‘There’s more to the world than just like crime’.

An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services

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Student declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Youth offending services (YOSs) were introduced to reduce the rates of offending amongst children and young people across England and Wales. Although they have been successful in supporting a high proportion of young people to achieve desistance, there is still a high level of re-offending.

This thesis explored the experiences of young people enrolled in YOSs through a socio-ecological lens. Six young people were interviewed and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), providing an in-depth understanding into their experiences. Five YOS professionals from various roles were also interviewed twice. Thematic analysis of the data provided contextual information regarding supportive factors and obstacles young people may face on their journey towards desistance.

Findings outlined contributing factors to the development of a psychological and physical reflective space created within YOSs. The main features of the space were identified, namely: access to online sessions and staff’s non-judgemental approach. Young people also experienced personal growth as an outcome of their involvement with YOSs. The flexible approach, multi-disciplinary working and positive staff qualities contributed to the successful work completed within YOSs.

Young people’s aspirations were explored, highlighting similarities with the general adolescent population. Findings signified the importance of moving away from a within-young person perspective to identify and acknowledge wider systemic issues,
such as societal barriers when exploring why a large part of this population are not engaged in education, training or employment.

Conclusions focus on the importance of gathering young people’s views during their involvement in YOSs as they provide a valuable insight into how best to support this population. The findings hold significant implications in understanding young people’s aspirations and how they perceive their experiences at YOSs. Implications for educational psychologists (EPs) within YOSs are outlined in relation to Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (2005), highlighting the variety of systems within YOSs EPs can contribute to.
Impact statement

This thesis explored the experiences of young people engaging in youth offending services (YOSs). A socio-ecological design was implemented through interviewing young people and professionals working within YOSs.

Previously, the views of young people within YOSs have been elicited using a single perspective which often resulted in information being missed. This study aimed to address this gap through exploring young people’s experiences whilst capturing the complex systems surrounding them, which can contribute or disrupt their journey towards desistance. As such, young people’s aspirations were also explored. These findings highlight the importance of gathering young people’s perspectives during their court order. A myriad of factors young people valued about YOSs was outlined, in addition to wider systemic issues which could prevent access to education, training and employment.

These findings provide a contribution to academia and professional practice. Implications for educational psychologists (EPs) have been considered within different system levels including supporting children and young people, schools and YOSs. The implications are widespread and include the following:

- Eliciting young people’s voices can support YOSs to embed a person-centred approach across their interventions.
- Further consideration should be given to strategies used to encourage young people to reflect on their offence, minimising the use of verbal questioning.
- Additional efforts are required to develop strategies to align young people’s short-term and long-term goals.
• More consideration is required to support young people during their transition from the YOS to offer sustained and continued support.
• Flexibility is required during YOS interventions to ensure completion and benefits are experienced by young people.
• EPs should be asking about children and young people enrolled in YOSs within their planning meetings with schools.
• Schools require further support in understanding factors which could contribute to the high exclusion rate of Black pupils and how to make their school more inclusive.
• Reflective practice, such as solution circles could support YOS staff when considering the most beneficial way of supporting vulnerable young people within complex environments.
• Promoting the development of positive relationships may support young people to engage in education, training or job opportunities.
• Additional efforts are required to challenge stigma attached to young people who have offended.
• Additional efforts are required to increase the number of training and job opportunities available to young people within the Youth Justice System.
• Consideration of children and young people within their context over time and adapting input is an essential aspect of supporting this population within schools and YOSs.

EPs work across a variety of systems surrounding children and young people. They are well positioned to support schools, the community and YOSs, in addition to challenging negative societal perceptions for this vulnerable population.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Youth Offending Services (YOSs) were created by the government in 1998 (Crime and Disorder Act) to mitigate the concerning level of youth crime. In 2018, 65,800 arrests of children and young people aged between 10-17 years old were made in England and Wales (YJB, 2019). All of these individuals were subsequently ordered to engage with a YOS. YOSs’ ambition is to ensure young people are accessing education, training or employment (ETE) and are participating in society, including abstaining from crime.

Since the introduction of YOSs, a 78% decrease in youth crime has been recorded which has been attributed to the valuable and effective work undertaken within YOSs. However, national statistics illustrate that YOS support is not successful for all young people and it is those individuals that are likely to get entrenched in more severe crime in the future. In the year ending March 2017, 33,400 young people were enrolled in a YOS and of this cohort 40.9% reoffended within twelve months (YJB/MoJ, 2019). YOS caseloads are subsequently described as “increasingly concentrated with young people who have longer, more entrenched, criminal histories” (YJB, 2015, p.18). Given these high reoffending figures and the long-term consequences, it’s surprising that little research has been conducted around the young people’s perspectives of engaging with YOSs to determine what they value from the service and how to better support them to move towards desistance.

Historically, research around YOSs have sought the views of adults surrounding the young people, as opposed to directly working with young people (Kirk, 2007). Yet, to
develop and implement effective services for this vulnerable population, it’s imperative their perspectives are heard, whilst ensuring the context is fully understood and acknowledged. Providing a platform for young people to share their views and experiences is vital at all times, but even more so when this research is conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when YOSs were required to suspend in-person support for young people and move to remote working.

1.1 What are youth offending services?
The aim of YOSs are to prevent offending and re-offending by working with children and young people who have either committed a criminal offence or who are at risk of offending (HM Government, 1998). YOSs consist of multiagency teams from education, police, probation services, social care and health with a shared aim of supporting young people to access ETE consistently. As the young person enters the YOS an ‘AssetPlus’ assessment is conducted to gather information including personal characteristics, relationships, care history, physical health, mental health, criminal history and information regarding their current offence. From this information, an appropriate intervention is then created. This framework provides professionals with a tool to identify risk and protective factors around each individual, in addition to evaluating the risk of offending or re-offending (YJB, 2014).

The court has a range of sentences, known as ‘orders’, it can give young people who have committed an offence. As a condition of all orders, young people are instructed to engage with YOSs for a set timeframe, which can range from three months to three years. If the young person offends whilst on an order, their case is immediately taken
to court to be reassessed. If this occurs, typically the order is increased in severity or time (see appendix 1 for outline of orders).

1.2 Motivations for the research

I have a long-standing interest in supporting vulnerable children and young people, both from a personal and professional perspective. My parents have been foster carers for many years and seeing the adverse life experiences children have encountered prior to living with our family, I was inspired to ensure this population are given a voice to share their experiences. My professional curiosity as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) led me to pursue the impact of these adverse experiences on young people’s long-term outcomes. Currently, much of the literature highlights the disproportion of Looked-after children in the youth justice system (YJS). In light of this, I strive to explore how we can support this vulnerable population to achieve meaningful and positive life outcomes.

My experiences as a TEP further expanded my interest within this field. I work with multiple secondary schools and frequently hear about young people turning towards crime. Yet, the narratives from school staff are often vague with little known around what support is provided within YOSs. I became curious as to the role EPs can take in supporting young people and staff within YOSs. Currently within my Local Authority (LA), an EP is appointed to the YOS for one day a week, however I believe EPs’ role within the YJS can go beyond this scope.

