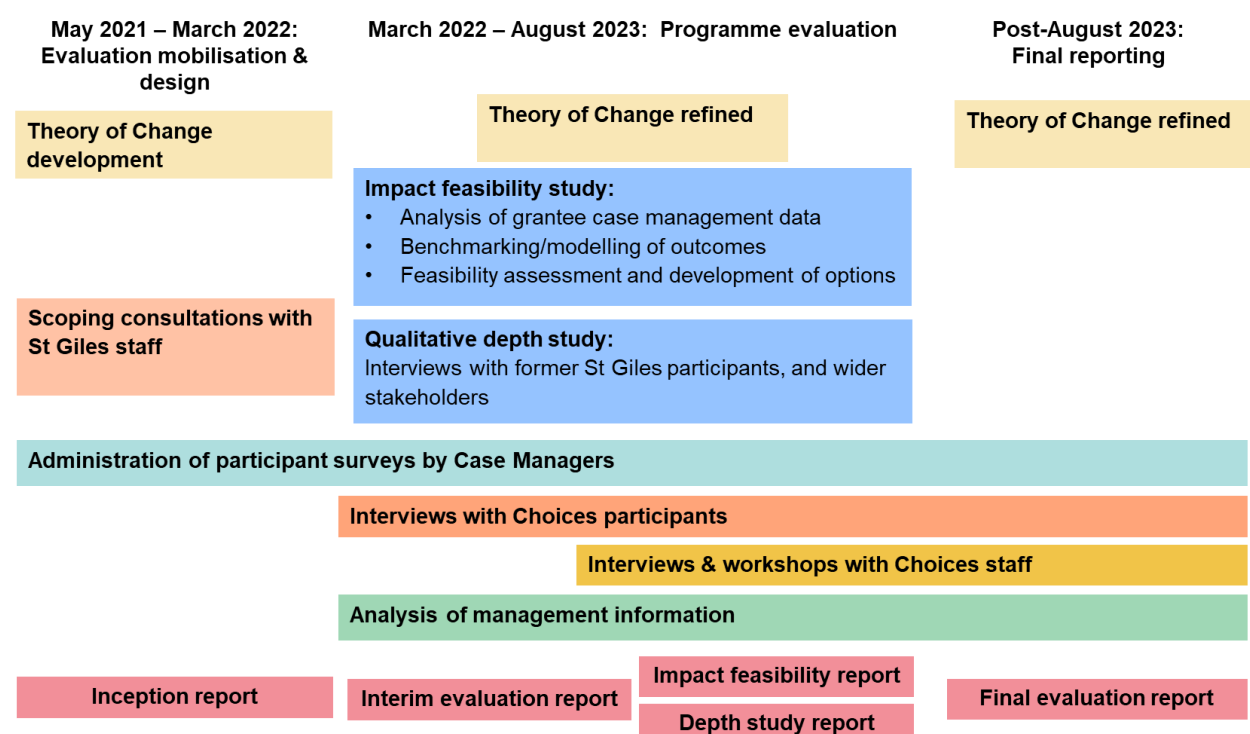
The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** – details the methodology for the pilot evaluation and key sources of data and evidence.
- **Chapter 3** – details the original Theory of Change for Choices
- **Chapter 4** - reports key findings from the implementation of Choices.
- **Chapter 5** – reports key findings relating to the short-term outcomes from the programme.
- **Chapter 6** – reports key findings for the intermediate outcomes from the programme, employment, education, and training outcomes.
- **Chapter 7** – provides a final Theory of Change for Choices
- **Chapter 8** - provides a summary of findings and lessons for future evaluation and delivery.
- The **Appendices** include full methodological details, the research tools, ethics and data protection documentation, a detailed timeline of the programme and evaluation and data tables.

2. Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the pilot evaluation methodology. Figure 2.1 illustrates the different stages of the Choices programme evaluation and the methodologies used. Full details of the methodology are contained in Appendix 1.

Figure 2.1 Overview of the stages of the Choices evaluation and methodologies used



Overview of methods and research questions

The evaluation used mixed methods. Quantitative data was collected by case workers and analysed to evidence the programme outputs and participant outcomes. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with programme staff, stakeholders, and clients. This data was analysed to test the assumptions and mechanisms of change identified in the ToC, seeking to explain in which contexts, for whom and why Choices made a difference. Table 2.1 summarises the data collected for the evaluation and the research questions evidenced.

Table 2.1 Data collected for the evaluation, by aim

Pilot evaluation aim	Analysis of programme data	Depth interviews with programme staff	Depth interviews with programme participants
1. Understand the model's programme theory and the mechanisms of change.		✓	✓
2. Evidence the ToC to understand the pathways and drivers of outcomes, the elements of the model that were most effective, the impact of contextual factors, and outputs and outcomes.	✓	✓	✓
3. Understand how and why participants achieved outcomes.		✓	✓

Theory of Change development

The context for Choices and the programme design was outlined in Chapter 1. A theory-based approach was taken to the pilot evaluation of Choices. A Theory of Change (ToC) articulated the programme intention, described in Chapter 3. The original ToC was developed based on a review of programme documentation, academic literature, interviews with relevant staff at St Giles and young people participating in similar programmes and a workshop with the programme team in August 2021. The ToC was revisited with staff mid-way through delivery (August 2022) and at the end of the pilot evaluation (September 2023). The final ToC and refinements are detailed in Chapter 7.

Data collection: programme monitoring data

St Giles used Inform (a version of Salesforce) to record baseline and registration data for Choices participants and ongoing data about support activities and outcomes. The data included in this report represent the full data set collected by the programme for participants enrolled between 4th August 2021 and end of March 2023, with outcomes collected up to 19th September 2023. A list of the fields collected in the programme data is available in Appendix 1.

The programme data had varied degrees of completion between fields. Table 2.2 summarises the number of participant records with completed information for key fields.

Table 2.2 Summary of data completeness for key fields

Data field	N	% of programme participants
Number of referrals	268	N/A
Number of programme participants	208	100%
WEMWBS (pre and post outcome) matched	88	42%
WOQ (pre and post outcome) matched	68	33%
Needs domains² (pre)	164	79%
Needs domains (matched)	65-66	32%

The 14-pt Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) pre-questionnaire was administered by case workers to measure elements of the ToC, specifically short-term change on mental wellbeing (see Chapter 3). The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) is a validated tool and was developed to enable the measurement of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The scale has been widely used nationally and internationally for monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes and investigating the determinants of mental wellbeing (See Appendix 5 for more information). There were total scores available for 194 programme participants (72% of the total referred). Case workers also administered the post-questionnaires. Post questionnaire scores were available for a total of 91 participants (34% of those referred). Of these, 88 pre and post WEMWBS measures could be matched. WEMWBS was intended to be administered to participants at entry to the programme, and then again every three months whilst they were on the programme, and finally at the point at which they finished the programme. However, the timings of WEMWBS data collection by case workers was not always consistent.

The Attitude to Employment Work Opinion Questionnaire (WOQ) was suggested during the scoping phase as an intermediate outcome measure by the evaluation team because staff felt it was challenging to convince young people in the target group about the benefits of work. The purpose was to test the feasibility of the WOQ as an outcome measure for the programme. The WOQ was intended to be administered to all programme participants at first registration (baseline) and again every three months thereafter and / or when they exited the programme. Total scores were available for 170 programme participants (63% of the total referred) and post-measure total scores available for 73 participants (27% of those referred). Of these, 68 pre and post WOQ measures could be matched.

Data was collected by case workers on the education, training, and employment (ETE) outcomes of programme participants. In addition to total employment outcomes, data

² The needs assessment had six domains: education, training, and employment, finance, safety, housing, family and social relationships, and health and wellbeing.

covered the type of employment. However, it was unclear how often or at what point this data was collected, or the process by which it was collected. While programme participants were followed up regularly, the programme data is likely to under-represent the true number of employment outcomes, as some participants stopped responding to follow-up communications once they no longer accessed programme support.

Qualitative data collection: programme staff

Interviews during the scoping phase engaged eight members of staff at St Giles in management and operational roles such as case workers. During the mainstage of the evaluation, monthly meetings were held between the evaluation team and the Choices team manager and case workers. During these calls, staff fed back on implementation, including what was going well and less well, and upcoming events and activities (e.g. jobs fairs). Face to face interviews with case workers took place during site visits in January and June 2023. In total there were 11 staff interviews. The discussion guides used are in Appendix 2.

Qualitative data collection: programme participants

During the scoping phase, nine interviews with young people supported by St Giles programmes (including Choices) took place. Based on the feedback gathered through the scoping stage, the initial proposal to set up an online community portal to engage participants was discounted because staff and young people felt that clients would not engage with this mode, and there were safeguarding concerns.

The depth research with participants at quarterly timepoints using telephone and face-to-face interviews to gather feedback on experiences of Choices and progress towards outcomes was therefore extended. All young people who agreed to be contacted for the evaluation were invited to take part in the qualitative research (n=173). The purpose was to gather feedback on their experiences of the support received, outcomes achieved or expected and views on the contribution of Choices to outcomes. The interviews explored young people's circumstances and motivations / expectations at entry to the programme and the wider context within which the support was delivered, including key enablers and barriers to progression. The discussion guides used can be found in Appendix 2.

A total of 44 interviews were completed with 36 programme participants during a mixture of telephone and face-to-face interviews. Of these, 27 were completed with participants who had reached the three months point of support. A further 17 interviews were conducted with participants six-months or more after enrolment to the programme, eight of which were longitudinal. Where the young person had completed a three-month interview, up to three attempts were made to contact them to take part in a follow up interview at the six-months point.

Qualitative data from interviews with Choices participants were inputted into an analysis framework structured around the discussion guides, with separate sections for the data from interviews at the three-month stage and six-month follow-up. A thematic analysis using the analysis framework was conducted, identifying key trends and variations between participants' accounts of the programme at the different interview stages. Notes from interviews and workshops with Choices case workers and the findings from the qualitative

depth study were similarly analysed using a thematic approach, with specific focus on how they corroborated or contrasted the findings from participants.

Data synthesis and aggregation

Robust analytical methods were applied across the quantitative and qualitative data collected for the evaluation. Following this, the analysed data was triangulated to identify key findings, themes and patterns across the various data sets to address the evaluation questions relating to processes and outcomes. It also incorporated an assessment of the evidence in relation to the hypotheses associated with the ToC.

Finally, the findings were synthesised to provide an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the programme in relation to its theory and intended outcomes. Aggregation was undertaken by mapping evidence to each mechanism and outcome. For example, assessing whether any outcomes were supported by more than one evidence source, or by more robust evidence to assess confidence in the findings.

Ethics and data protection

The evaluation design was reviewed by the Ipsos Ethics Group. Agreement to be contacted by the evaluation team was obtained from young people by their case worker at registration to the programme, and 173 clients agreed for their data to be shared. To inform these decisions, there was a participant information sheet setting out how data would be used for the evaluation (see Appendix 3). For this aspect of the project, Ipsos, St Giles, YFF and LJMU were independent data controllers. Data was processed to support the evaluation of the programme. Data held by Ipsos and LJMU was deleted on publication of the report. Programme data continued to be held by St Giles and YFF beyond this point.

Limitations of the evidence

The evidence available to inform the pilot evaluation has limitations, which should be considered in the interpretation of the findings in this report. These include:

- **Missing data:** there was missing data in the programme monitoring data. Although the programme data improved during the lifetime of the pilot, there remained inconsistencies and gaps which made it difficult to fully evidence the ToC. For example, data was missing on the depth and intensity of support provided to each participant and whether they had achieved education and training outcomes. It was not always clear if this was because the information was not collected or whether participants had declined to provide this.
- **Low samples sizes (for outcome measures):** the numbers of pre/post outcome measures were sufficient for analysis. However, there was missing data (see Table A5.1 for information about sample sizes for all outcome measures). Inconsistent implementation of the quantitative measures used to evidence intermediate outcomes (WEMWEBS and WOQ) mean that they did not represent effective evaluation tools for the programme during the pilot. The measures were not administered to participants at regular time intervals and there were specific challenges in administering them with

participants when they left the programme as the end date was not specified. A further issue was that the tools were often read out to participants by case workers who recorded their responses, which could have contributed to positive bias in the results as participants wanted to agree and demonstrate progress to their case worker. The findings should be interpreted in the context of this limitation. It is possible that outcomes among the group whose data was not available differed (positively or negatively). Low sample sizes have curtailed the ability to compare sub-groups and to undertake multivariate analysis.

- **Agreement to take part in the evaluation:** It proved challenging to gain the agreement of programme participants to take part in qualitative interviews, with 17% of programme participants participating in an interview (36 out of 208). However, this qualitative data is useful to illustrate experiences and provide a range of views.
- **Participant self-selection biases:** participants could decide whether they wanted to participate in the evaluation, meaning that those who have chosen to take part may not be representative of all participants.
- **Gaps in data collection:** Despite improvements in programme data collection during delivery, there remained gaps. For example, data was not recorded on the length of each engagement or what it involved beyond the domain of support and communication type. Furthermore, both a text message and a half day meeting with a client would each be counted as a single action. Similarly, an action relating to 'finance' could involve guidance on how to access benefits or a substantial grant for clothing, household items or support with temporary accommodation. It is therefore not possible to assess the average number of hours of engagement per client, or to explore in detail which types of activities were most frequently associated with outcomes – a key requirement for testing the ToC and understanding the causal mechanisms underpinning change. Another limitation of the data is that it only records activities and support delivered directly by St Giles case workers. It does not record the range of wider support accessed by programme participants from elsewhere within St Giles or externally.

3. Original Theory of Change

This chapter provides an overview of the original Theory of Change (ToC) created at the outset of the programme.

Context

As noted in Chapter 1, one-third of young offenders reoffend within one-year. Young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) are more likely to be convicted of a crime (Barrow Cadbury, 2011). Employment is a proven factor in reducing the likelihood of reoffending (MoJ, 2013). However, people with a criminal conviction face discrimination when seeking work.

Inputs

A total of £332,895 funding was allocated to St Giles by Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to support an 'impact pilot' of the Choices programme. Direct funding was used to support the employment of staff to deliver the programme (one programme manager and three case-workers), and fund other components such as an individual client budget of £150. Clients could also be supported by peer advisors who were trained volunteers. St Giles could access wider financial support for participants from external sources, such as for training, grants for clothing, household items, food, or emergency accommodation.

Additional inputs from external partners included referral mechanisms; enhanced access to and linkages between support/interventions across organisations; and education and employment opportunities/placements for programme clients.