Literature highlights the well-documented association between offending behaviour and the complex needs of young people. Current figures indicate that young people
who offend are three times more likely to have mental health difficulties compared to their peers (Hagell, 2002; Almond, 2012). They are also more likely to have a higher rate of physical and learning needs (Bryan, Freer & Furlong, 2007; Hopkins et al., 2016) and higher rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Yet, their needs have often gone unnoticed or have been inadequately supported (Kesler, 2007; Almond, 2012), so it’s not surprising that educational experiences of this population are predominantly negative.

EPs strive for equality and advocate the voice of young people; therefore, they are well suited to make a difference to this vulnerable population. Particularly due to the complex needs of young people within the YJS, EPs can offer a unique contribution regarding the psychology around child development, motivation, working in systems and the importance of relationships. All of which could be significant when supporting young people to engage in YOSs and move towards desistance. Furthermore, due to EPs’ skills and knowledge of systemic practice, they can make necessary adaptations to target individualised needs or support the YOS team as required (Talbot, 2010). As YOSs continue to support young people to engage in ETE, I believe there is a great potential for EPs to support this process.

1.3 Research context: an overview

The research was conducted within a YOS in an outer London Borough where I am currently on placement as a TEP. The YOS opened in 2003 and supports children and young people aged between ten and eighteen who have been given a statutory order by the courts or children and young people aged between eight and sixteen who are
at risk of offending. Within the YOS building, there are six different teams that have the same goal of supporting young people to engage with ETE.

However, national statistics demonstrate young people who are supervised by YOSs are 2.6 times more likely to not be engaged in education, training or employment (NEET) compared to their peers (Powell, 2018). Within the YOS where the research was conducted, internal data shows 23% of young people were reported to be NEET following their engagement in YOSs in 2010. Comparable figures are also reported in other areas of the country, showing an average of 28.7% of young offenders are NEET for up to 6 months and 51.7% are NEET for 6 months or longer (Audit Commission, 2010). The following chart shows nine areas of the UK and their NEET rates for young people enrolled in YOSs. Despite slight variations, there is a consistency of NEET rates across the country, highlighting a systemic issue regarding young people in YOSs not accessing ETE. More recent NEET data for young offenders is not available until the 2021 census survey is released.

Figure 1

A bar chart showing the percentage of young people who are NEET following their engagement in YOSs
Evidence suggests that outcomes for NEET young people are often grave, including poor mental health, shorter life expectancy, drug use and higher chances of committing crime (Arnold & Baker, 2012). Consequently, the consistent high NEET rates are concerning and raise questions around what is preventing young people from accessing opportunities, are the opportunities appropriate and are they in line with young people’s aspirations? As Carroll et al. (2013) argues “programs should focus on assisting adolescents to develop clear self-set achievable goals and support them through the process of attaining them” (p. 431). Little is known around what young people who are supervised by YOSs aspire towards and what support they receive to achieve their goals. Arguably, supporting young people towards meaningful goals is a key component in achieving desistance and therefore it is fundamental we understand what young people aspire towards.

1.4 Theoretical underpinnings of research: Desistance and Ecological Systems theory

All YOSs have the aim of supporting young people to achieve desistance. Desistance theory will subsequently be drawn upon within the study to explore the factors within YOSs which support individuals to engage in services and step away from crime (McNeil, 2006; Williams & Ariel, 2013).

Nugent & Schinkel (2016) aim to capsulate this process by proposing the terminology “act-desistance” to describe non-offending behaviour, “identity desistance” for
internalisation of a non-offending identity and “relational desistance” for recognition of change by others. These terms have been praised due to their clarity within their descriptions (Weaver, 2019) and will therefore be used throughout this thesis.

Arguably, the complex process of engaging in YOSs and moving towards desistance is underacknowledged within desistance theory. Echoing this, Jacks et al. (2017) criticise the use of desistance theories as they place the young person at the source of the offending behaviour; possibly underestimating the influences of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ACEs and wider environmental factors impacting on young people’s development and behaviour. Agreeing with this concept, Nugent & Schinkel (2016) argue for desistance to occur, changes within the individual’s mesosystem (such as an employers’ perception and beliefs) and macrosystem (wider society) need to occur. Understanding a young person’s context has never been more important due to the impact of Covid-19 on young people’s lives and experiences within YOSs. As such, a social-ecological lens, alongside desistance theory was applied to provide an appropriate platform to explore young people’s aspirations and experiences of engaging in YOSs.

Given the multi-components of YOSs, including the myriad of professionals and interventions young people receive, a socio-ecological framework was considered best suited to fully understand their experiences. As such, Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model was drawn upon to consider the multifaceted level of support within YOSs through the exploration of these four systems on young people’s experiences (see Figure 2):
**Process:** This study looked at the interaction between the young people and their engagement in YOSs, particularly exploring what they value from the service, how they could be better supported and any potential barriers they may face.

**Person:** Young people’s perceptions of YOSs and their future aspirations were explored by providing them with a platform to share their experiences and views. Consideration was given to the resources and opportunities available to the young people which was captured from interviewing staff members from the YOS.

**Context:** The context of the YOSs is imperative to fully honour young people’s experiences. Therefore, professionals were interviewed to gather contextual information regarding the service offer, supportive factors and potential barriers that young people may face.
Time: Due to the pandemic, consideration was given to the impact this may have had on the young people and their experiences within YOSs. Data was collected over a two-year period to explore how young people were supported during this time.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 will review the relevant literature in order to outline the importance of the present research. It focuses on the following areas: risk factors associated with youth offending, aspirations, young people’s engagement in YOSs and the role of educational psychologists. The research questions will then be outlined. Chapter 3 discusses and justifies the methodology of the study, in addition to describing ethical considerations. The findings are then presented in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 presents the discussion of the findings, limitations and also recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

A literature review was undertaken to gather an understanding of young people’s experiences of engaging with YOSs and the needs of young people within the YJS. Risk factors of engaging in youth crime are outlined and research into young people’s engagement with YOSs and their aspirations are described and evaluated. Details of the search terms can be found in appendix 2.

2.1 Risk factors associated with youth offending

To fully understand the experiences of young people within YOSs, it was considered imperative to outline the complex environments they may have encountered prior to engaging in crime. As such, this section will consider the research base in relation to risk factors associated with youth offending.

It’s important to acknowledge the complexity of interrelated risk factors that are often present in a young person’s environment which can contribute to their offending behaviour. McAra & McVie (2016) argue that young people within the YJS should be treated as vulnerable young people as opposed to offenders. Similarly, the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) emphasises the need to raise awareness of the complex needs of young offenders. In light of this, a vast amount of empirical evidence highlights many significant risk factors that increase the chances of young people becoming involved with crime. Becoming a Looked-after child (LAC), having attachment/relationships difficulties, SEN, mental health needs, complex interacting systems and exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have all been documented to increase the risk of young people turning towards crime (Laufer & Harel, 2003; Hurry & Moriarty, 2004).
2.1.1 What are adverse childhood experiences?