Activities

The participant journey map was detailed in Figure 1.1 and discussed in Chapter 1. It included:

1. Engagement: referral and initial engagement with a case worker with lived experience.
2. Initial assessment: building an understanding of needs and barriers.
3. Action planning, reviewing and goal setting.
4. Getting work ready: providing holistic and job search support
5. Progressing skills and development, including access to training
6. In-work support: including practical support and progression.
7. Programme exit.

The Choices support model had three central programme theories:

- **Lived experience:** Using case workers and peer advisers with lived experience builds trust and engagement and motivates change among young people with experience of criminal justice or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system.

- **Creating agency through strengths-based support:** Young people will sustain their voluntary engagement because they are able to determine the pace of support with a focus on their strengths and interests. They will use the service when they are exploring options for making a change and be motivated and facilitated to lead and drive change for themselves.
- **Support to create stability and readiness to engage with EET:** Young people can develop and maintain stability in the wider factors that may affect their ability to sustain their engagement with Choices (e.g. housing and finances).

Short-term outcomes

The support provided by Choices was expected to contribute to varied personal development outcomes for participants. These were intended to be the foundation for moving towards work or training and included improved self-awareness, confidence, resilience, and motivation, as well as improved mental wellbeing, relationships and aspirations for the future.

Participants were expected to increase their skills, knowledge, and experience through support from a case worker undertaking activities and guided conversations to enhance their ability to job search and perform at job interviews. Participants were also expected to increase their skills, knowledge, and experience through completion of accredited skills and training courses and by undertaking work experience.

These personal development and skills, knowledge and experience outcomes were intended to contribute to improved work-readiness which included improved awareness of skills, strengths and opportunities, improved attitudes towards work and a reduction in wider barriers to progression.

Intermediate outcomes

The primary outcome for the Choices programme was entry to employment, education or training (measured via St Giles' routine programme monitoring data). Participation in Choices was also expected to contribute to a range of criminal justice outcomes for participants, including reduced risk of (re)offending. However, these criminal justice outcomes were not systematically assessed through the pilot evaluation because they are not a primary focus for the Youth Futures Foundation.

Impacts

Through delivery of the programme, and achievement of interim outcomes, additional impacts beyond engagement in training and employment were anticipated to be achieved, including:

- Sustained or improved employment status and economic advantage / life earnings (reducing poverty).
- Reductions in risk factors and health harming behaviours including (re)offending, exposure to violence, homelessness/unstable housing.

- Improved quality of life; and economic gains across society through reduced need for financial support, increased productivity / higher tax revenues, and reduced costs of crime, violence, and healthcare provision.

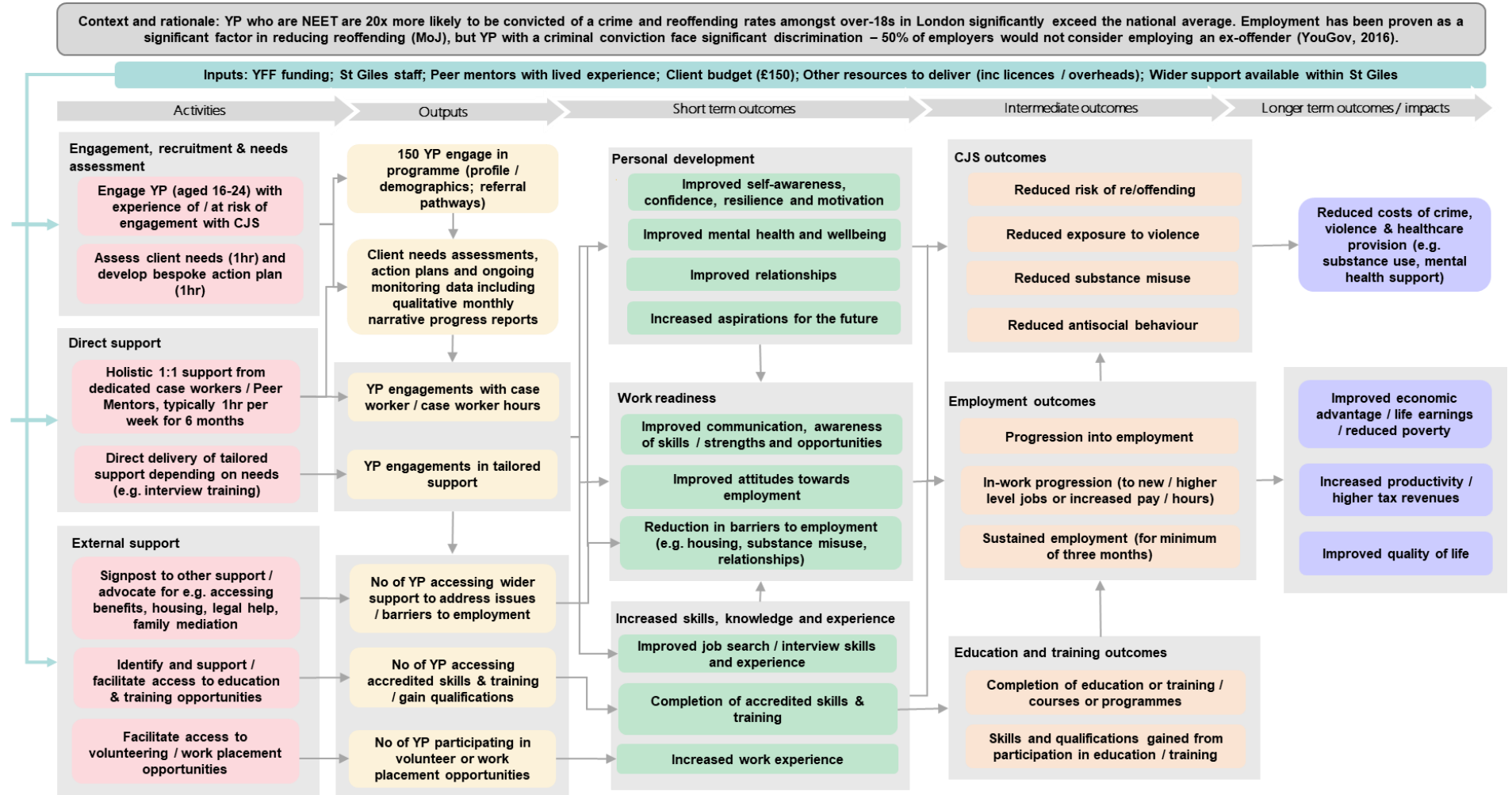
These longer-term impacts of the programme were out of scope of the pilot study.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions underpinning the Choices Theory of Change that were identified to be explored and tested through the evaluation. These included:

- That young people will actively engage with the programme.
- That young people will sustain their engagement with programme activities.
- That young people can develop and maintain stability in terms of the wider factors that may affect their ability to sustain their engagement with Choices (including housing and finances).
- That the activities will build young people's resilience, self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.
- That opportunities for employment will be available and that these will match the skills and aspirations of the young people.
- As lack of education is a risk factor for not being in employment, education opportunities will address any deficit in education attainment and provide a pathway to meaningful employment (Mawn et al, 2017).
- That intensive multi-component interventions will increase employment amongst young people.

Figure 3.1: Theory of Change for Choices



4. Findings: programme implementation

This chapter presents the main findings of the pilot evaluation in relation to implementation, focusing on participant engagement and recruitment, referral routes and the support model in practice.

Engagement and recruitment

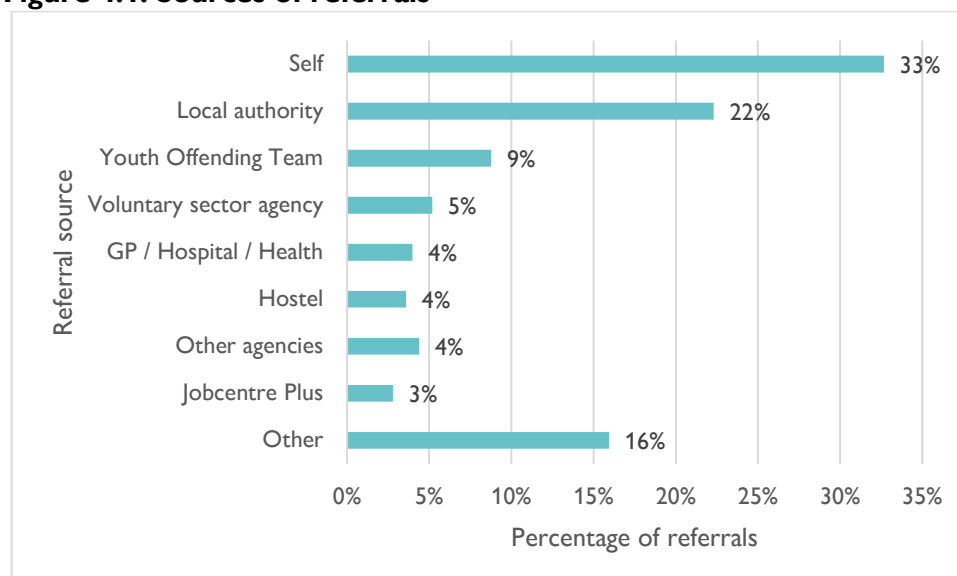
There were 268 participant referrals to Choices recorded. All young people who were referred to the programme were engaged by case workers through face-to-face meetings, phone calls and / or messages. During this time, case workers sought to get to know them and develop trust and buy-in to the programme. Of those referred into the programme, 15% (n=41) declined the programme referral. Case workers indicated that people in this group were not ready for the support.

Referral routes

There was no single dominant referral route or pathway onto Choices. Referrals came from over 20 separate sources (Figure 4.1). Around one in three (33%) participants self-referred, including engaging after a recommendation from a friend for example. Just over one in five (22%) participants came through local authority teams (social services, children's services, probation, and community safety). Around one in ten (9%) were referred by Youth Offending Teams and the remainder of referrals came from varied other sources including voluntary sector agencies, Jobcentre Plus, hostels, health, education, community mental health, probation services and police. Sixteen percent of referrals came from other organisations which were those not included on St Giles monitoring information.

Project delivery staff noted that many statutory services experienced staffing shortages and staff turnover during the programme. This meant that newer staff in partner organisations were less aware of the range of support services available to refer people into, including Choices. This was considered by delivery staff to have contributed to the falling share of referrals from other organisations during the programme.

Figure 4.1: Sources of referrals



Source: St Giles Programme Monitoring Data

Base: 258 programme referrals – referral source missing for 40 participants

Young people interviewed heard about Choices through a variety of sources. After hearing about the programme, some felt optimistic and positive because they believed the support would be tailored to their needs and allow them to focus on employment sectors and job roles where they wanted to work. Other participants expressed uncertainty about taking part or were quite disinterested. These young people were reluctant to have another organisation to engage with in addition to the statutory services that supported them, or expressed apprehension about what would be involved.

Young people's expectations of Choices were related to how developed their education and employment goals were. When they joined the programme, those who knew what sector they wanted to work in and skills they wanted to improve had clearer expectations of the goals they sought through the support. Others explained that they started Choices with little or no expectations and were simply open to receiving any support available. Participants whose career goals were less developed were vaguer in their expectations, hoping that St Giles could help them plan their future better.

Money was a key underlying motivator for continued engagement, especially in the context of the rising cost of living. However, in cases where young people had been used to being able to gain money through illegal means, staff found it more challenging to sell the benefits of earning money through a wage.

Profile of young people enrolled

Table 4.2 summarises the demographic characteristics of all programme participants who enrolled onto the programme. It shows that the programme was successful in reaching the intended audience and engaged young people who met the programme eligibility criteria (young people aged 16-24 in London with experience of or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system). Over half of clients (56%) had a history of offending, meaning they

had a criminal conviction, with the remainder being viewed as being at risk of engaging with the criminal justice system.

Most recorded referrals were male (84%). There was age diversity within the referrals, but the most common age bracket was age 18-21, accounting for more than two fifths of participants (43%). Participants included people from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Most participants (65%) lived with friends or family at the point of enrolment.

At the time of programme referral, most clients were unemployed (90%). However, the programme also supported some young people who were in education (2%), in part-time (5%) or full-time (1%) employment on referral.

St Giles staff observed recent changes in the profile of young people who engaged with the services and support they offered, including through the Choices programme. They reported that since the pandemic, cohorts included more young people with higher level qualifications, such as degrees. Data on the level of qualification of participants at enrolment was not collected and so this cannot be further evidenced.

Table 4.2: Profile of engaged participants

	Total	%
Gender		
Male	183	84
Female	35	16
Data missing	1	-
Age at registration (years)		
16-17	56	26
18-21	91	43
22-25	66	31
Data missing	6	-
Ethnicity		
Arab/Asian	27	13
Black	119	56
Mixed	24	11
White	41	19
Data missing	8	-
Housing situation		
Living with family/friends	140	65
Hostel/temporary accommodation	22	10
Children's home/foster care	#	#
Tenancy/Private owner occupation	27	13
Prison	#	#
Rough sleeping	#	#

	Total	%
Supported housing	9	4
Other	10	5
Data missing	4	-
Offending history		
Yes	108	56
No	86	44
Data missing	25	-
Employment or education status		
Unemployed	192	90
In education	#	#
Full-time employment	#	#
Part-time employment	10	5
Other	#	#
Data missing	6	-

Source: St Giles Programme Monitoring Data (# = data suppressed)

Base: 219 programme participants

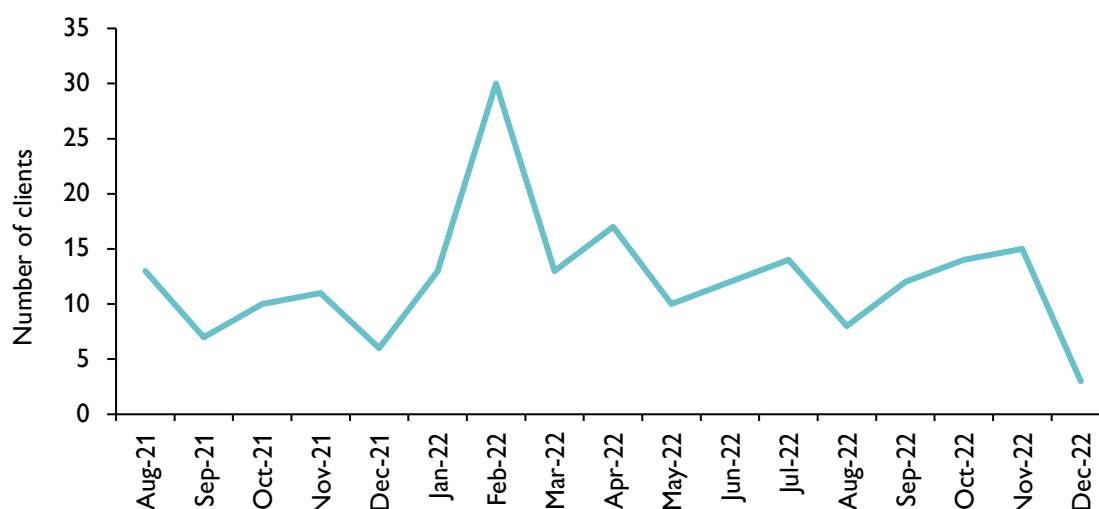
Enrolment

St Giles faced recruitment challenges during the first months of delivery, until December 2021, due to restrictions in place for the Covid-19 pandemic. These restrictions limited the amount of face-to-face outreach work staff could undertake with potential programme participants. Staff believed this also negatively affected the level of referrals from partners as many services were operating a reduced and / or remote service during this time.

The number of new client registrations by month is shown in Figure 4.3. The highest number of monthly clients enrolled was in February 2022 when 30 clients joined the programme. This coincided with an easing of lockdown restrictions as well as the transfer of two case workers (and their clients) from another St Giles programme to Choices³. The average number of new clients per month was 15.

³ The two case workers and clients were brought over from a programme called “Flip the script” which was identical to Choices and funded through Credit Suisse.

Figure 4.3: Number of new client registrations, by month



Base: 208 programme participants with enrolment date

Participants' experiences of registration were generally positive because they felt that their case worker (or the person they initially engaged) had a positive attitude and put them at ease.

Support model in practice

Choices support model has lived experience⁴ at its core. The support was participant-centred and led, taking place at the pace they determined, commonly after an extended period of trust building. This approach ensured that participants felt safe and comfortable to actively consider work.

The common features of the support model were a needs assessment, the development of a client-owned action plan, and one-to-one support from a dedicated case worker. The rest of the support offer was tailored to the needs identified. It included direct support, such as skills development, getting work ready, and support with accessing housing or benefits. Case workers also made referrals and signposted participants to external support.

Case workers used an asset-based approach⁵, focused on helping the young person explore what they like to do and are good at. This approach was seen to be especially valuable for young people who had disengaged from school or struggled academically and had low self-esteem and aspirations as a result.

The nature, type and degree of support therefore varied between participants, driven by the initial needs assessment. As a result, client journeys varied considerably. The support

⁴ By 'Lived Experience', St Giles mean living through and overcoming the kinds of barriers and challenges faced by their clients and those of other services for people facing disadvantage. Staff and volunteers combine their passion for enabling others to overcome their challenges and tackling stigma, discrimination and exclusion, with the professional skills and expertise a demanding training & development pathway gives them.

⁵ Social Care Institute for Excellence. (2023). [Asset-based Approaches for Integrated Care](#) Accessed November 2023.

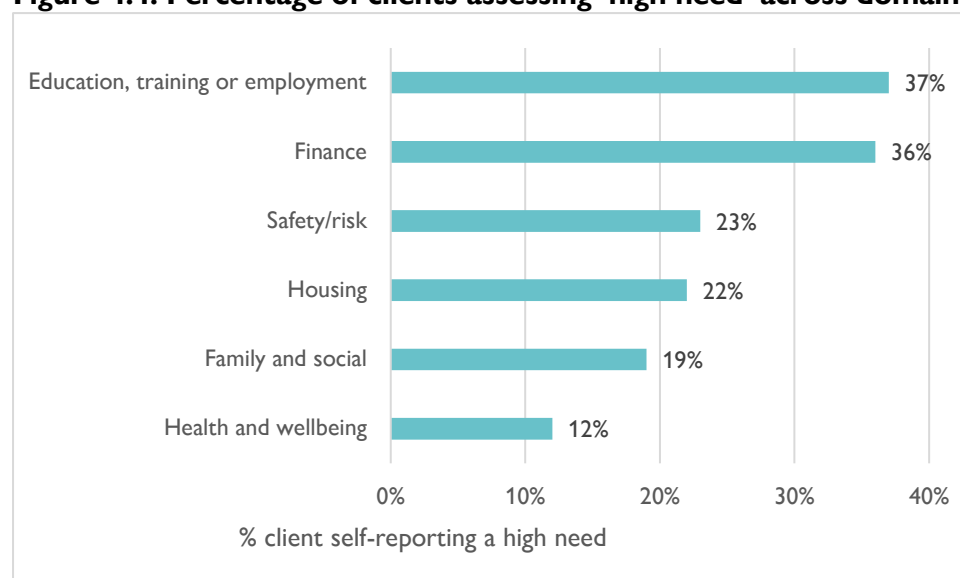
was time unlimited. Participants could continue to engage with Choices when they found work, or started training, and could disengage and then reengage at a later point. This recognised that the contexts and situations of participants were challenging, and progression was unlikely to be linear.

Needs assessment

On entry to the programme, a needs assessment developed by St Giles was conducted to identify areas clients needed support. Clients rated their level of need across six domains covering housing, health and wellbeing, education, training and employment, safety, family, and social relationships. A score of 1 or 2 on the needs assessment was considered a low score, indicative of a 'high' level of need. The assessment also included scores from case workers and a narrative.

The most identified areas of high need on programme entry were with education, training, and employment (37%), and finance (36%). Around one in five clients reported Safety (23%), Housing (22%), or Family and social relationships (19%) as high levels of need. Health and wellbeing were less frequently scored as high need, with 12% of participants identifying this area at the outset (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Percentage of clients assessing 'high need' across domains



Source: St Giles Programme Monitoring Data

Base: 164 participants giving client ratings

'High need' is defined as providing a score of 1 or 2 out of 5

Interviews with participants confirmed that individual circumstances and needs at registration varied. Barriers to work included not receiving responses to job applications, limited previous work experience, not knowing how to approach job-seeking, low confidence and having a criminal record.

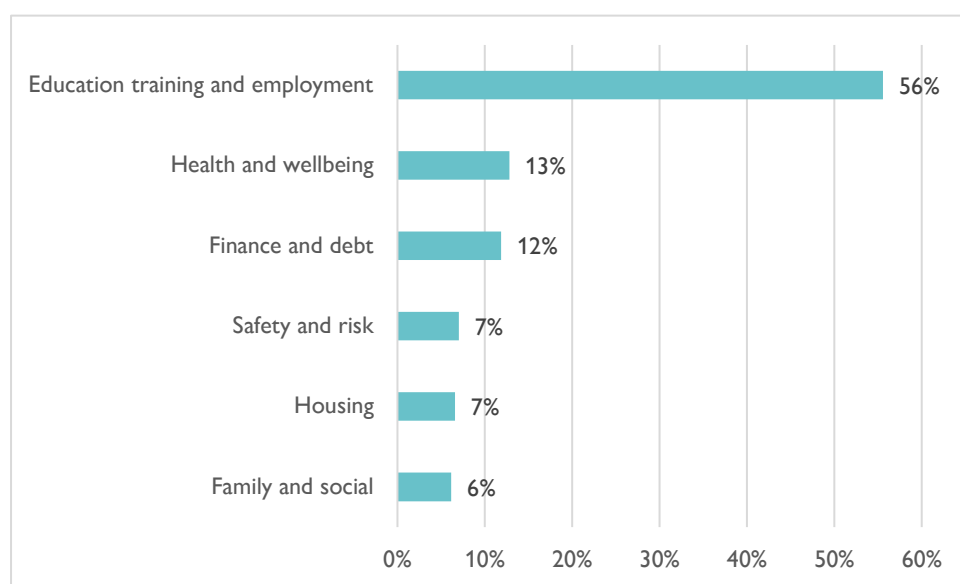
The emphasis young people placed on education, employment or training, and their readiness to work varied and changed over time. In some cases, interviewees highlighted

that housing or mental health were their main priorities at the time of registration, rather than looking for work. There were cases where participants were employed at enrolment, either part-time or within sectors they did not want to pursue long-term.

Actions taken to support participants

The programme data shows that the most common theme of recorded actions was education, training, and employment (56%). This was also most frequently identified during the needs assessment, and the primary focus of Choices support. However, the programme supported participants holistically, as demonstrated by the extent of actions recorded relating to health and wellbeing (13%), finance and debt (12%), safety (7%), housing (7%) and family and social relationships (6%) (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Types of actions delivered to programme participants



Source: St Giles Programme Monitoring Data

Base: 3,219 actions with content available.

The nature of any given action was varied and tailored to the participant. Case workers supported young people with:

- **Development of (career) goals and/or a personal action plan.** Generally, young people interviewed did not remember writing a specific plan but recalled discussing and developing goals with their case worker about what they would like to do in the future. For young people with less of an idea about their long-term future, goals were broad, focusing on identifying things that interested them. Participants with clearer ambitions noted more specific goals, such routes to consider like apprenticeships. Staff reported that recent increases in inflation and cost of living increased interest in moving into work rather than training or education, as there was an increased need to contribute to household budgets.

- **CV writing and interview skills.** Young people received support with building their CV and interview skills. Participants mentioned being offered workshops focusing on interview skills, which included delivering presentations.
- **Support searching for and securing education, training, and employment opportunities.** This included case workers sharing jobs of interest and supporting young people with applications for work and training opportunities. Young people emphasised that opportunities shared by case workers aligned with their interests rather than being generic opportunities.
- **Funding for qualifications and equipment required to pursue career goals.** Examples include St Giles providing funding for participants to get their Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card to enable them to get an apprenticeship or job within the construction industry.
- **Support with other aspects of their life.** Several participants interviewed said they had received support from St Giles to address wider barriers to employment, including support for housing, benefits, and mental health. Stakeholders recognised there are often practical aspects of support that are needed for young people, including applying for identification documents and opening a bank account for their wages to be paid into. It can take a long time for young people facing multiple barriers to achieve employment outcomes, highlighting the importance of collecting and evidencing intermediate outcomes.

Tailored support from a dedicated case worker

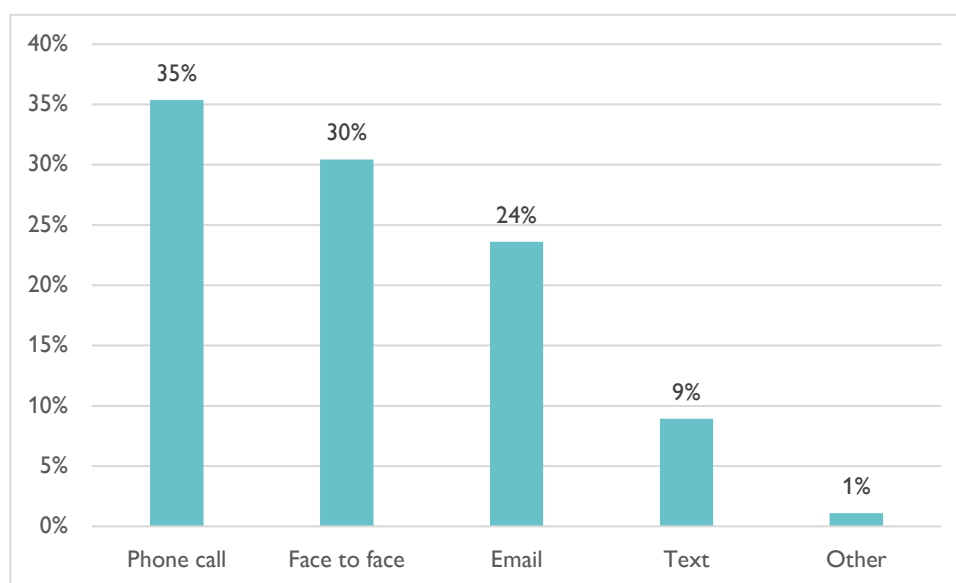
Interviews also highlighted how support was tailored to individual needs and circumstances. The importance of the provision being bespoke and flexible was acknowledged by both staff and participants as critical in supporting young people towards work. Alongside this, support was both asset-based and peer-led, with case workers and peer advisors having lived experience and being role models from their community, helping young people to build trust and focus on finding the right employment for them.

Young people used a variety of communication methods to engage with their case worker and reported settling into a rhythm of which methods they mainly used and how frequently they would use them. This varied from being in touch multiple times a week, typically via phone calls or text messages, to every two to three weeks in a face-to-face meeting. In the qualitative data, there were young people who communicated primarily by phone call and text rather than in-person, typically because they had a less involved relationship with their case worker. This level of flexibility appeared to suit participants, as they generally appeared happy with this arrangement.

“Very welcoming but professional at the same time, friendly, they listened to me and were trying really hard to help me.” (Choices programme participant)

The programme data illustrates this variety of communication methods. For actions where data was recorded, interactions were split between phone (35%), face-to-face (30%) and email (24%) communication (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Communication methods for actions



Source: St Giles Programme Monitoring Data

Base: 2,474 actions with communication method available

External support

Effective partnership working was viewed as important to support young people with a smooth transition between services and wraparound support. Sector stakeholders and partners explained how communication and efficient information sharing between partners and support workers was crucial to reduce duplication and maintain the engagement of participants. Organisations such as St Giles with in-house services were seen as best practice by sector stakeholders as they allowed young people to access different types of support and activities in one place, meaning that young people were familiar with the location and staff.

Case workers noted they referred participants to external support when required, for example to mental health support. Young people discussed referrals to support agencies relating to mental health or housing by their case worker. Feelings of low self-esteem and being excluded from wider society were common and therefore accessing specialist support to address these issues could be a precursor to focusing on education and employment opportunities.

Interviews with young people highlighted the range of external support being accessed, including services accessed before joining Choices and after. External support relating to education and employment included Jobcentre Plus and other employment programmes. Beyond education and employment support, participants noted meeting with social workers and mentors.

Work with employers

Case workers highlighted the role that job fairs had in achieving employment outcomes for participants, though they were selective in only sending young people who they felt were ready for employment to maximise the chances of success. The employers St Giles worked with and invited to these events were all based locally. They were from a range of sectors and were open to employing people with a criminal conviction. Case workers noted that all the employers they worked with were engaged and the reassurances St Giles provided that any programme participants employed would continue to get wrap around support contributed to this.

Time-unlimited support

The lack of a structured pathway to exit the Choices programme was discussed in the interviews with young people. Of the young people who were no longer in contact with St Giles, either because they started a job or were not looking now, there was consensus that they could get back in touch with their case worker if anything changed and they would like to resume engagement in the future. Indeed, some of young people in education intended to reengage with St Giles after course completion to access further support to find a job. This is enabled by open engagement and the time unlimited support offer.