ACEs are stressful events that occur during childhood which directly affect the child (such as neglect) or the environment they grow up in (such as exposure to domestic violence). They can be a single occurrence or events over a prolonged period of time (BPS, 2019). Much of the literature relating to ACEs has shown lifelong impacts on social, emotional and mental health, educational attainment, criminal behaviour and employment prospects (Ford et al., 2016; Merrick, 2017). Further, the more ACEs children and young people experience, the greater the risk of poor outcomes later in life (Chartier et al., 2010; Plumb et al., 2016). However, correlation does not imply causality. Many individuals who have experienced ACEs will achieve positive life outcomes.

The relationship between ACEs and offending behaviour is undoubtedly a complex one. Young offenders are amongst the most vulnerable within the population and acknowledging their previous life experiences is key in understanding their behaviour, experiences and perceptions.

2.1.2 The impact of ACEs on offending behaviour

Amongst the many sociological and psychological theories of explaining causes of offending behaviour, the impact of ACEs has been a consistent finding amongst literature (Baglivio et al., 2014; Logan-Green et al., 2017; Blum et al., 2019). Some theorists argue exposure to ACEs in early life disrupts the attachment bond between a child and their primary caregiver, other social leaning theorists argue that children learn their offending behaviour from modelling key adults’ behaviour. Lastly, the psycho-social theory highlights the negative emotions, such as anger and resentment
developed in children who are exposed to ACEs which later leads to offending behaviour. An alternative perspective, as proposed by Brezzina (1998) is the relevance of all three theories when explaining the complex relationship between ACEs and offending behaviour. Supporting this theory, the YJB (2014) highlighted the shared and multiple risk factors often present in young people's lives including; family violence, abuse, neglect, trauma and involvement from social services.

Bellis et al. (2014) conducted a study around the impact of ACEs in the UK and found individuals with ACEs are more likely to become victims and perpetrators in criminal activity. Individuals with four or more ACEs were associated with living in deprived areas, having no qualifications and being unemployed or on long-term sickness. The impact of the participant's ACEs on the next generation's level was also highlighted, suggesting a pattern between ACEs and successive family generations (Bellis et al., 2014). However, ACEs have been criticised due to the subjective methods of establishing causation, as they rely on individual’s recalling their childhood experiences. Edwards et al. (2017) argues this is highly subjective, as those who have a positive adulthood may perceive themselves as overcoming their previous experiences and thus not reporting them as negative. Whereas, individuals who may be experiencing challenges in adulthood may be more inclined to share their childhood experiences. Edwards et al. (2017) subsequently described the data as ‘skewed’ and ‘unverifiable’ (P.3).

In contrast, Wolff, Baglivio & Piquero’s (2017) study used an adolescent sample which reduced the subjectivity of relying on long-term retrospective recall of their childhood experiences. Within their study, participants who had experienced more ACEs
reoffended within a shorter time frame following a community-based programme, in comparison to individuals with fewer ACEs. The link between ACEs and recidivism was consequently highlighted. However, a limitation of Wolff, Baglivio & Piquero’s (2017) study lies within the limited protective factors identified, which may have contributed to the likelihood of young people reoffending following their involvement in the youth justice system.

Addressing this limitation, Craig, Piquero, Farrington, & Ttofi, (2017) used multi-methods of ascertaining ACEs scores and protective factors in an individual’s life. They interviewed participants over their life (beginning from the age of 8 years old) and conducted surveys with parents and teachers. Concurring with previous research (Fox et al. 2015; Baglivio et al. 2014), their longitudinal story found that ACEs were associated with offending behaviours over the life-course. Protective factors were also identified which reduced the likelihood of individuals offending. Having high school attainment, low impulsivity, low neuroticism, low troublesome-ness, low daring, low dishonesty and small family size were all documented as protective factors against entering the justice system. This highlights the importance of considering protective factors, alongside ACEs when considering effective individualised support.

Furthermore, Anderson (2019) highlights the importance of not using ACEs as a predetermination for individuals’ outcomes. Anderson’s (2019) research signified where ACEs had contributed to the pathway to crime, it was not a simple causation. Individual’s context ‘was everything’ (p.7) and measurements of ACEs, often a checklist, fails to capture people’s wider experiences. ACEs experienced within Anderson’s (2019) research included structural factors, such as race and socio-
economic status. For example, one participant spoke of feelings of exclusion which were exacerbated by receiving free school meals and the minimal opportunities in his area. Supporting this, Walsh (2019) critiques the minimal ACEs research which examines childhood socio-economic conditions. A systematic review of ACEs research conducted by the Glasgow Centre for population Health identified that out of 3,000 research papers, only 6 examined social injustice factors such as poverty, race, gender, disabilities and sexual orientation (Walsh et al. 2019). Walsh (2019) subsequently argues that social justice is predominantly ‘ignored’ in the ACEs framework. As such, ACEs are described as a useful ‘starting point’ (p. 263, Taylor-Robinson, Straatmann & Whitehead, 2018) for discussing children’s health, but should not be used as a significant determination of their health or life outcomes. Rather, efforts should focus on reducing socioeconomic inequalities, identifying protective factors and understanding wider societal factors to provide appropriate trauma informed practices.

This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979; 2005) ecological systems theory, highlighting the importance of considering the wider systems surrounding a young person, such as their home environment, socio-economic condition, parental circumstances and school experience. Arguably, the significant amount of time a young person spends in education can act as a protective factor (providing success in education with an inclusive ethos) or a risk factor in relation to crime (providing failure in education and feelings of isolation; Hayden, 2008). There is a growing body of literature demonstrating the success in early interventions for children considered at risk of offending. However, there is limited research around the effectiveness of interventions for adolescents, with Hayden (2008, p.1) describing secondary age
support as “inadequate.” This is concerning considering the average age a young person starts offending is 15 years and 2 months old (Years 10 and 11 at school; YJB, 2019).

2.1.3 Educational needs of young offenders
A large majority of young offenders have negative and disrupted experiences of school. Within the UK, up to 40% young offenders are not accessing education or employment, with a further 16% in alternative provisions, such as pupil referral units (PRUs; Heath & Priest, 2016). The link between offending behaviour, unmet learning needs and detachment from education is thus a prevalent theme across the literature.

Young people within the YJS frequently have literacy and numeracy levels well below the national average (Social Services Inspectorate et al., 2002; Taylor, 2016). Hurry et al. (2005) found 57% of young people who were supervised by YOSs had below Level 1 in literacy and 63% had below Level 1 in numeracy. Speech, language and communication needs are also high within youth offending population with Hughes et al. (2012) noting a 60-90% prevalence rate in young offenders compared to 2-4% in the general population. Bower et al. (2012) argue that poor academic achievement and feelings of disconnection from others initiate young people’s disengagement from education. The authors subsequently concluded the importance of providing positive educational experiences for young people and ensuring their needs are identified and met within school.

In contrast, the MoJ & DfE (2016) report 45% of young people who were in custody and 46% who were sentenced to a Youth Rehabilitation Order had SEN needs without
a Statement or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). The number of undiagnosed learning needs in young people on referral orders and cautions were also reported at 42% and 38%, respectively. These statistics highlight the high level of learning needs within this population which have frequently gone unnoticed. Echoing this, Carroll et al. (2013) outlines the process of young people who have difficulties within school, lose self-esteem and therefore engage in risky behaviours to increase their reputation. Such risky behaviours have frequently been linked to absenteeism or exclusionary practises within school.