5. Findings: Short-term outcomes

This chapter presents available evidence on short-term outcomes for participants of the Choices programme, summarised in Table 5.1. Several short-term outcome measures were collected focusing on six areas of client need as measured by self-reported client ratings⁶. Mental wellbeing was measured by the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and attitudes to employment were measured by the Attitude to Employment Work Opinion Questionnaire (WOQ).

These findings should be considered in the context of the limitations of the evaluation discussed in Chapter 2, specifically the sample sizes for quantitative measures and that the sample sizes for each measurement tool may not be comprised of the same people. When assessing the strength of evidence consideration has been given to the number and quality of data sources to support the claim.

The strength of evidence assessments are based on the following descriptors:

- **Emerging evidence** (dark green): For these outcomes we have multiple sources to support the claim, both quantitative and qualitative evidence, but there remain limitations given that the evidence is self-reported, there are issues with the completeness of some datasets and there is not a comparison group.
- **Some limited evidence** (light green): For these outcomes we have data from one source that supports the claim and that refers to a direction of travel that may lead to the outcome realisation but does not tangibly support its achievement. There are limitations with the source, for example it is self-reported or has a small sample size.
- **Little or no evidence** (red): to provide a suitably robust assessment that the programme contributed to this short-term outcome measure.

Table 5.1 Summary of short-term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Change between baseline and most recent post assessment	Direction of evidence	Strength of evidence
Improved relationships	Statistically significant change in mean score on relationship needs from 3.6 to 4.1	Positive	Some limited qualitative and quantitative evidence of Choices improving relationships.

⁶ Statistical analysis used paired sample t-tests to assess change on outcome measures between initial assessment and first post assessment, and between initial assessment and the most recent assessment. Significant changes are described below, and further analyses (including non-significant results) are presented in Appendix 5.

Short-term outcome	Change between baseline and most recent post assessment	Direction of evidence	Strength of evidence
Increased self-awareness, confidence, and aspirations for the future	N/A	Positive	Some limited qualitative evidence that the support contributed to participants having increased self-awareness, confidence, and aspirations for the future.
Improved wellbeing	Statistically significant change in mean score on WEMWBS from 47.0 to 50.3.	Positive	Emerging evidence of positive contribution of Choices to wellbeing from combination of the WEMWEBS measure, client's needs assessment and qualitative data.
Improved skills, knowledge and experience related to job seeking.	N/A	Positive	Some limited evidence from qualitative data (a post measure only).
Attitude to work (WOQ)	Increase in WOQ mean score (23.1 to 23.4) not statistically significant.	Positive	Little or no evidence. The WOQ measure suggests that attitudes to work did not change significantly. Staff reflected that attitudes were challenging to change among young people who are disengaged from work and education. The measure had a small sample size (matched for one-third of participants). It is possible that the sample of pre/post matched WOQ scores were different to the sample of those who achieved employment outcomes.

Short-term outcome	Change between baseline and most recent post assessment	Direction of evidence	Strength of evidence
Removing barriers to work	Statistically significant changes in mean scores on finance (from 2.7 to 3.4), housing (from 3.4 to 4.0), and safety (from 3.4 to 3.7).	Positive	There is some limited evidence that barriers to work such as finance and housing, were reduced, indicated by the needs assessments and qualitative data. This assessment is caveated by the fact that the needs assessments were not validated measures, and that the qualitative data tended to be biased towards participants that remained engaged with the support.

Personal development

Choices was expected to contribute to participants' personal development outcomes including their relationships with others, underpinned by a trusting relationship with a case worker, and their wellbeing. This section discusses the evidence for each in turn.

Increased self-awareness, confidence, and aspirations for the future

There is some limited evidence from the qualitative data that the support received contributed to participants having increased self-awareness, confidence, and aspirations for the future. When first joining Choices, young people typically described having limited or no future aspirations, particularly when there were short-term issues or recent changes in their life taking priority. Staff felt that participants' confidence was often low. After receiving support, young people tended to have increased aspirations overall, better awareness of their strengths, and to be more confident in working towards employment or education, though this varied person to person. There were participants who had identified long-term career goals and were actively working towards these, but others who were still not sure of their future. For example, one participant had enrolled on a college course to train to be an electrician. Part way through the tutor said they did not have the right level of English and Maths and so they withdrew from the course. At age 23, the participant felt that their options for apprenticeships were limited and they could not afford to pay for further learning and so were uncertain about their next steps.

Relationships

There was some limited evidence from the needs assessments and qualitative data, that the support positively contributed to the quality of participants' relationships.

Clients perceived that the positivity of their personal relationships increased during the programme. Between the baseline needs assessment and the most recent post assessment there was a statistically significant increase in mean score on relationship needs from 3.6 to 4.1 (n=65).

Case worker and participant relationships underpinned the support model. Lived experience was viewed by the staff, stakeholders and young people interviewed as central to the effectiveness of the relationship. The qualitative depth study highlighted that staff with lived experience supported engagement because young people felt that the staff member was authentic and relatable. Lived experience helped staff build greater trust between them because young people felt they understood their situations and context. Case workers and peer advisors with lived experience were able to show vulnerability and provide role models of different ways of living. Lived experience helped some young people to reach out for help when they were fearful and to overcome issues such as hypermasculinity. For example, one young person described their case worker as a mentor and role model, with similarities in experiences and upbringing inspiring them to make positive changes in their life. This experience was not universal, and qualitative interviews found young people who had lost touch and stopped communicating with their case worker, sometimes due to staff changes resulting in them not being sure who to contact.

“[They] felt like a mentor... they had been in my position when they were younger and it was someone I could relate to, they grew up in the same area, and had had the same experiences as me.” (Choices programme participant)

Wellbeing

There is emerging evidence from a combination of the WEMWBS measure, client's needs assessments and qualitative data, that the support positively contributed to participants' wellbeing.

Where WEMWBS data was available for participants (n=88), this showed significant increases over time. From baseline assessment to most recent assessment there was a statistically significant increase in mean score on WEMWBS from 47.0 to 50.3. By the most recent post assessment the WEMWEBS participant scores had risen closer to the population norm of 51.6 (Warwick, 2011).

This improvement in WEMWBS score was supported by data from clients' needs assessments, which found that between baseline and the most recent post assessment there was a statistically significant increase in mean score on health and wellbeing needs from 3.7 to 4.0 (n=65).

During interviews, young people highlighted the positive difference the programme made to their wellbeing. The role of the case worker was critical to the realisation of these outcomes, with young people saying they felt able to talk to them about issues or challenges they were facing that were not just about job seeking. Several noted they felt they could confide in them about other personal matters, felt supported by them and that they helped reframe how they saw their current circumstances. This was perceived to have helped improve their wellbeing, making them feel more motivated and supported in all aspects of their life.

“Yes, and if I ever needed to talk about private issues, or if I was concerned about my wellbeing, it wasn’t just finding work but also health.” (Choices programme participant)

Skills, knowledge, and experience

There is some limited evidence from the actions recorded and qualitative data, that Choices contributed to participants having improved skills, knowledge and experience related to job seeking. More than half of the actions recorded by staff related to support for participants in relation to employment, education, and training. This was said by participants to have contributed to improved job search / interview skills and knowledge of job opportunities.

During interviews, participants described receiving some form of job searching, CV writing and/or interviewing skills support from their case worker, with some also taking part in workshops delivered by St Giles and externally. Participants noted that taking part in workshops on things such as interview skills and tasks such as group presentations and public speaking, had made them feel more confident and better at communicating in professional contexts. Generally, participants felt well-supported to better understand the process of applying for jobs, a key barrier they felt held them back. Participants also highlighted that they felt increasingly confident applying for jobs themselves, without the support of their case worker, something they would have not felt capable of doing before Choices. Where participants had made less progress, they cited challenges gaining relevant work experience, difficulties in accessing courses and qualifications such as apprenticeships, and a lack of alternative work options when their identified goals had been difficult to realise.

"One thing [my case worker] has taught me is how to apply [for jobs] independently... they have improved my confidence to apply myself online." (Choices programme participant)

Work-readiness

The evidence relating to work-readiness is conflicting, with the Attitude Toward Employment Work Opinion Questionnaire (WOQ) measure suggesting that attitudes to work had not changed, but that many barriers to work had been reduced.

The qualitative data provided some evidence of programme participants having improved communication, as well as better awareness of their skills and strengths and available labour market and education opportunities. The tailored employment support provided by case workers included CV writing support, interview skills sessions and regular sharing of work and learning opportunities. These helped young people better understand their current skill set and opportunities, whilst developing the communication skills necessary for finding work.

The WOQ measured changes in attitudes to work pre and post participation in the programme. Of those for whom total measure scores were available, there was neither a statistically significant change in the scores from baseline and three months, nor between baseline and three-month follow-up. Yet some participants who took part in qualitative interviews noted that the support helped them to think more long-term and made them more focused. This can be best demonstrated in cases where participants were interviewed twice. Over time they described becoming more focused on work or education and having clearer career goals which changed their attitude to work. Participant relationships with case workers were described as integral to igniting this spark and sense of future direction.

"If I did not have [their case worker's support], I would probably not be looking for jobs right now... and probably doing things I shouldn't have been doing." (Choices programme participant)

The client's needs assessment scores also highlight a growing foundation for education, training, and employment outcomes, with significant reductions in wider barriers to work across finance, safety, and housing. There were statistically significant increases in mean

scores on finance between the baseline and most recent measure (from 2.7 to 3.4), for housing (from 3.4 to 4.0), and for safety (from 3.4 to 3.7).

Review of programme theory

This section discusses the extent to which the programme theory relating to short term outcomes was plausible and evidence informed.

These short term outcomes were premised on two central programme theories.

- **Lived experience:** Using case workers/ peer advisers with lived experience effectively builds trust and engagement and motivates change among young people with experience of criminal justice or at risk of engagement with criminal justice.
- **Creating agency: strengths-based support:** Young people will sustain their voluntary engagement because they determine the pace of the support with a focus on their strengths and interests. They will use the service when they are exploring making a change and be motivated and facilitated to lead and drive their own change.

Lived experience

Staff acknowledged the many reasons why young people might initially be wary of engaging with services, including past traumas or negative experience of services. This was reflected by participants who stated that case workers were not like staff in other services. The accessibility of case workers and how relatable they were by having lived experience were highlighted in the qualitative interviews as key enablers to success.

“It is just better hearing it from someone more similar to you [with lived experience].” (Choices programme participant)

The centrality of this outcome to the support model is illustrated below:

Young person’s context	Mechanism	Outcome
Lack of trust of authority / support services. Hyper-masculinity ⁷ .	Support from a case worker with lived experience. Case worker can show their vulnerability and role models a different way of living.	Trusted relationship with case worker

⁷ Hypermasculinity refers to the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour, such as an emphasis on physical strength and aggression.

The lived experience support model places a high degree of emphasis on the case worker - participant relationship. This makes the continuity of case workers important. There were examples of young people that had experienced changes in case workers which they said resulted in them having to repeat information and their story again each time.

Other respondents noted that communication with staff broke down when their case worker stopped contacting them. One respondent said they found out afterwards it was because their case worker had left. Levels of staff turnover and challenges faced in case worker recruitment were highlighted by St Giles as key challenges in delivery, reflecting the relative buoyancy of the labour market after the pandemic and pay levels for case workers relative to other job roles. On future programmes, consideration should be given to the effective ways to support staff retention and the handover of caseloads between staff.

While lived experience was undoubtedly effective at creating and maintaining the engagement of young people, there remained a substantial minority (15%) of young people referred to the programme who did not take part. Further consideration could be given to any other ways that engagement could be effectively extended to this group.

Creating agency: strengths based support

Staff affirmed that they wanted to create agency among participants to determine their own path. This included choice in whether to focus on employment or education, which job roles to focus on, and when and how to engage. However, staff felt that young people were less proactive than in the past and often wanted case workers to do things with or for them. They attributed this to young people being isolated during the pandemic and needing support to build confidence to engage and act. Staff said they were having to spend more time building the confidence of young people, including supporting them to make travel plans, or accompanying them to new places, before they felt able to do this alone.

Young people were able to engage at a time and with an intensity that best suited their needs and motivations. The support provided was led by the participant. Case workers regularly reached out to young people in a range of formats, so they could be available to support when the timing was right for the young person to consider employment, education or training and lead their own change. There was an informality in how case workers created trust, such as going for a coffee, walking around the block for conversation, and sending WhatsApp messages.

Interviews with participants demonstrated the importance of varied and informal engagement and each respondent tended to have established their own rhythm and preferred format of communicating with their case worker. This included how frequently they would speak and through what channels. Some participants spoke multiple times a week whilst others spoke once or twice a month. Regular communication would often take place over WhatsApp or telephone calls, with face-to-face sessions that focused on completing job applications or reviewing CVs. Case workers made efforts to plan these meetings on days when participants were meeting other services (e.g. probation) to encourage engagement.

Understanding young people's varied motivations for engaging and reasons why they wanted to make a change at that time was explained by staff as being important to engagement. Some participants responded better to this degree of agency than others. Clients referred by Jobcentres made up just 3% of referrals (Figure 3.1), but were felt by staff to be easier to engage than those coming through the criminal justice system (CJS) who frequently disengaged once their probation period finished. Young people referred by the CJS were reported by staff to be less motivated to attend and took part because they were told to. One strategy used by staff to maintain engagement was to book client meetings on the days a young person met their Youth Offending Officer.

Staff reflected that long-term engagement was higher among young people at the upper end of the target age range (e.g. 22 and above). This was because older participants were more open and ready to engage with support due to changed personal contexts and an increased level of maturity. Participants towards the upper end of the age range, were also more likely to realise that they needed a stable and realistic source of income, for example to afford to learn to drive, move out of home or to support a family of their own. In future, further consideration could be given to activities and approaches that might encourage proactivity and readiness to engage among younger age groups.

Young person's context	Mechanism	Outcomes
Lack of trust of authority / support services.	Non-judgemental and bespoke support provided using an assets-based approach.	Improved self-awareness, confidence, resilience, and motivation.
	Support provided with respect and space to give agency.	Identification of strengths and transferable skills.

“I didn't want to come to the programme. Then I realised everyone there was on my level, basically. They were helping me, how to apply, what to do, they weren't just telling me to do things, they were guiding me and it motivated me.” (Choices programme participant)

6. Findings: Intermediate outcomes

This chapter presents available evidence on education, training, and employment outcomes for participants of the Choices programme, summarised in Table 6.1. Outcomes relating to criminal justice (which are also intermediate outcomes within the Theory of Change) were not in scope for the evaluation.

A small number of participants were in work (6%) or education (2%) when they started the programme (Table 4.2). By September 2023, half of participants were recorded as moving into education and/or employment (53%). Just under one third (32%) were recorded as starting training, and just over one third (33%) were recorded as starting work. There were 13 per cent of young people that were recorded as starting both employment and training.

This change in employment, education, and training status was also evidenced by data from client's self-reported needs assessments. This showed a statistically significant increase in mean scores on employment, education, and training needs, indicating a decline in need, between baseline assessment and most recent post assessment (from 2.6 to 3.7).

The strength of evidence assessments in Table 6.1 are based on the following descriptors:

- **Emerging evidence** (dark green): For these outcomes we have multiple sources to support the claim, both quantitative and qualitative evidence, but there remain limitations given that the evidence is self-reported, there are issues with the completeness of some datasets and there is not a comparison group.
- **Some limited evidence** (light green): For these outcomes we have data from one source that supports the claim and that refers to a direction of travel that may lead to the outcome realisation but does not tangibly support its achievement. There are limitations with the source, for example it is self-reported or has a small sample size.
- **Little or no evidence** (red): to provide a suitably robust assessment that the programme contributed to this short-term outcome measure.

Table 6.1 Education, training, and employment outcomes

Outcome	Change	Direction of evidence	Strength of evidence
Employment	33% participants recorded employment outcomes	Positive	Some limited evidence from quantitative and qualitative data that the support positively contributed to employment outcomes that aligned with young people's skills and aspirations. Not all employment outcomes were collected due to some participants losing contact with St Giles staff following support.

Education and training	32% participants recorded training outcomes	Positive	Some limited evidence from quantitative and qualitative data that the support positively contributed to education and training outcomes.
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Education and training outcomes

One third of the cohort (32%) had a recorded education or training outcome: 19% had a recorded training outcome and an additional 13% had both a recorded employment and training outcome.

There is some limited evidence from the quantitative and qualitative data that the support positively contributed to these outcomes. The programme was expected to use education and training to provide participants with pathways to meaningful employment. This was to be achieved through tailored support to help participants identify, apply for and complete educational courses, training and qualifications that suit their skills and ambitions. The types of courses undertaken included the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, employability courses and Security Industry Authority (SIA) licencing, as well as Level 2 and Level 3 courses. The programme data did not consistently capture the number of completed qualifications.

Some young people interviewed had received support with searching for education and training opportunities and funding for qualifications required to pursue career goals. There were cases where respondents had started a college or university course. These young people were confident they had made a good decision and started a training or apprenticeship within a field that they were interested in. There were some individual examples of participants making considerable progress, from being NEET to doing an educational or training course that they decided to take with the support of their case worker, see case-studies A and B for examples. Participants did not all want to pursue education and training. Reasons given included wanting to prioritise earning money to create independence and reluctance to return to an education setting. There were participants at the upper end of the age eligibility criteria who sought apprenticeship opportunities but felt that this option was closed due to their age.

“[The support I received has been] really great actually... A couple years back when I started, I didn’t have much going on [as I was unemployed and unsure about joining college...] they have helped me come on very far.” (Choices programme participant)

Case study: Participant A

Participant A was initially referred to Choices by their social worker after dropping out of college, becoming NEET and being unsure of their next steps. They were also struggling with their mental health. During their initial interview, they had already made considerable progress towards their goals. They had re-joined college, were doing a course they were interested in and performing well at, with their case worker helping them identify and apply for the course. They had also started a part-time job in a café to support them whilst they studied and they felt more confident and assured than they did before starting Choices.

During their second interview, they had made even further progress. They were in the final year of their college course and had plans to go to university. They had left their part-time job, though this was just so they could focus on their studies. They were confident and optimistic about their future and reiterated the key role that the Choices programme and their case worker had played in this. They found it valuable to have someone to help them to think about their future in a structured way and to create a series of goals to help them work towards their work ambition. It was important to the participant that they received mental health and wellbeing support alongside support for education and employment because this gave them the confidence to think about their future.

Case study: Participant B

Participant B was referred to St Giles by their carer as they had recently turned 18 and had become NEET after finishing sixth form. They were interested in finding a job in retail or hospitality, but they perceived their lack of experience as a barrier they wanted help with. During the first interview, they said they had worked with their case worker to develop their CV, practice interview questions and were actively completing job applications together, though were yet to secure a job. They were not interested in any training or education courses at that time.

At the follow-up interview, they had not yet found a permanent job though had signed up for an educational course that their case worker had recommended to finish some of their GCSEs. Though at this point no education or employment outcomes had yet been achieved, they did not think they would have made any progress had it not been for their case worker. They also highlighted how they paused speaking with their case worker for several months as they were not in the right headspace to engage, though returned once they were because they valued the support.

Employment outcomes

There is some limited evidence from quantitative and qualitative data that the support positively contributed to employment outcomes and helped participants to find employment aligned with their skills and aspirations.

By September 2023, just over one third (33%) of the cohort had a recorded employment outcome (13% of whom also had recorded training outcome). It took participants between two and 365 days before their first employment outcome was recorded. The mean was 99 days, and the median was 68 days, indicating that finding work three months into the support was most common.

The most common employment sectors for participants to find work were catering, hospitality and tourism, and construction. A key contextual factor that affected access to employment opportunities for participants was the pandemic. Many sectors offering entry-level employment opportunities for young people, such as hospitality, tourism, and retail, had to close due to lockdown restrictions and put existing staff on furlough. Government national and regional lockdowns during 2021 also impacted on employer recruitment practices, with many pausing on hiring new staff or providing work placement opportunities due to uncertainty about the future. This may have been mitigated however by the strong labour market and number of job vacancies in 2022⁸.

Of those who moved into employment, almost three quarters (73%) were working part-time and the remaining 27% were full-time. Over half (56%) were on permanent contracts and the remainder were on temporary contracts. Of those participants who were interviewed twice, some had secured employment at the three-month stage and had made further progress at the follow-up interview, either through moving into a permanent position or to another role.

Young people explained that support from Choices meant they felt more confident applying for 'serious' jobs and that the qualifications or training they gained through the programme would help them achieve their career goals.

"They have allowed me to find my first job and helped me get my health and safety on check. I had my CSCS card, but I needed the health and safety as well to get on site. They helped me out and I started working in February" (Choices programme participant)

⁸ Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 17 October 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Vacancies and jobs in the UK: October 2023](#). Accessed October 2023

Young people that had found a job referenced the critical role of their case worker in helping them to secure it. All interviewed participants who had found work were happy with the sector and role they had secured. This included both participants who had found full-time roles and others who had found part-time roles to support themselves whilst in education or training. Where participants had yet to find a job, they were mainly positive about the progress they had made towards securing employment and were confident they would find work soon.

Participants' starting point when they first joined the programme was a factor in whether they had secured employment. Of those that had a clear role or sector in mind, most had secured either employment or an educational opportunity in line with that ambition. Where participants were either not ready for employment or uncertain about what they wanted to do, they were typically focussed on their personal development or other outcomes rather than securing employment. This highlights the range of participants and journeys through the programme and the differing timeframes to achieving their goals.

Binary logistic regression was used to estimate the association between a recorded employment outcome and a history of offending after controlling for socio-demographics. It was found that after controlling for age, gender, and ethnicity, offending history was significantly associated with having a positive employment outcome recorded. Participants without a recorded offending history at intake were 3.8 times more likely to have a recorded employment outcome compared to those who had no employment outcome recorded ($p < 0.001$) ($N = 182$).

Review of programme theory

This section discusses the extent to which the programme theory relating to the employment, education and training outcomes was plausible and evidence informed. These outcomes were premised on the theory that the Choices programme provides:

- **Support to create stability and readiness to engage with EET:** Young people can develop and maintain stability in the wider factors that may affect their ability to sustain their engagement with Choices (e.g. housing and finances).

Support provides a sufficient foundation for EET outcomes

Case workers enabled participants to access support beyond education and employment, such as with housing, finances, safeguarding, and mental health, including through referrals to external support. This holistic approach intended to build stability in young people's lives and provide the foundations to focus on securing a job or educational opportunity. The evidence collected from the depth study, interviews with participants, and changes to the domains of need, helps demonstrate this, with the depth study highlighting the interdependency of employment support alongside wider support.

Similarly, interviews with participants illustrate examples of young people resolving other issues early into their support from St Giles before focusing on employment. The length of time required to develop readiness for EET varied. For example, for one client getting a job after 2-3 months of engagement could be an achievable goal, whilst others focused on funding secure housing initially, or feeling confident traveling out of their local area. The

findings indicate that some barriers to work remained. For example, young people with an offending history were less likely to have a recorded employment outcome than those at risk of offending.

Staff viewed engagement with employers as an effective route to increasing employment outcomes for participants and this became more prominent part way through delivery. Employer engagement could have a more central role in future programmes supporting similar young people. Consideration could be given to how to build on the increased willingness of employers to hire (young) people with a criminal record and contribute to long-term change. For example, by working with employers supportive of campaigns such as Ban the Box, which is led by Business in the Community and aims to get employers to remove a tick box asking about prior criminal convictions from their application process.

7. Final Theory of Change

Figure 7.1 outlines the refined ToC for Choices, which was revisited with Choices staff at the end of the pilot evaluation. This section discusses the updates that were made to the ToC and the rationale for these.

Context

Contextual changes driven by the pandemic which affected implementation were added to the ToC:

- **Increased mental health needs and social isolation** among young people. Staff reflected that the pandemic had increased young peoples' support needs and decreased their readiness to work. Staff felt that young people overall were less proactive than in the past and wanted the case workers to do things with or for them. This was a result of being isolated during the pandemic and needing support to build confidence to engage and act.
- **Transformation in how statutory services were being delivered**, with an increase in the use of telephone or web-based interaction and support, as well as a decline in face-to-face. Choices staff felt that this affected young people's expectations about how they would engage with employability support, with most expecting to engage remotely rather than in person. Staff needed to encourage young people to meet with them in person and to make clear the potential benefits of this, such as getting out of the house and meeting new people.
- **Staffing changes**. The pandemic increased demand for some statutory services, and organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, for example, recruited a significant number of new case workers. There was also a significant turnover of staff within organisations across the labour market. Choices staff reflected this contributed to a loss of institutional knowledge, especially of support services among referring partners, and to staff turnover among case workers at Choices. In the later stages of implementation there were sharp rises in inflation, and an increase in the **cost of living**. Staff reflected that this contributed to an increased focus of young people on finding work, sometimes at the expense of training or education options.

The ToC has also been adapted to reflect the young person's context which staff acknowledged was critical to their experience of the programme and their outcomes. The qualitative depth study identified differences in individual factors such as experience of adverse childhood experiences, mental health and self-esteem, loneliness and isolation, income and debt, and substance misuse. It highlighted the importance of relationships with others, such as family and friends, and staff reflected that socio-economic background had affected the options and pathways available to young people and the wider support they had to work towards outcomes.

Inputs

The inputs required for the programme remained relatively unchanged. However, the pilot received additional funding from Credit Suisse. In January 2022, St Giles transferred two case workers funded by Credit Suisse from a similar programme (“Flip the script”) to Choices along with their clients. The model of support offered through the Credit Suisse was the same as Choices and these young people were therefore included in the pilot evaluation.

Activities

Staff reflected on the varied time taken for clients to engage, enrol and take part in a needs assessment. Reflecting on the time taken to build trust and relationships, staff acknowledged the more than 40 people that had declined the support, despite hours of case worker time spent attempting to engage them through outreach.

The direct support continued to be delivered with flexibility, depending on participant need. It was important for case workers to do this effectively by understanding clients, having knowledge of and access to resources, being proactive, and recognising resources in unusual places (e.g. noticing a sign in-person or online for something that might benefit a client), and contacting employers on behalf of clients.

External support was important and given implications from the pandemic, greater use was made of mental health support, but more broadly support services that help to build people’s confidence and self-belief. Staff reflected those clients they supported frequently saw themselves as different and not part of society. They needed support, such as mentoring, role-modelling or Cognitive Behaviour Therapies (CBT) to address that mindset.

The emphasis the programme had on employer engagement increased when a case worker with experience of working closely with employers in a similar role elsewhere joined the team. This has been added to the ToC as a new activity. They created an employer database and were instrumental in the team creating more links with employers and hosting monthly Jobs Fair where employers attended to meet with clients about job opportunities. Choices assured young people attending that these employers were supportive and open to recruiting them and reassured employers that any young people they recruited would be supported through the transition into work.

Short-term outcomes

Personal development outcomes were described as the foundation for other outcomes because they helped to create stability and readiness in mindset for change. The short-term outcomes for clients remained those identified at the outset of the programme, except for Improved Relationships. This was changed to Trusting Relationship with a case manager due to the centrality of this relationship to the support model and resulting outcomes.

Work-readiness outcomes have remained the same except for the addition of the identification of transferable skills from different contexts. This was considered by staff to be an important part of how to build work-readiness alongside discussing with clients the pros and cons of different work and learning options.

Intermediate outcomes

The intermediate outcome measures identified at the outset remained relevant and appropriately reflected the different stages and potential barriers to progression faced by participants. Staff reflected the very different progress through the ToC for different individuals and reflected that the referral route could be a proxy for the degree of readiness to engage with employment, education, and training support. Progression through the ToC was felt to be strongly impacted by a young person's context and starting point, as well as motivation and the extent to which they enrolled at the right time to make a change.

Impacts

The anticipated impacts from the Choices programme identified at the outset of the pilot remained unchanged. They were not in scope for the evaluation.