2.1.5. Exclusions
Difficulties within education are often manifested in children’s behaviour and are frequently mistaken for acts of defiance. As such, ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’ is the most common reason pupils are excluded from school, either permanently (34%) or for a fixed term (30%; DfE, 2019). Young people within YOSs often fall into these categories with literature suggesting they are significantly affected by exclusionary practices.

Skinner & Pitzer (2012) argue that school can either support a young person’s belonging in school or undermine it. If a young person has a negative experience within school, this could have profound impacts on their autonomous motivation to engage in other activities within society. Highlighting this, Munn & Lloyd (2005) point out the relationship between exclusion from school and social exclusion:

“Exclusion for disruptive behaviour is perhaps the most explicit form of rejection by a school of its pupils and for some excluded pupils it increases the likelihood of wider social exclusion” (Munn & Lloyd, 2005. p.2)
Chitsabesan et al. (2007) found 75% of young offenders had previously been temporarily or permanently excluded from school for extended periods. Similarly, high levels of persistent school absences across young people within the YJS were noted, with 90% of young people in custody, referral orders or on cautions reporting persistent school absences (DfE & MoJ, 2016). The relationship between offending behaviour and exclusion has a vast amount of data supporting the interrelatedness of the two factors, however it is no doubt a complex relationship.

Berridge et al (2001) attempted to explore the causal relationship between offending behaviour and exclusion through interviews with 343 excluded young people. They concluded that exclusion from school can either trigger the onset of offending behaviour or accelerate existing criminal activity. Within the US, this link is described as the ‘school-to-prison-pipeline’. Comparably, Graham (2016) discusses how UK schools ‘identify, isolate, and then train the minority of their students to fit the future role of imprisoned offender’ (p. 139). Relatdly, Bowling & Phillips (2006) highlight that Black Caribbean young people are perceived as potentially violent by teachers and are frequently exposed to criminal profiling during ‘stop and search’ procedures. It’s therefore not surprising that Black Caribbean boys have the third highest permanent exclusion rate (following Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller; DfE, 2021), which is later translated to an over representation of this ethnic group in the YJS.

Conversely, engaging young people in ETE is a protective factor, thus YOSs’ aim is to support young people to engage in ETE consistently. Yet, young people who are supervised by a YOSs are 2.6 times more likely to be NEET compared to their peers (Powell, 2018), highlighting a national dilemma of young people not accessing ETE
following their engagement in YOSs. This concern was echoed within the annual inspection of YOSs in 2019, with the educational provision being described as ‘disappointing’ with a high level of young people not accessing suitable education and training opportunities. It was noted that some young people were receiving little more than one hour’s education a day, leaving them ‘unoccupied and vulnerable to further offending’ (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation, 2019, Pg. 9). This raises questions about the opportunities available to this population and the relevance of them to young people’s aspirations.

2.2 Young offenders’ aspirations

16-18-year olds are at the critical period of human growth and development in their career (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2002). Yet, the majority of young people who received a caution or sentence in the year ending March 2019 were aged between 15-17-years-old (77%), with 17-year olds being the most prevalent age group (33%; MoJ, 2020). As such, it’s important to consider the repercussions of young people becoming involved with crime at this age.

Echoing this, Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) argue that young people’s past and current experiences largely impact their sense of future aspirations. Similarly, previous research suggests young people within YOSs have limited future aspirations (Nurmi, 1989; Albert & Luzzo, 1999). However more recent research has shown that young people within the YJS aspire towards vocational careers such as plumbing and mechanics (Hurry et al, 2005). Interestingly, Gardner (2010) reported young people often develop scripts around their aspirations, rather than exploring their personal desires for the future. This raises questions of whether young people’s documented
goals are a true reflection of their views? Exploration into the process of ascertaining young people’s true aspirations within YOSs is paramount in supporting them to engage in ETE.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) interviewed fourteen young people who were under supervision of a YOS to explore their aspirations and personal future. All participants reported experiencing difficult life events or trauma previously which they felt influenced their outlook towards their future. Further, young people who perceived their current circumstances more positively, were able to identify personal aspirations more easily than those who viewed their current situation negatively. Through a grounded theory approach Fitzpatrick et al (2015) created a theoretical framework to conceptualise how young people perceive their future goals, as shown in figure 3.

**Figure 3**
*Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) theoretical framework of how adolescents involved in a YOS think about their goal aspirations and personal future*

- Identifying idealised goal aspirations
- Appraisal of past and present
- Stuck in uncertainty
- Threat of future disappointment
- Protecting self
When young people think about their aspirations two categories of identifying ‘goal aspirations’ and ‘appraising past and present’ emerge simultaneously. Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) discussed how this is a reciprocal process where a young person begins to think of personal goals, yet the perceived likelihood of achieving the goal is influenced by their judgement of past and present circumstances. As young people appraise their past and present events, they feel a level of hopelessness around their aspirations being reached and they enter the ‘stuck in uncertainty’ section. A level of pessimism around their future then develops which contributes to the development of ‘threat of future disappointment’ category. As the young person experiences uncertainty of not achieving their aspirations, they then apply a range of protective strategies to avoid threats to their sense of self, which Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) labelled ‘protecting self’. Protecting themselves leads young people to de-value their aspirations, not wanting to commit to future goals, portraying themselves as ambivalent around their future or delaying the process of thinking about their future (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). These coping strategies are implemented to preserve young people’s sense of self and well-being; however, they significantly impact on the young person’s ability to achieve their aspirations.

Although Fitzpatrick et al’s (2015) study had a small sample size, a strength lies within the in-depth qualitative approach used to gather meaningful information around how young people perceive their futures. It also provides a possible explanation of why some young people may be NEET. Fitzpatrick et al’s (2015) study subsequently emphasises the role of the YOSs in disrupting this framework by supporting young people to develop meaningful and realistic aspirations. Yet, surprisingly there is a
paucity of research exploring young people’s aspirations, specifically identifying what is important to them and whether they feel on the correct trajectory towards their goal.

2.3 Transition to adulthood

Amemiya, Kieta & Monahan (2017) identified five themes that supported young people towards desistance during their transition to adulthood; seeking and maintaining supportive relationships, navigating peer groups, working towards long-term goals, finding sanctuaries and structuring time. Young people spoke about the importance of maintaining supportive relationships with prosocial adults or peers, such as partners, caregivers and professionals. It was attachments to these figures which provided motivations to change. This is further supported by Zilberstein & Spencer (2017) who convey mentoring relationships including qualities of safety, consistency, empathic communication and reliability have the potential to develop secondary attachment relationships. Similarly, Barry (2010) emphasises the importance of young people gaining respect and trust of adults around them during their transition to adulthood. Without this reciprocal relationship, young people are likely to become disempowered during this transition.

Within the Amemiya et al. (2017) study, the majority of young people’s goals were broad such as wanting to be ‘successful’ and ‘do positive’ in life, suggesting they are likely to benefit from support to consider their future aspirations and what being ‘successful’ may involve. Finding sanctuaries away from certain locations where they can avoid crime was also discussed as a key factor in moving away from crime, such as going to their partner’s house or places of employment. Lastly, young people spoke about the importance of structuring their time to keep themselves occupied in activities
or employment. The dangers of being bored were highlighted as a significant risk factor of engaging in criminal activity.

With this in mind, the DfE (2015, p.122) introduced the notion that young people need to be supported to plan for their future from the ages of 13-14-years-old. The guidance introduced four preparing for adulthood outcomes:

- Independent living
- Having friends and relationships and being part of their communities
- Being as healthy as possible
- Moving into paid employment or higher education

Young people ‘participating in their communities’ is spoken about numerously within the SEN code of practice (DfE, 2015, p.124, 126, 128 & 133). Yet, the perception of adolescents is a key component of whether they are fully accepted and integrated into their community. Bawdons (2009) explored how the UK media perceived male adolescents and found that they were frequently being described in negative ways with terminology such as: ‘yobs’, ‘thugs’, ‘feral’, and ‘louts’, with limited positive stories regarding adolescents. Similarly, another study found 71% of media stories were negative regarding young people (Ipsos MORI, 2006). A danger of such negative perceptions of adolescents is the potential of barriers being created for young people accessing opportunities within their communities (Halsey & White, 2008). This is often described as a reciprocal relationship, as young people who offend are more likely to excluded from society and also those who are excluded from society are more likely to offend.
This cyclic notion provides a possible explanation into the number (40.9%) of young people re-offending following their engagement in YOSs (YJB/MoJ, 2019). However, to truly explore how to better support this population towards desistance, their voices should be central to the process. This concept is supported by the Munro Review (2011), which states the need for “young people as individuals with rights, including their right to participate in major decisions about them” (p.24). Conversely, young people’s views are rarely sought and implemented in the decision-making process within YOSs (Baker, 2008; Hart & Thompson, 2009). This is concerning considering the documented link between young people not feeling listened to and disengagement from the activity or intervention (Hart & Thompson, 2009).

2.4 Young people’s engagement in youth offending services

When ‘engagement’ is discussed within this study, it refers to the active, constructive and focused involvement and participation with YOSs (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Ipsos MORI (2010) explains further, conveying that engagement in YOSs exceeds turning up for appointment, but also includes young people being motivated and committed through active participation in the services offered to them. A young person who actively engages in services, increases the likelihood of successful completion of interventions and positive outcomes (YJB, 2008). The ‘openness’ to change and ability to reflect on previous life events were also considered key factors in young people engaging with YOSs and moving away from crime, particularly for young people internalising a non-offending identity (Farrall, 2002; Giordano et al, 2002).
The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002) assumes everyone has intrinsic motivation to fulfil three psychological needs of: autonomy, competence and relatedness. This intrinsic motivation is apparent in all individuals, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity and age. However, an individual’s environment is seen as either supportive of the person’s needs or a barrier to meet their needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Deci & Ryan (1985) argue that every individual has the basic need to engage with social activities and others, however if these needs are not met, they disengage from their environment by acting out or withdrawing. This theory offers a possible process of young people turning towards criminal activity and overlaps with Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) notion of the wider environment influencing a young person’s behaviour and development.

It also suggests that once a young persons’ needs are met, they are more likely to be motivated to engage with their environment. However, the complexity of this process amongst young offenders is perhaps underacknowledged within Deci & Ryan’s (2008) theory. Acknowledging this, a socio-ecological lens could assist with exploring contributing factors within a young person’s wider system which may be influencing their motivation to engage in activities in their environment. Specifically, the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) provides a framework to identify the bidirectional influences between an individual and their environment, whilst acknowledging what is occurring within their context during a period of time. Arguably, this is significant when considering a young person’s level of engagement in YOSs to ensure their perceptions have been fully understood.
Further, Self-Determination Theory proposes the quality of motivation is more important than the quantity in regards to predicting outcomes for young people (Deci & Ryan, 2008). As such, Deci & Ryan (2008) make a distinction between autonomous motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation combined to evaluate the value in an activity) and controlled motivation (behaviour as a result of feedback from rewards and punishments and the regulation of actions have been internalised). Controlled motivation is more likely to lead to periods of act-desistance, whereas autonomous motivation leads to more positive long-term well-being and maintained change. Thus, it’s desired that young people have autonomous motivation when engaging with YOSs to enhance the chances of positive sustained change.

However, limited information is known around what motivates young people to engage with YOSs, with previous research showing that although some young people are legally obliged to attend YOSs, they show no levels of motivation to engage with services (Dawes & Larson, 2011). Arguably, ascertaining young people’s perspectives of engaging in YOSs plays a significant role in providing meaningful support to this population (Hart & Thompson, 2009). As highlighted by NACRO (2008), only young people can inform adults around what works and doesn’t work when supporting them.

Endeavouring to gather young people’s perceptions of YOSs, Shepherd (2019) conducted an e-survey with 14,542 young people who are being supervised by YOSs. They noted that 95% of respondents reported the services they have received have been good and 96% said their views had been taken seriously. Shepherd (2019) subsequently concluded a high level of positive feedback from young people enrolled with YOSs. A clear strength of Shepherd’s (2019) study lies within the large sample
size obtained from a hard-to-reach population, which could be attributed to the use of online questionnaires. However, Shepherd’s study offers limited exploration into the specifics of YOSs which young people value or dislike, which could provide valuable information around how to support this population. Furthermore, Shepherd’s (2019) research took place as part of HM Inspectorate of Probation’s Inspection of Youth Offending work. As such, it’s possible young people may have perceived their participation in the study as connected to their involvement in the YJS, fundamentally influencing how they answered the questionnaire.

A similar dilemma was noted in Trivasse (2017) study. They interviewed eleven young people who were enrolled in a YOS to ascertain their views and experiences. The researcher had a close connection with the YOS which could have resulted in participants answering more positively. However, Trivasse concluded that social desirability bias had a minimal effect due to young people offering negative comments regarding their experiences of YOSs. Although this may be the case, the reliability of the results could have been strengthened by an independent researcher overseeing the research and data analysis.

Trivasse (2017) concluded that many young people held negative views prior to engaging with the YOS, however perceptions changed over the course of their involvement. The study had three main findings:

- YOSs were seen as an alternative to custody which increased young people’s motivation to engage in services. Trivasse (2017) reflected on this view as
possibly resulting in young people believing that YOSs can repeatedly support them through multiple offences whilst avoiding custody.

- Participants felt supported around their personal and social circumstances, such as helping them to engage in education.
- Lastly, the importance of a positive relationship between the young person and YOSs was crucial in supporting young people to engage in services.

King (2016) found similar results when interviewing five young people from YOSs, highlighting the importance of positive relationships between staff and young people and the implications of working with them in supporting change. Positive elements of YOSs were commented on by young people, such as having structure and receiving anger management support. In addition to negative elements being highlighted such as finding sessions boring and rigid.

King (2016) and Trivasse's (2017) studies provide an invaluable insight into how young people perceive support from YOSs, however a weakness lies within the limited contextual information regarding the support YOSs offer to young people. King (2016) reflects on information being missed from young people's perspective due to contextual information not being sought prior to interviewing them. For example, what interventions young people receive and the variety of orders available. Gathering this information beforehand would have contextualised some of the information young people discussed in their interviews and may have provided a greater understanding of their experiences. A study applying a more holistic lens around the support offered to young people from various sources would therefore be beneficial to ensure young people's perspectives are fully understood and explored. This is in line with
Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (2005) by ensuring the ‘process’, ‘context’ and ‘time’ are considered. This is significant, as young people’s perceptions can provide invaluable insights into the most effective approaches when working with this hard-to-reach population, thus promoting engagement in services. Supporting this, Rose & Doveston (2008) highlight the importance of placing young people at the centre of research to empower them to recognise their views can influence change.