Assumptions

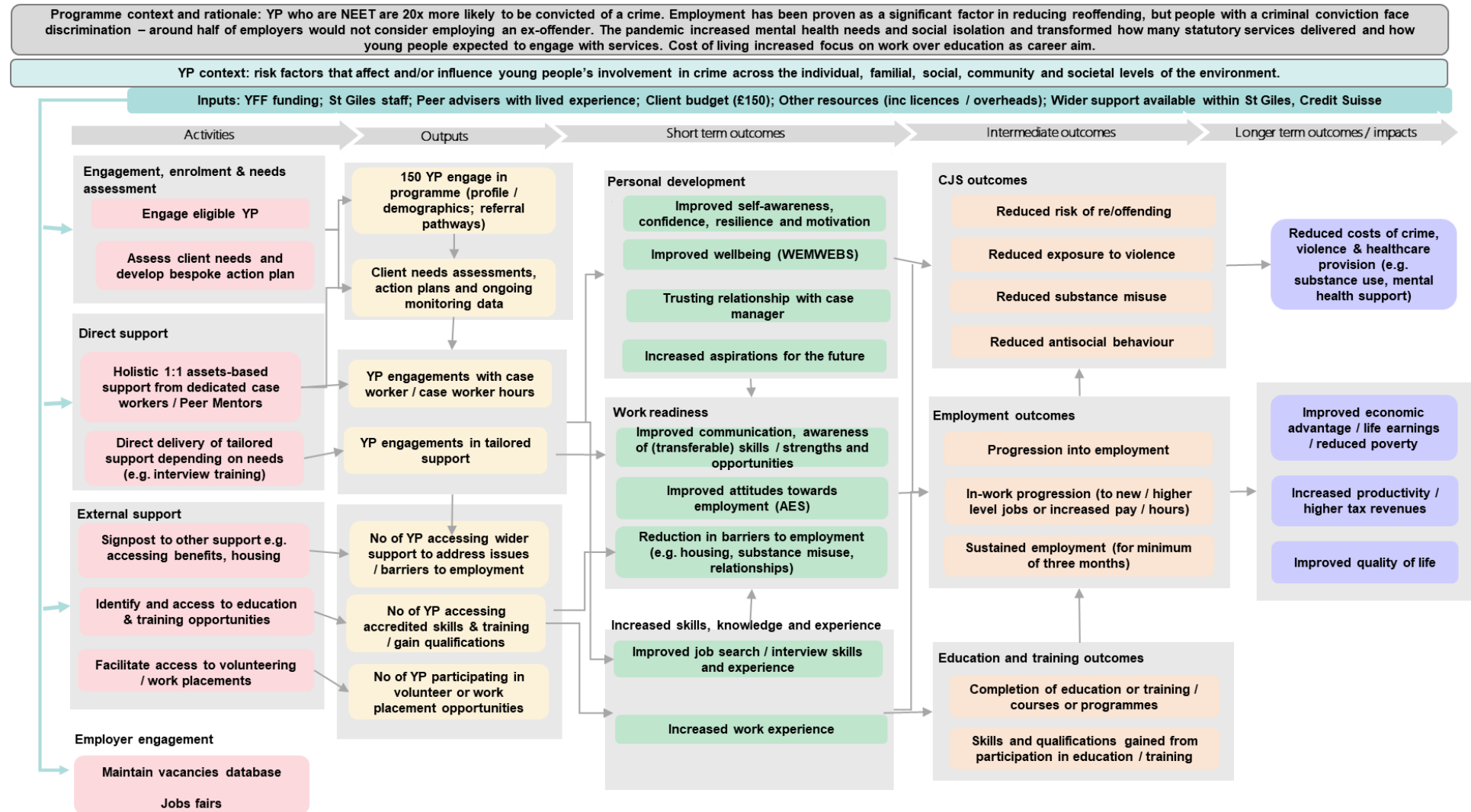
There were several assumptions, outlined in Chapter 2, underpinning the Choices Theory of Change that were explored and tested through the evaluation. Table 7.2 lists these assumptions and discusses the extent to which they were evidenced through the pilot evaluation.

Table 7.2: Review of the ToC assumptions

Assumption	Evidence and discussion
Young people actively engage with the programme.	Evidenced. Achievement of the enrolment targets and number of actions undertaken. Case managers worked hard to sustain engagement, using a variety of channels. There were a significant minority of eligible young people who did not engage.
Young people will sustain their engagement with programme activities.	Evidenced. The personalisation of support, and relatability of case workers was important. Turnover among case workers and a lack of clear handover processes detracted from sustained engagement.
Young people can develop and maintain stability in terms of the wider factors that may affect their ability to sustain their engagement with Choices (including housing and finances).	Evidenced. Progress was made across a range of domains of need, indicating that the support enabled participant's to overcome wider barriers to work.

Assumption	Evidence and discussion
Activities will build young people's resilience, self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.	Partially evidenced. Using a strengths-based approach helped to create these outcomes. How to positively influence participant's attitude to work could be further tested.
Opportunities for employment will be available and that these will match the skills and aspirations of the young people.	Partially evidenced. Job opportunities were less available at the start of the programme due to the health restrictions in place during the pandemic. The team engaged employers open to recruiting young people and arranged jobs fairs to create opportunities of interest.
Intensive multi-component interventions increase employment amongst young people.	Evidenced. We can be reasonably confident from the quantitative and qualitative data that the support positively contributed to employment outcomes that aligned with young people's skills and aspirations.

Figure 7.1: Refined Theory of Change



8. Conclusions

This report has presented the findings from a pilot evaluation of the Choices programme delivered by St Giles. This final chapter presents summary conclusions in relation to evidence gathered against the Theory of Change (ToC) for the programme. There were some challenges and limitations of evaluating impact and these are discussed, along with lessons for future delivery and evaluation of employability support to young people in contact with or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system.

Evidence for the Choices Theory of Change

Programme delivery

The evaluation found that the model for Choices was broadly delivered as intended and described in the ToC. The holistic and varied nature of the support delivered meant that each participant journey was tailored. There were a few refinements made to the ToC during implementation, including to account for the changing context and an increased emphasis on employer engagement during delivery.

Choices successfully reached and engaged with the target group of marginalised young people who were in contact with, or at risk of engagement with, the criminal justice system.

Outcomes

The Choices delivery model demonstrated some emerging evidence of education and employment outcomes for young people with experience of or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system. Half of those who participated in the programme were recorded as attaining an education and/or employment outcome within six months of starting the programme, whilst one third were recorded as attaining an employment outcome over this period.

The evaluation also found emerging evidence of positive improvements in participants' mental wellbeing over the course of the programme (where data was available). This increased from a level below the population average at first engagement with the programme, towards a level comparable with the wider population.

There were also significant changes across a range of self-reported areas of need, with positive changes to employment, training and financial needs occurring more quickly than others, such as housing.

The intermediate outcome measures identified at the outset remained relevant and appropriately reflected the different stages and potential barriers to progression faced by those recruited to the programme.

Evidence for programme theories

The Choices support model had three central programme theories:

- **Lived experience:** Using case workers and peer advisers with lived experience builds trust and engagement and motivates change among young people with experience of criminal justice or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system.
- **Creating agency through strengths-based support:** Young people will sustain their voluntary engagement because they are able to determine the pace of support with a focus on their strengths and interests. They will use the service when they are exploring options for making a change and be motivated and facilitated to lead and drive change for themselves.
- **Support to create stability and readiness to engage with EET:** Young people can develop and maintain stability in the wider factors that may affect their ability to sustain their engagement with Choices (e.g. housing and finances).

All three theories were considered by programme participants, staff, and wider stakeholders to be central to engaging and supporting the target group of young people.

Using case workers and peer advisers with **lived experience** was effective in building trust and engagement with participants. The focus on establishing trusted relationships was key to facilitating conversations about challenging issues and ways to overcome them. This provided the foundation and space for case workers and programme participants to consider future employment options together. Whilst the support did not significantly affect attitudes to work, it did help create a sense of how change might be worked towards.

Participants at the younger end of the target age group were less likely to be motivated to change. For future programmes, consideration could be given as to what else, beyond lived experience, might foster change for this group.

Working with young people to build a **sense of agency** was found to be important. Young people were able to determine the pace of support, when and how they engaged, and their preferred type of work. This was perceived positively by programme participants who compared it favourably to other types of mainstream provision which they considered to be less tailored to their individual needs and aspirations. There were examples of this approach helping to facilitate increased engagement and confidence. The time-unlimited support meant that young people knew they could return to St Giles if they needed support in future, or in cases where they were not yet ready to fully engage.

The holistic model of support offered through Choices helped to create **stability and readiness to engage** with employment, education, and training. Around half of the actions recorded for programme participants related to employment, education, or training. The other half focused on addressing other areas of need, such as housing, finances, safeguarding, and mental health, including through referrals to external support. This holistic approach helped build stability in young people's lives, providing the foundation to enable them to focus on pursuing education and employment opportunities.

Feedback from programme participants, staff and wider stakeholders highlighted the interdependency of employment support alongside wider support. Some young people shared their experiences of having resolved wider issues early into their journey with St

Giles before focusing on education and employment. The length of time required for young people to become ready for entry to employment, education or training varied widely according to need. For some, getting a job within a few months of engagement with the programme was realistic and achievable. For others who were facing multiple and complex barriers to progression, this process took much longer.

Lessons for future delivery

Overall, the support model was found to be appropriate and effective at engaging the target group. However, there were some young people who did not engage, with 15 per cent of those referred to the programme not continuing to formal enrolment, and others who withdrew. Staff reported that despite increases in the cost of living, they continued to find it challenging to sell the benefits of earning money through a wage to some young people. In future delivery, consideration could be given as to whether and how other influences could be used, such as greater use of peer support. Programme participants could be effective at engaging others, and consideration could be given as to whether group sessions could be used, although there are safeguarding issues with the use of peers due to local gang boundaries that would need to be considered.

Choices had referrals from over 20 separate sources, illustrating the extent to which St Giles is well-known by local stakeholders and statutory services, and the efforts made by programme staff to network. The St Giles team noted that staff turnover in referring organisations was a barrier to maintaining programme referrals over the implementation period. It is important for future programmes to have plans to support engagement and awareness raising activity in referral partners throughout programme delivery to maintain engagement and referrals.

Blended channels of support, mixing face-to-face, telephone and others, were effectively used by staff to communicate with young people. Given the changed context, with public services increasingly supporting people remotely, future delivery could clarify which types of engagement and activity is best undertaken in person, and which via other channels. This could come alongside clear messaging on the potential benefits of each type of engagement method.

The findings indicate that some barriers to work remained. For example, young people with an offending history were less likely to have a recorded employment outcome than those at risk of offending. Working directly with employers to overcome this became more prominent part way through delivery. Employer engagement could be more central to future programmes supporting this cohort, and consideration given to how to build on the increased willingness of employers to hire from within this cohort. For example, the Ban the Box campaign aims to get employers to remove a tick box asking about prior criminal convictions from their application process. Future support could proactively seek to influence and increase the supply of vacancies for the target cohort alongside providing employability support.

Limitations of measuring impact

The monitoring data for Choices improved during the lifetime of the programme, but there remained inconsistencies and gaps. For example, data was not available on the depth and intensity of support provided to each participant. The quantitative measures used to evidence intermediate outcomes (WEMWBS and WOQ) were not administered consistently, which meant they were not as effective tools for the evaluation as they could have been. They were not administered to participants at regular time intervals and there were specific challenges in administering them with participants when they left the programme as there was no end date to the support.

The pilot evaluation findings suggest that the programme has contributed to outcomes. However, in the absence of an impact evaluation with a counterfactual design, it is not possible to robustly evidence and quantify the difference made by the programme. However, the evidence that is available suggests that the support is not harmful, and that the direction of travel towards intended outcomes is positive.

Lessons for future evaluation

Employment has been proven to reduce offending and reoffending amongst young people. There is therefore value in developing the evidence base of what works to effectively support young people with a criminal record, or at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system, into employment. There are several lessons from the pilot evaluation of Choices that could inform future evaluations of programmes targeting this cohort of young people.

The eligibility criteria related to geography, age and being at risk of or in contact with the criminal justice system. Given the primary intended outcome of entry to employment, education, or training, consideration should be given as to whether young people already in employment or education at registration to the programme should be eligible. If they are included, the progress and outcomes of this group would need to be measured differently to those who are not in education or employment at the outset.

While the quality of the programme data improved over the course of delivery, it has limited the evaluation. Future evaluation should prioritise:

- Collecting outcome data consistently and embedding this within service delivery, so it is available for a larger number of participants.
- Collecting data about the length / intensity of engagements. This would enable more detailed exploration of variations in the dosage of support received and analysis of the groups that had more or less support.
- Collecting data about what support has involved beyond the domain of support and communication type. More accurate data collection about the type of support received would enable evaluation to explore in detail which types of activities are most frequently associated with outcomes – a key requirement for testing the Theory of Change and understanding the causal mechanisms underpinning change.

- It would be useful to extend the management data to capture activities and support accessed by programme participants from elsewhere within St Giles or externally to support attribution of change.

Data quality could have been improved by closer working between delivery and evaluation staff, for example delivering briefings and training at the start of the evaluation and when new staff joined the programme. Information could have covered what is being asked of participants, when and why, and given an overview of what good data looks like. This would have helped secure buy-in from case workers on the purpose and importance of data to the evaluation. The project would have benefited from having a dedicated officer within St Giles focused on the standardisation of programme monitoring data, and ensuring outcomes measures were collected.

Measuring outcomes from administrative data would be preferable to relying on programme data, which was challenging to collect for all participants. The [Employment DataLab](#)⁹ may present a way for St. Giles to track client outcomes and create a comparison group in future. Using administrative data to measure outcomes would help ensure that evaluation feels proportionate to staff and participants, particularly in instances where significant time is taken to build trust and rapport and every interaction matters.

⁹ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), published 29 November 2022, updated 5 December 2023, gov.uk website, [Employment Data Lab](#). Accessed February 2024.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Analysis of programme data

At initial registration to the programme, data is collected from programme participants on:

- **Socio-demographic indicators:** age, gender, ethnicity, housing status, offending history and employment status.
- **Referral:** source and main reason for referral.
- **Needs:** clients are asked to rate their perceived level of need (on a 5pt scale) in relation to housing; health and wellbeing; education, training and employment; finance, safety/risk and family and social. Case workers also rate clients on the same 5pt scale across these domains where they perceive a different level of need to that reported by the client.
- **Consent:** participants are asked to provide consent for their monitoring data to be included in the evaluation and / or for their contact details to be shared for participation in an interview for the evaluation. At the interim stage, 222 clients had agreed for their data to be included in the evaluation and 139 had consented to be recontacted for an interview.

Data on **actions and support** delivered to clients is recorded by case workers on an ongoing basis. For each engagement with clients, case workers record:

- **Type:** whether the action relates to housing, health and wellbeing, education, training and employment, finance, safety/risk or family and social.
- **Communication method:** whether it was a phone call, face-to-face meeting, group meeting, text message, email or other.
- **Who the action was with:** whether it was with the client directly, with a support agency, or with others such as friends or family of the client.