2.5 The role of educational psychologists (EPs) within YOSs

The literature presented in chapters one and two present a distinct need for young offenders to have their educational and emotional wellbeing supported by YOSs. EPs are in a prime position and have the knowledge and skills to identify and support their needs. This could involve supporting the YOS to develop preventative strategies through working with families and schools, in addition to working directly with the young person (Collins, 2019). Fallon, Woods & Rooney (2010) also highlight a broad range of work EPs can support with, such as therapeutic work with young people, interventions to raise self-esteem, drop-in sessions for parents and writing reports for criminal courts.

Furthermore Ryrie (2006) outlined EP’s unique role within a YOS, discussing the context of individual work, such as consultations with family members or YOS staff and individual assessments with young people. In addition to working with other YOS staff members to carry out joint interviews with young offenders. Developmental and strategic work was also highlighted, for example developing the content for interventions. Lastly, Ryrie, highlighted the role of EPs providing training to adults who work within YOSs around understanding young people’s behaviour. Ryrie
subsequently concluded EPs skills are well suited to support the complex needs of young people within YOSs.

Yet, it’s important to note that EPs’ role within YOSs can go beyond these points mentioned by Ryrie (2006) and Fallon, Woods & Rooney (2010). In 2005, the Youth Justice Board commissioned ‘Communities that Care’ to review the risk and protective factors of young people engaging in crime, as well as effective preventative interventions. Four key areas were identified from a survey of 14,500 children and young people aged between eleven and sixteen: the school, the family, individual issues and peer group or community-related factors. These factors map onto Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (2005) and demonstrates the complex configuration of factors within each individual’s wider systems in which EPs can support young people and their families. Agreeing with this notion, Hill (2017) advocates the requirement of a multi-model when supporting young offenders, using specifically personalised interventions that target individual’s needs.

There is currently a small scope of research which explores the role of EPs within YOSs and the research is predominantly from the views of EPs and other professionals within the service. However, in order to create meaningful interventions, young people need a platform to voice their experiences of engaging with YOSs and share what they value the most from services offered to them. This study will consider implications of the research on the EP role within YOSs from the perspectives of young people. As discussed previously, ensuring this is supplemented by contextual information around the YOSs will provide a richer account of young people’s experiences.
2.6 Rationale for the present study

YOSs have a significantly positive impact on the level of youth crime within the UK. They have been praised due to the individualised approach in supporting young people to move towards desistance and are therefore a huge part of promoting support and safety for this vulnerable and hard-to-reach population. However, they are not successful in supporting a large amount of young people within the YJS, with statistics showing vast reoffending and NEET rates across the country. Given the long-term negative consequences for young people who remain involved in crime, it’s imperative that we explore how best to support this population.

However, limited research has been conducted around young people’s experiences of engaging with YOSs, supplemented by contextual information from professionals working within the service. Young people’s aspirations and how they are supported to achieve their goals has also received little attention within literature. This thesis will subsequently provide young people with a platform to share their aspirations and experiences of engaging with YOSs to consider how best to support this population towards desistance.

The aim of the study was to explore young people’s experiences of engaging in YOSs. Drawing upon the theoretical underpinnings of desistence theory and a social-ecological framework, this study aimed to capture the views of young people to establish how they perceive YOSs and what aspirations young people are striving towards. Professional views were explored to provide contextual information regarding supportive factors and barriers affecting young people they work with. This study aimed to provide a platform for young people to share their voices, experiences and
perceptions of YOSs. A further aim involved providing professionals with a greater insight into supporting vulnerable young people to reach their aspirations.

The **research questions** included:

1) How do young people perceive their experiences of youth offending services?
2) What are the aspirations of young people within youth offending services?
3) What do professionals identify as supportive factors and barriers affecting young people they work with?
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used within the research. Followed by consideration of the social constructionist epistemological stance and the rationale for the qualitative research design. Next, the socio-ecological research design, recruitment of young people and professionals and ethical considerations are discussed. Finally, the approaches to data analysis used in this research; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and thematic analysis are outlined.

3.1 Ontological and Epistemological position

Researchers are required to be transparent regarding their “set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990 p.17), which is often described as a ‘worldview’. An individual’s worldview consists of their perception of the world and reality (ontology) and how knowledge is created (epistemology; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Creswell & Creswell (2017) convey that our worldview is created from past research experiences, discipline focuses and our research communities which all influence how we carry out research.

There are four major worldviews within research; postpositivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism. A postpositivist position believes there is only one reality and highlights the importance of objectivity and generalisability. A constructivist worldview believes knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and participants and there are multiple socially constructed realities. Whereas pragmatists believe there is only one reality, but individuals have their own unique interpretation of that
world. Lastly, a transformative worldview assumes there are various versions of reality based on conscious recognition and social positioning (Mertens, 2010).

Mertens (2010) argues that worldviews are not distinct in practice, however it’s imperative to match the worldview that mostly aligns to my own view in order to guide this research. This research explores young people’s experiences of YOSs, using the assumption that each individual’s experience is unique and is open to interpretation. This is in line with a social constructionist perspective as it aims to uncover how young people and professionals perceive and make sense of their reality through co-constructing knowledge (Burr, 2015).

It also acknowledges that although ‘YOSs exist as a phenomenon’, individuals have a distinct understanding which is developed through their unique experiences. A social constructionist approach, underpinned by qualitative research, allows for exploration into how young people have made sense and meaning of their experiences at YOSs. It also acknowledges my role as the researcher to construct a shared meaning of young people’s and professionals’ experiences.

3.2 Research Design
Qualitative research provides a rich, complex and detailed data collection (Willig, 2013). The intention of this research was to explore young people’s experiences of YOSs and to gather contextual information from professionals. This ensured contextual factors were acknowledged, including the impact of the pandemic on YOS service delivery and the support available for young people during this unprecedented time. A qualitative research design was considered most appropriate as it allows the
researcher to explore the participants’ perspectives and promotes the voice of the young people and professionals in the YOS (Willig, 2013). Subsequently promoting exploration into contextual and systemic factors to build a comprehensive picture of the research context (Creswell, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (2005) was utilised during the consideration of the research design. Previous research describes the usefulness of applying this model when exploring the systems surrounding vulnerable children and young people (Burns, Warmbold-Brann & Zaslofsky, 2015). This is pertinent considering the complex systems surrounding young offenders, such as societal attitudes and the myriad of professionals that work within YOSs. Previous research has criticised Bronfenbrenner’s model (2005) as variations of the framework have been used, resulting in ‘conceptual confusion and inadequate testing of the theory’ (Tudge et al, 2009, p.1). This study aims to address this by explicitly linking elements of the PPCT model to the research design, focusing on the proximal processes to encapsulate the interplay between young people and their environment.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) has also been criticised for the limited information around how to explicitly apply the PPCT model in research (Xia, Li & Tudge, 2020). Arguably, capturing all aspects of an individuals’ proximal processes, their context and time features is an unmanageable and unrealistic expectation. Xia, Li & Tudge (2020) outline the importance of deciding on the developmental outcome of interest and adapting the model accordingly to operationalise the targeted research area. Subsequently, the PPCT model was used to guide the research design, particularly
identifying areas of the young person’s environment which are pertinent to the research questions.

A three-phase qualitative research design was implemented over a two-year time period. There is no distinct or prescribed way of applying the model, however Tudge et al. (2009) argued for research to accurately use Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, it should explicitly outline the relationship between bioecological theory and research methods.

**Figure 4**
*PPCT’s application to this research study*

3.2.1 Semi structured interviews
Semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate to collect data from young people and adults as they allowed participants to voice their unique experiences of YOSs, whilst allowing guided discussion to ensure the research questions were addressed (Robinson, 2014). They encourage flow within the conversation and allow participants to voice topics which are important to them (McCluskey et al., 2015). This acknowledges the importance of the “whole person living in dynamic, complex social...
arrangements” (Rogers, 2000, p. 51), which was considered essential for this study due to the complex systems often surrounding young people within YOSs.

A flexible interview schedule was adopted ensuring all participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. Supporting the social constructionist approach, adaptations were made regarding how the participant was making sense and expressing topics covered in the interview. Consequently, questions were re-worded and repeated back to the young person to ensure the correct meaning was captured. A flexible interview schedule also allowed for variation of question order, including probing for further detail.

3.2.2 Phase one ‘Context’: Interviews with professionals

Applying a socio-ecological framework, professionals from varying roles were interviewed to explore the context of YOSs. Contextual information, such as the types of orders and interventions offered was essential to fully interpret the young people’s interviews. For example, one young person mentioned they were given a ‘youth conditional service thing’ which may have been misinterpreted if previous information regarding the types of orders was not sought beforehand. Information gained from interviewing professionals contextualised this to an ‘Out of Court Disposal’, meaning he was given a specific compulsory requirement to engage with YOSs, but was not required to attend court.
3.2.3 Developing the interview schedule

The interview schedule was created using Kallio et al’s (2016) interview framework as this increases objectivity and trustworthiness in research (McMeekin, Germeni & Briggs, 2020). This process involved identifying aims and addressing the research questions, whilst utilising themes which arose in the literature review. A pilot interview was not conducted as my participant sample was limited and therefore all professionals were needed in the study to ensure a wide perspective of YOSs was encapsulated. However, the interview schedule was peer reviewed by a colleague who had previous experience working in a YOS. Adaptions were made following this review, such as adding questions around multi-disciplinary working and processes around EHCPs for young people enrolled in YOSs, as these topics emerged during our conversation.

The initial open-ended question: ‘can you tell me about your role within the youth offending service?’ allowed participants to share their experiences of working within YOSs. Participants answered in very detailed way, providing a useful in-sight into their role. It also encouraged the conversation to develop naturally, led by the participants’ responses. The interview schedule (appendix 3) contained a summary of themes to be covered including: challenges within their role, the role of other professionals, the referral pathway, educational provisions, facilitating factors and barriers of young people engaging in services and their aspirations.

The duration of the interviews was between 30-45 minutes, which was adequate time to ensure the participants voiced everything they wanted, as well as covering the broad topic areas within my interview schedule. At the end of the interview, professionals
were given an opportunity to share anything important that had not been covered or if they wanted to add information to a point discussed previously.

3.2.4 Phase two ‘Person and Process’: Interviews with young people

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, participants were interviewed online via Microsoft Teams. Online interviews have been praised for the effectiveness in gathering hard-to-reach populations’ voices (Wilson & Edwards, 2003), in addition to being “more convenient for both parties, letting each stay in a familiar and safe environment” (Kazmer & Xie, 2008, p.265). Arguably, online interviews make young people feel more comfortable sharing their experiences whilst being at home. In contrast, participant’s home environments could act as a distraction, influencing their concentration and the data gathered (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Attempting to mitigate this, interviews were scheduled during their timetabled reparation session to reduce the risk of unexpected distractions in their environment.

Young people’s responses were captured using an interactive whiteboard. This was an effective way of obtaining detailed information, whilst allowing participants to see their responses and add any additional thoughts (Hay-Gibson, 2009). One young person experienced a distraction during the interview when their doorbell rang and required a short break. The visual prompt supported their re-engagement into the interview, through visually and verbally recapping previous answers.

Bodily cues are prevented from being captured during online interviews (Cater, 2011). However, they are described to be as equal authenticity compared to face-to-face interviews when web cameras are used, allowing the evaluation of facial impressions
(Sullivan, 2012). My camera was subsequently turned-on for all interviews and young people were invited to turn theirs on at the start of the interview. All participants accepted, which supported the development of an attuned relationship through using facial expressions to prompt and re-phrase questions when required.

Due to the research being conducted during a pandemic, online interviews were best suited to investigate the research questions, whilst ensuring the safety of young people. This also aligned with YOSs’ method of communicating with young people during this time, therefore all participants had previous experience using this platform.

3.2.5 Developing the interview schedule

Utilising Kallio’s et al’s (2016) interview framework, the following themes were explored: associations with YOSs, young people’s aspirations and reflections on their situation.

All young people were initially asked ‘can you tell me a little bit about yourself?’ which allowed them to choose the initial focus. For example, some young people discussed their hobbies, whereas others spoke about their education and future aspirations. Asking this open-ended question supported rapport building. This is fundamental to ensure participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences (Willig, 2013). The nature of the interview was also emphasised highlighting there was no right and wrong answer, providing participants with a sense of power over what direction they took the interview. The following questions were then asked:
The Grid Elaboration Method (GEM; Joffe & Elsey, 2014) was used to explore young people’s experiences of YOSs. The GEM was chosen as it provides a visual mediated approach which allows exploration of young people’s thoughts, feelings and emotional experiences, without constraining participants to a set of predetermined questions. The GEM involved presenting participants with a blank grid comprising four boxes on the whiteboard feature on Microsoft Teams. They were then asked to represent with a word, image or phrase their ‘associations’ with the YOS. Each answer was questioned in-turn, asking participants to elaborate on their association in as much detail as possible for all of the four boxes. Table 1 illustrates an example GEM from a young person’s interview.