Data is not recorded on the length / intensity of each engagement or what it has involved beyond the domain of support and communication type. For example, a text message and a half day meeting with a client would each be counted as a single action. Similarly, an action relating to 'finance' could involve guidance on how to access benefits or a substantial grant for clothing, household items or temporary accommodation. It is therefore not possible to assess the average number of hours of engagement per client, or to explore in detail which types of activities are most frequently associated with outcomes – a key requirement for testing the Theory of Change and understanding the causal mechanisms underpinning change.

Another limitation of the data is that it only records activities and support delivered directly by St Giles case workers. It does not record in detail the range of wider support accessed by programme participants from elsewhere within St Giles or externally. For example, we know that some clients have accessed support from St Giles' in-house counsellor and that

some have participated in programmes delivered by the Princes Trust, but this is not currently recorded in the monitoring data.

The data was shared across seven separate Excel spreadsheets, which were cleaned, combined, and transferred into SPSS for analysis. Analyses employed descriptive statistics, and paired sample t tests. Binary logistic regression (enter method) was used to estimate the association between a recorded employment outcome and a history of offending after controlling for socio-demographics (age, gender and ethnicity).

Qualitative data collection and analysis

Interviews with programme participants were conducted at three- and six-months following registration. The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback on their experiences of the support received, outcomes achieved / expected to be achieved and views on the contribution of the Choices programme to outcomes. The interviews also explored young people's circumstances and motivations / expectations at entry to the programme and the wider context within which the support is delivered, including key enablers and barriers to progression.

In total, contact details for 173 young people who had registered on the Choices programme and consented to being part of the evaluation were shared. These contact details were shared in batches by St Giles between February 2022 and July 2023. Table 1 provides a final breakdown of recruitment for these interviews. A total of 44 interviews had been completed by July 2023 with 36 separate programme participants (eight were interviewed at both three and six months post-registration). There were 27 interviews taken place at the 3-month stage and 17 interviews at the 6-month stage.

Table A1: Status of interviews with young people, 12 October 2023

Status	3-month interviews: Total	3-month interviews: %	6-month interviews: Total	6-month interviews: %
Complete	27	16%	17	10%
Unsuccessful	133	77%	138	80%
Declined	4	2%	5	3%
Removed	9	5%	13	8%
Total sample	173	100%	173	100%

Three attempts to contact participants in the sample were made via telephone at different times of the day, as well as text messages and emails. Some participants declined to take part in an interview. Similarly, some participants were removed from the sample after being notified by St Giles that it would not be appropriate to contact them (due to their current circumstances, such as being in prison).

In addition to telephone calls, researchers made three in-person visits to St Giles' office to speak to Choices participants between January 2023 and May 2023 which led to 10 interviews being conducted.

Looking at the profile of the 44 young people who have participated in an interview compared to the whole sample:

- **By gender:** females were slightly more likely to have participated in an interview, accounting for 22% of the total number of interviews relative to 16% of the sample.
- **By age:** participants aged 22-25 were most likely to agree to participate in an interview, accounting for 39% of the total relative to 28% of the sample. Conversely, those aged 16-17 were least likely to participate accounting for 19% of interviewees despite making up 23% of the sample.
- **By ethnicity:** Asian / Asian British participants were slightly more likely to agree to participate, accounting for 17% of those that took part in an interview compared to 13% of the sample. Similarly, Black / Black British participants were underrepresented, making up 47% of those spoken to, but 55% of the sample.

Development of the Theory of Change (ToC)

The development of a ToC is an essential first step in designing evaluations of public policies and programmes. A ToC details the context and rationale for an intervention, the intended inputs, activities and outputs to be delivered and the anticipated outcomes and impacts from these. It also articulates the assumptions that underpin how activities and outputs are expected to result in outcomes and impacts. The ToC provides the overarching framework to guide the data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of the findings from evaluation.

A first draft ToC was developed for the St Giles Choices programme during the initial scoping and design stage of the study between May and August 2021. It was based on a review of programme documentation (including YFF grant application data), interviews with key stakeholders and young people participating in similar programmes and a rapid review of relevant academic literature.

The ToC for the programme was revisited in August 2022 through a workshop with St Giles staff. It was subsequently updated to better reflect delivery.

Appendix 2: Discussion guides

Topic Guide: 3-month interviews with programme beneficiaries

Introduction

Thank you for finding the time to speak with us. My name is ... and I'm a researcher from Ipsos UK / Liverpool John Moore University.

Ipsos UK and Liverpool John Moore University (LJMU) are research organisations that have been asked by the Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to find out whether programmes like Choices are making a difference to the young people who take part. The Youth Futures Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation which funds programmes that help young people remove barriers to work and access meaningful employment opportunities. This year, they gave funding to St Giles to help deliver the Choices programme. We are interested in hearing from you about your experience being part of the programme, how you think it is helping and what difference it is making.

The interview should last around 20-30 minutes and it is up to you if you want to take part. If you do decide to take part, you do not need to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can stop the interview at any time. You can also change your mind and withdraw your consent later before the final report has been published. Whether you take part or not will make no difference to the support you receive from St Giles or any wider support you are receiving or would like.

You will receive a £15 voucher for taking part.

We will combine the information you share with me today with information from other young people who have worked with St Giles into a report which will be sent to YFF and later published. As part of the report, we might use quotes from our discussion today, but if we do, we will not use your name or other information about you. Other than the research team, no-one will be able to identify you in the report or know what you have said. However, we might need to speak to someone else if you tell us about something which might cause harm to you or others, or any specific crime or offences. We will not share general discussions of committing offences. You do not have to tell us anything you don't feel comfortable with.

Do you have any questions? Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

IF YES: can you confirm if you would be happy for me to audio record our discussion today? This will be used by the research team to ensure we have written up our discussion accurately. The audio file will be destroyed later in the project and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

Background

I'd like to start with some questions about you.

Could you tell me a bit about yourself?

Could you tell me a bit about your local area?

- How long have you lived in the area?
- What do you like about the area? Why?
- What do you think could be better? Why?

Engagement with the programme

I'd now like to ask you some general questions about St Giles and the help you've been receiving from them.

How did you first find out about the St Giles Choices programme?

- Prompt as needed: self-referred, parent, teacher, peer, social worker, youth worker, other.

And what were your circumstances back then?

Were you looking for work?

Were there any specific things or goals you needed help with?

- IF APPLICABLE: What, if any challenges or barriers were you facing when looking for work?

Once you'd found out about Choices, how did you feel about getting involved?

- What were you looking forward to? If anything? – why?
- What were you not looking forward to? If anything? – why?

What were your expectations at the beginning? What were you hoping to achieve?

- Probe around employment vs personal outcomes if not mentioned.
- Probe to specific needs mentioned above
- Probe around the type of role or sector they were hoping to move into and why? Have they worked in a similar position before?
- Probe around any challenges to employment or other personal challenges if mentioned earlier.

Experience of the programme to date

What was your experience like when you first got involved with Choices?

- Do you remember who you spoke to (probe around different types of roles)? Anyone else?

Was there anything you were asked to do or complete?

How often are you in touch with St Giles now? How? (Face to face/online)

- Probe around the type of communication – emails, messages, chats etc.

Could you tell me more about what you you've been doing so far?

- Type of support: job search support, training, mentoring vs other support with housing, finances, health/mental health etc.
- Format: 1 to 1, group, combination?
- Who is the support provided by? Probe around discussions with case workers vs. interactions with external organisations (e.g. job fair, training). Explore whether they've been referred to other organisations and services.
- Have you been setting some goals or developed a personal action plan? Can you tell me a bit more about this and what it involved?
- Probe around what goals/actions they set (if not covered already), how they decided what goals should go into the plan and what actions to take.

How useful do you find setting out the plan? Why yes/not?

- And how do you feel about the help you've received from St Giles so far?
- IF applicable: Probe around how support from St Giles compares to external support

What, if anything, have you found most helpful so far? Why?

- Probe around specific support provided as well as elements such as trust, lived experiences, relevance of support, ability to understand their circumstances and needs

What, if anything, have you found not so helpful? Why?

Is there anything about the help you have received that you would have liked to have been different?

- In what way would you have liked it to have been different?

Are there other types of support that you would like to have received?

Is the support different or similar to what you thought it would be like?

- Why is that?

Would you recommend Choices to others?

- What makes you say that?

Outcomes and impact

Do you feel that receiving help from St Giles has made a difference to you in any way?

- How? What has changed for you so far? Prompt around actions/goals from PDP and check if any have been achieved already.

IF ACHIEVED:

- What enabled you to achieve this goal/make this change?
- Probe around support from St Giles vs external

IF NECESSARY: What element of the help St Giles provided helped you achieve this? How?

If you were not receiving support from St Giles, what you do you think you would be doing? Would your current situation be any different than it is now?

- Probe around EET status
- Probe around wider circumstance (housing, wellbeing etc).

What, if any challenges are you facing when looking for work now?

What are the next steps for you?

Is there anything else that could be help you achieve these at this stage?

Do you feel that the support you have received from St Giles will help you with finding work or new opportunities in the future?

- How? In what ways do you think it will help you in future?
- And which elements of the support from St Giles will help you most in the future and why?

Other support

(If applicable) Have you received any similar type of help with finding work in the past / are you receiving any similar types of support now?

- If so, who was / is this with? What type of activities did or does this involve?

(If applicable) How does the support (from other programmes or initiatives) compare to the support you are receiving from St Giles?

- Are there any aspects of the support from St Giles that like more / less? Why?

Wrap up and recontact

Is there anything else that we haven't discussed today that you would like to share?

We would like to speak with you again in 3 months' time, it'll be a very similar conversation about your thoughts and experiences with St Giles. Would you be ok with us getting in touch again?

How could we best contact you? Are you happy to be recontacted by email/phone?

Thank and close

Topic Guide: 6-month interviews with programme beneficiaries

Introduction

Thank you for finding the time to speak with us (again). As you know, my name is ... and I'm a researcher from Ipsos / Liverpool John Moore University.

Ipsos and Liverpool John Moore University (LJMU) are research organisations that have been asked by the Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to find out whether programmes like Choices are making a difference to young people who take part in the programme. The Youth Futures Foundation has provided funding to support St Giles in their delivery of the Choices programme. We are interested in hearing from you about your experience of the programme, how you think it has helped you if at all and the difference it has made / you think it will make.

WHERE RELEVANT: The purpose of this second interview is to follow up from our initial interview a few months ago to see how things are progressing for you and what difference the Choices programme has made. As a thank you for taking part in this interview, you will again receive a £15 love2shop voucher.

The interview should last around 20-30 minutes and it is up to you if you want to take part. If you do decide to take part, you do not need to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can stop the interview at any time. You can also change your mind and withdraw your consent later before the final report has been published. Whether you take part or not will make no difference to the support you receive from St Giles or any wider support you are receiving or would like.

We will combine the information you share with me today with anonymous information from other young people who have worked with St Giles into a report which will be sent to YFF and later published. As part of the report, we might use quotes from our discussion today, but you will remain anonymous as we will not use your name or other information about you. Other than the research team, no-one will be able to identify you in the report or know what you have said. However, we might need to speak to someone else if you tell us about something which might cause harm to you or others, or of any specific crimes or offences being committed. We will not share general discussions of committing offences. You do not have to tell us anything you don't feel comfortable with.

Do you have any questions? Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

IF YES: can you confirm if you would be happy for me to audio record our discussion today? This will be used by the research team to ensure we have written up our discussion accurately. The audio file will be destroyed within three months after the project finishes in Autumn 2023 and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

If not previously spoken to

I'd like to start with some questions about you.

Could you tell me a bit about yourself?

Could you tell me a bit about your local area?

- How long have you lived in the area?
- What do you like about the area? Why?
- What do you think could be better? Why?

Since we last spoke

I'd like to start with some questions about how you've got on since we last spoke in [month].

When we last spoke you were living in [location], has this changed at all?

When we last spoke you were [in education / employed / looking for work], has anything changed since then? Could you tell me a bit more about this? Probe for any changes.

If moved into employment / education / opportunity:

What is your new job / training / opportunity? When did this happen?

What role, if any, did St Giles play in helping you secure your new job / training / opportunity?

- Do you have any feedback on the role they played?
- What worked well / less well and why?
- Did it make a difference to you in securing the role? If yes, what was it about the support that made the difference?
- Would you still have the new job / training / opportunity without the support from St Giles?

How is your new job / training / opportunity going?

- Is this permanent or temporary?
- Is this full-time or part-time?
- Do you see yourself staying there?

If no change:

Have you made progress looking for work / education / training opportunities since we last spoke? If so, how?

What role, if any, has St Giles played in helping you progress towards looking for work / education / training opportunities?

- Do you have any feedback on this? What worked well / less well and why?
- Is there anything hindering you securing work / education / training opportunities?
Probe: opportunities; preparedness; support received
- Have your personal circumstances changed in any other ways at all?

Experience of the programme

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your experience with the Choices programme.

Are you still in contact with St Giles?

If still in contact:

How often are you in touch with St Giles now?

- Has this changed since we last spoke and, if so, why?
- Would you like to be in touch more / less?

Probe around the type of communication and any changes – face-to-face, emails, messages, phone calls etc.

If no longer in contact:

When did you stop contact with St Giles?

- Was there a particular reason why you stopped? *Probe: temporary or permanent pause in contact; issues with support received; progress made etc.*
- How were things left with St Giles? *Probe: whether agreed pause or gone silent; could they / would they restart support; any other agreements*

IF APPLICABLE: Since we last spoke, what kinds of things have you been doing with St Giles?

- Type of support: job search support, training, mentoring vs other support with housing, finances, health/mental health etc.
- Format: 1 to 1, group, combination?
- Mode: face-to-face, telephone, text, email etc.

Who is the support provided by?

- Probe around discussions with case workers vs. interactions with external organisations (e.g. job fair, training).
- Explore whether they've been referred to other organisations and services.

How do you feel about the help / support you have received from St Giles? Why?

- Has this matched your expectations? Why / why not?
- What, if anything, have you found most helpful? Why?
- *Probe around specific support provided as well as elements such as trust, lived experiences, relevance of support, ability to understand their circumstances and needs*
- What, if anything, have you found less helpful? Why?

And what are your future plans? What are you hoping to achieve?

- IF APPLICABLE: Probe whether they have a personal development plan (PDP) and how useful it has been as well as progress against fulfilling the plan
- Probe around specific goals mentioned, both relating to EET and beyond.

Have you made more or less progress than you expected at this stage? Why do you think that is?

- Which goals are outstanding?
- What role has St Giles had in supporting you with your goals?

Is there anything about the help you have received that you would have liked to have been different?

- In what way would you have liked it to have been different?
- Are there other types of support that you would like to have received?

Would you recommend Choices and the support you have received from St Giles to others?

- What makes you say that?

Outcomes and impact

What (if any) difference has the support you received from St Giles made to you?

- *Probe around the outcomes in the ToC and which aspects of the service made the most difference to these.*

FOR EACH OUTCOME REFERENCED:

- What was it about the support from St Giles that enabled you to achieve this goal / make this change?
- Probe around support delivered directly by St Giles vs external
- *IF RELEVANT:* which element(s) of the support St Giles provided helped you achieve this? How?
- Probe around wider support beyond EET (e.g., wellbeing; housing).

If you were not receiving support from St Giles, what you do you think you would be doing? Would your current situation be any different than it is now?

- Probe around EET status
- Probe around wider circumstance (housing, wellbeing etc).

Other support

(If applicable) Have you received any other help with finding work in the past / are you receiving any support now?

- If so, is this support ongoing? Who was / is this with? What type of activities did or does this involve?

(If applicable) How does the support (from other programmes or initiatives) compare to the support you are receiving / received from St Giles?

- Are there any aspects of the support from St Giles that you like more / less compared to other support you have received? Why?

Future plans

Are there any outstanding barriers or challenges you are facing in moving into work? Have these changed at all?

- How, if at all, is St Giles helping you overcome these?

What are the next steps for you?

Do you feel that the support you have received from St Giles will help you with finding work or new opportunities in the future?

- How? In what ways do you think it will help you in the future?
- And which elements of the support from St Giles do you think will help you most in the future and why?

Is there anything else that you think would help you with finding work or new opportunities in the future?

Wrap up and recontact

Is there anything else that we haven't discussed today that you would like to share?

We would like to speak with you again in 3 months' time. It will be a very similar conversation about your thoughts and experiences with St Giles. Would you be ok with us getting in touch again?

How could we best contact you? Are you happy to be recontacted by email/phone?

Thank and close

Topic Guide: Interviews with programme staff

Introduction

Ipsos UK and Liverpool John Moore University (LJMU) are research organisations that have been asked by the Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to find out whether programmes like Choices are making a difference to the young people who take part. The Youth Futures Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation which funds programmes that help young people remove barriers to work and access meaningful employment opportunities. This year, they gave funding to St Giles to help deliver the Choices programme. We are interested in hearing from you about your experience of working on the programme, how you think it is helping and what difference it is making.

The interview should last around 20-30 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you can change your mind at any time. If you do decide to take part, you do not need to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can stop the interview at any time. You can also change your mind and withdraw your consent later before the final report has been published.

The opinions and views that you share during our discussion will be treated in the strictest confidence and used only for the purposes of the evaluation. We will combine your responses with other data we are collecting when we analyse the findings. All feedback will be anonymised and reported in aggregate form. We will handle this sensitively in any reporting.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

We would like to record the discussion for analysis purposes. The recording will be used to ensure that we transcribe details correctly. It will not be provided to anyone outside of the evaluation team and will be destroyed three months after we have completed the evaluation. The recordings will be securely stored up until the point at which they are destroyed.

Do I have your permission to record?

Turn on the recorder and record consent to take part and for the discussion to be recorded.

Their role

To start, can you provide an overview of your current role as well as your involvement in the Choices programme?

- Time in role
- Time in sector / similar roles before hand
- What does a typical day / week / month look like?
- Has the role and responsibilities changed over time?

What does your typical caseload look like, and how do you manage this?

- How do they split their time between each young person
- How does staff leave (holidays, staff turnover) affect caseloads
- Why staff turnover?

How is any staff turnover managed for the young person?

Have you, or do you, receive any support or training for this role?

- Is there any support or training you would like, or feel staff in general may benefit from?

The programme overall

Now we would like to discuss the programme itself:

How would you describe the Choices programme in your own words?

- What are the key aims?
- What are the key inputs?
- What are the desired outcomes?

What do you feel are the key elements of the programme?

- Lived experience? (identified in the theory of change)
- Outreach to engage?
- Time-unlimited support?
- No end date?

Has anything about the programme been different to how you expected it to be?

Recruitment of young people to the programme has been higher than planned – what is the impact of this?

- Did capacity expand?
- Caseload size increase?
- Has the programme had to adjust in anyway?

Support provided to the young people

The next few questions focus in on the support provided to the young people on the programme

What are things young people come to the Choices programme to address?

- What are the key barriers they face?

What support do you tend to offer?

- Extent to which they flex the model and why

- To what extent do they signpost to other support? (accessing benefits, legal, housing, benefits, family mediation)
- To what extent do they offer support with education / training?
- Did the project seek to engage with others in the family / household unit?
- Is the depth of support sufficient to overcome barriers and situation?

How long are young people typically on the programme for?

How often are you in touch with the young person while they are on the programme?

- What kind of communication?

Employment support

Thinking specifically about support young people receive in relation to employment:

In relation to employment, what do young people come to the programme to address, and what support is provided?

- What employment barriers do they face
- Is there any careers support / vocational profiling?

What, if anything, do you do directly with employers?

- Are there links with employers / wider support / partners?
- How does employer discrimination get overcome?

The theory of change refers to ‘meaningful employment, how is this defined?

- Fulltime vs part time?
- Temporary vs permanent?
- Related to their interests and/or skills?

How many of the young people who come to the Choices programme is employment support not suitable for?

- What happens to those people?
- What support do they need / get?

Outcomes

Now, we would like to ask a couple of questions about outcomes achieved by young people on the programme:

- What outcomes do young people achieve as a result of the Choices programme?
- For those who don’t progress, or get desired outcomes, what are the reasons?

Wrap up

We are now on to the last couple of questions before we finish the interview:

Is there anything we haven't discussed already which you think may be helpful for us to know? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for speaking with me today.

Appendix 3: Ethics and Data Protection documentation

Participation information sheet

Two research companies, called Ipsos MORI and Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), have been asked to find out how the St Giles Choices Programme works and whether it makes a difference to young people who are involved in the programme. As part of the research, we have to let you know what information we will collect about you and what we will do with your information. This information sheet (also known as a privacy notice) tells you this. If you do not understand anything in this information sheet, please let the researcher know so we can explain it to you.

1. Why do I need an information sheet?

We will collect information about you, this is known as ‘personal data’. We need to collect some information about you so we can find out whether Choices is making a difference to young people. The Youth Futures Foundations (YFF) has asked Ipsos MORI and LJMU (the research organisations) to do the research.

For this part of the research project, Ipsos MORI, St Giles, YFF and LJMU, are what is known as ‘independent data controllers’. This means we chose why we need to collect information about you.

We will not share any individual views or things you tell us with St Giles in any way that would allow them to identify you as an individual. We may use some quotes (e.g. the words you have said) but these will be anonymous so no-one will know you said these words. Any quotes we do use will be labelled as ‘young person’ and will not have names.

What you tell us is confidential within the research team. However, we might need to speak to someone else (such as your case worker) if you tell us about something which might cause harm to you or others. We might also have to report any specific crime or offence if you tell us about it, but we will not share information if you talk about committing offences in general terms. You do not have to tell us anything you do not want to share.

2. How will we use information about you?

We will use personal information about you (e.g. your name) so we can arrange to talk to you as part of the research. Information you tell us when we talk to you as part of the research will be used to help us to find out how Choices works and whether it makes a difference to young people, and *how* it makes a difference.

At the end of the research, we will write a report using the information you and others have told us. We will not ever use your name or other people’s names in the report. The report may be published.

Under data protection law (GDPR), we have to tell you the lawful basis we are using to collect, use, store and delete your information. For this research, we will collect your

consent to collect, store and share this information. You can withdraw your consent at any point.

3. What personal information will you collect about me and how?

For this research project, Ipsos MORI and LJMU will collect different sorts of personal information. This will be used to help us make sure we talk to a wide range of people and understand what difference Choices is making to people with different background and characteristics. We will also use your personal details to arrange a time to talk to you and when talking to you to find out what you think about the project. Your personal information will not be used in our reports. We would like to collect information on:

- **First name/s and surname**
- **age**
- **gender**
- **ethnicity**
- **nationality**
- **education or qualifications**
- **as well as information on your previous work history or employment status**

Ipsos MORI and LJMU will:

- **be given your name by the people who run the Choices Programme**
- **be given other personal details and monitoring data you share with St Giles such as your age, gender or employment status and progress (as outlined above)**
- **speak to you to find out what you think about the Choices Programme**
- **analyse further data provided by St Giles**
- **collect copies of the signed consent form - these will be scanned and stored electronically (paper copies will be shredded).**

4. Who will my personal data be shared with?

We collect your details from St Giles and then during the project your personal information will only be shared between Ipsos MORI and LJMU (until August 2023). Data will be shared securely via online data transfer portals or encrypted files.

At the end of the project, your data will also be securely shared with the project funders, Youth Futures Foundation (YFF), to be held in a data depository for the purposes of evaluation and research to help young people. To fulfil these purposes the data may also be shared with other organisations who manage the depository, evaluate outcomes, or conduct further research that is associated with YFF's vision and values. YFF will process your data in accordance with data protection law which includes keeping it secure and only

using it where there is a fair and lawful basis to do so. For more information, please see YFF's [privacy policy](#).

5. How long will you use my information for?

We will keep your personal information until the research project has been completed. We will delete the information three months after our final report is available to the public (in late 2023).

6. Your rights

You have the right to be told about the information we collect and use about you. You do not have to talk to us if you do not want to. It is your choice. If you do take part and change your mind later, you can contact us and ask for your information to be removed. We cannot remove your information after the report is written though.

You also have the right to see what personal information we have about you. If you want to change your information or remove it from this research, please email (RESEARCHER EMAIL PROVIDED).

If you have any questions about this privacy notice or how we handle your personal information, please contact:

Data Protection Officer (DPO) at Ipsos MORI [EMAIL PROVIDED]

You have the right to make a complaint at any time to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues via <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>.

Appendix 4: Timeline

Figure A4 illustrates the timeline of activities related to the evaluation and programme delivery.

Figure A4 – Project and evaluation timetable

[illegible]

Appendix 5: Outcome measures

Table A5.1 Overview of sample sizes for outcome measures

Measure	Measurement period	N	% of programme participants
WEMWBS	Baseline	194	72
	Post 1	91	34
	Most recent	50	19
WOQ	Baseline	170	63
	Post 1	98	37
Housing	Baseline	214	80
	Post 1	65	24
	Most recent	66	25
Education, training and employment	Baseline	215	80
	Post 1	64	24
	Most recent	66	25
Health and wellbeing	Baseline	214	80
	Post 1	65	24
	Most recent	66	25
Finance, benefit, and debt	Baseline	214	80
	Post 1	65	24
	Most recent	66	25
Safety and risk	Baseline	215	80
	Post 1	65	24
	Most recent	66	25
Family and social	Baseline	215	80

	Post 1	66	25
	Most recent	66	25

Mental wellbeing - Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was developed to enable the measurement of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing.

The 14-item scale has five response categories, which can be summed to provide a single wellbeing score. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing, thereby making the concept more accessible. The scale has been widely used nationally and internationally for monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes and investigating the determinants of mental wellbeing.

Questionnaire

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experiences of each over the last two weeks.

STATEMENTS	NONE OF THE TIME	RARELY	SOME OF THE TIME	OFTEN	ALL OF THE TIME
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=88), there was an increase in mean score on WEMWBS (baseline, 46.9; 1st post assessment, 49.3), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p>0.001$). From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=90), there was an increase in mean score on WEMWBS (baseline, 47.0; most recent post assessment, 50.3), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p<0.001$).

Attitude Toward Employment Work Opinion Questionnaire (WOQ)

The Attitude Toward Employment Work Opinion Questionnaire (WOQ) measures job-related attitudes, including self-confidence and motivation for work, using an eight-item scale with four response categories. Young people are asked to select the response that best corresponds with their beliefs. The WOQ is a validated tool that can be used to predict job performance in entry level positions.

Questionnaire

These questions measure self-confidence and motivation for work. Please tick the box which best corresponds with your beliefs.

1. I am not quite ready to handle a job.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

2. I have enough skills to do a job well.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

3. I know I can succeed at work.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

4. I would take almost any kind of job to get money.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

5. I admire people who get by without working.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

6. The only good job is one that pays a lot of money.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

7. Working hard at a job will pay off in the end.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

8. Most jobs are dull and boring.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=68), there was an increase in mean score on WOQ(baseline, 23.1; 1st post assessment, 23.4), but this was not a statistically significant increase (p=0.412).

Needs assessment

Housing

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=64), there was an increase in mean score on housing needs (baseline, 3.4; 1st post assessment, 3.6), however this was not a statistically significant increase (p=0.184).

From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=65), there was an increase in mean score on housing needs (baseline, 3.4; most recent post assessment, 4.0), and this was a statistically significant increase (p<0.01).

Education, training, and employment

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=64), there was an increase in mean score on ETE needs (baseline, 2.6; 1st post assessment, 3.2), and this was a statistically significant increase (p<0.01). From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=66), there was an increase in mean score on ETE needs (baseline, 2.6; most recent post assessment, 3.7), and this was a statistically significant increase (p<0.001).

Finance

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=64), there was an increase in mean score on finance needs (baseline, 2.7; 1st post assessment, 3.0), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p<0.05$). From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=65), there was an increase in mean score on finance needs (baseline, 2.7; most recent post assessment, 3.4), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p<0.001$).

Health and wellbeing

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=64), there was no change in mean score on health and wellbeing needs (baseline, 3.7; 1st post assessment, 3.7), however this was not a statistically significant increase ($p=0.925$). From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=65), there was an increase in mean score on health and wellbeing needs (baseline, 3.7; most recent post assessment, 4.0), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p<0.05$).

Safety

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=64), there was an increase in mean score on safety needs (baseline, 3.4; 1st post assessment, 3.5), however this was not a statistically significant increase ($p=0.375$). From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=66), there was an increase in mean score on safety needs (baseline, 3.4; most recent post assessment, 3.7), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p<0.01$).

Relationships

From baseline assessment to first post assessment of clients with available data (n=64), there was an no change in mean score on relationship needs (baseline, 3.6; 1st post assessment, 3.8), however this was not a statistically significant increase ($p=0.200$). From baseline assessment to most recent post assessment, of clients with available data (n=65), there was an increase in mean score on relationships needs (baseline, 3.6; most recent post assessment, 4.1), and this was a statistically significant increase ($p<0.01$).

Appendix 6: Bibliography

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