Drawing upon Joffe & Elsey’s (2014) technique, I used parroting (using the interviewee’s own words) and asking ‘tell me more about…’ to encourage further detail from the participants initial association. Park (2018) advocates the use of these strategies to empower the participants and “facilitate exploration of constructs that were personally meaningful to each participant” (p. 252). It also allowed me to repeat back participant’s answers to ensure the true meaning of their perceptions, emotions and experiences were captured.
Table 1

*GEM elicited from a young person when asked ‘what comes to mind when I say youth offending service?’*

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<td><strong>1) ‘Programme’</strong></td>
<td><strong>2) ‘Mentor’</strong></td>
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<td>‘It just reminded me of like a programme to just help people with erm offences they've committed, and just help them get past that and just see like the consequences and opportunities, they have with like other things. It allows you to see the opportunities that you, like without wasting them’.</td>
<td>‘They just the kind of like guide you, without, they don’t even really feel like a mentor, they just talk to you, and they guide you. They talk about situations and what could be done or what could have been done, and this, and you just learn from them to be honest’.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3) ‘Routine’</strong></td>
<td><strong>4) ‘Resilience’</strong></td>
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<td>‘Like our routine, like weekly thing, a few times a week when I get a call and I have to be there by a certain time’.</td>
<td>‘It kind of makes you resilient and wants to like, kind of makes you not want to like commit another offence, because after, obviously not at first, but after a while, that just understand that the consequences, have a larger effect. It's not just a small thing’.</td>
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Following the GEM, a scaling technique, originating from solution focused brief therapy (De Shazer et al., 1986), was used to explore where the participants rate their experiences at the YOS. A 0-10 rating scale, consisting of 0 being “the worst it could be” and 10 being “the best it could be”.
The ‘Miracle question’ approach

To explore young people’s aspirations, the miracle question from solution focused therapy (De Shazer, 1988) was asked: “Now, I’m going to ask you a strange question, suppose one night, you fall asleep and suddenly, a miracle has happened. You’re 10 years older and everything you’ve ever wanted has come true. What would this look like?’ The participants’ answers were scribed on a mind map which was shared on the screen (figure 5).

The miracle question was chosen for its usefulness in helping young people to describe their best hopes (Duff, 2014). Follow-up questions such as: ‘what will be different’? and ‘what will other people notice about you?’ were asked to further explore hopes and aspirations. All interviews ended with the question ‘Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?’ allowing participants to share any additional thoughts.

Figure 5

An example of a young person’s miracle question visual
A pilot interview was not conducted. The number of young people who were engaging in YOSs during Covid-19 was significantly reduced due to the courts being closed during the national lockdown. Therefore, all young people who opted in to participate were recruited to ensure the maximum number of experiences were encapsulated. However, the interview schedule was peer reviewed by a colleague who had previous experience working in a YOS. Adaptions were made following this review, such as adding reflective questions around what the young people would tell their younger self as these topics emerged during our conversation.

3.2.6 Phase 3 ‘Time’: Interviews with professionals
Aiming to ascertain the impact of Covid-19 on YOSs, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four staff members who had previously been interviewed a year earlier.

Interviews were conducted virtually and started with follow-up questions such as ‘how have you been since we last met?’ And ‘has there been any recent changes to your role?’ The interview schedule focused on how they have supported young people during the pandemic, the impact of the pandemic on their role, any perceived changes to the young people or their needs, lasting impacts of the pandemic and any possible long-term changes to YOSs.

3.3 Recruitment of Participants
All names of young people and professionals have been changed and the youth offending service will be known as ‘YOS’ to protect participant’s anonymity.
3.3.1 Phase one and three recruitment: professionals from YOSs

Opportunistic sampling was used to recruit five participants who work in an outer London YOS. All professionals had distinctive roles and directly supported young people. Therefore, capturing the views of five professionals from various different roles provided a rich and holistic perspective.

An email was sent to all fifty members of the YOS team inviting them to participate, which included an information sheet to explain the purpose and process of the research (appendix 4). Professionals opted-in to the study by replying to the email and a convenient interview date was organised.

For phase three of the study, the same professionals were emailed again. Participants opted-in the study through replying to the email. Four participants replied to the email and a suitable time was then arranged. Details of participant roles are included in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Participant details*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>Job role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>⇒ Supports young people where there are concerns around learning, engagement or social communication difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>⇒ Provides support for young people with EHCPs supporting them to engage with YOSs and educational provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Therapeutic interventions social worker</td>
<td>⇒ Accredited counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>⇒ Provides one-to-one work to young people if there’s a link between their offending behaviour and their social, emotional mental health needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Zara  |  Gangs and sexual violence group worker  |  Runs groups, typically between two and five people. Groups are held around topics of criminal behaviours such as knife crime prevention, consent and sexual offending behaviour.

Laura  |  Case manager  |  Supports young people who are in custody or on remand or have ISS (the top-level community sentence)
Money  |  Ensures young person’s needs are being met in custody and are prepared for resettlement.
Money  |  If the young person is returning to family, ensures they are meeting their custodial goals, such as educational goals, interpersonal skills or interventions.

Money  |  Meets with the young people to identify their aspirations.
Money  |  Supports engagement in education, through helping with college applications and interviews.
Money  |  Liaises with the colleges to share correct information regarding the young person’s order and how best to support them.

3.3.2 Phase two recruitment: young people enrolled in YOSs

Purposive sampling was used to recruit six young people who were enrolled in the YOS. At the time of data collection, there were six young people engaged in reparation sessions who were available to engage in the research. Although this is a relatively small sample, it’s in-line with the recommended number of interviews within IPA doctoral research (between 4 and 10; Smith, Flowers & Larking, 2009). Males aged between 16-18 years old were chosen as the participant group because of the 327 service users, 89% were male and 91% are from this age group. Young people’s identities were not shared with professionals and therefore it was unknown if
professional staff members interviewed were working directly with the young people in the sample.

The YOS reparation manager verbally informed young people about the research and emailed them the information sheet which further explained the process of the study (appendix 6). Young people opted-in to participate in the study through either replying to the email or verbally informing the reparation officer they would like to participate. This recruitment process was chosen to provide all males aged between 16-18 years-old with an opportunity to engage in the study, as all young people engage in reparation sessions during their order. This recruitment process can create some aspects of influence and power over the young people feeling obliged to opt-in to the interview. To mitigate this, consent was revisited at the beginning of the interview, highlighting the young person’s right to opt-out at any point, without any ramifications to their involvement in the YOS. Parental consent was gained for participants aged 16 and 17 through the reparation officer emailing consent forms to parents/carers of young people who expressed an interest in participating (appendix 7). Details of participants are included in table 3.

**Table 3**
*Participant details*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Albanian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>British African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>British Indian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was gained from the UCL, Institute of Education Ethics board. Following the ethical guidelines of the Health Care Professional Council (HCPC, 2015) and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2014), relevant ethical issues were acknowledged and instigated across the research process.

3.4.1 Vulnerable participants

Young people within the study are described as a vulnerable group due to the complexity of their needs. Visual interview activities were subsequently implemented, such as the GEM and Miracle question, which aimed to reduce some of the language demands. Questions were also simplified and broken down based on the young people’s response to minimise any chance for misinterpretation.

As highlighted by Willig (2013), it’s imperative to understand young people’s perception of interviews to fully understand their contribution. The interview subsequently began with positioning the interview as an informal discussion with the interviewee as the expert on what young people are currently experiencing in terms of support from YOSs. My position removed from the YOS was also highlighted to reassure participants this research is not linked to their order, rather it aims to provide them with a platform to share their views and experiences.

To minimise any inconvenience caused to young people in the study, their time spent in the interview was part of their reparation within the YOS. This was clearly outlined in the information sheet and also verbally explained by the reparation officer. Consideration into the possibility this may influence people to feel obliged to participate
was undertaken and thus continued informed consent was collected at the start of every interview, providing participants with an opportunity to terminate the interview without any implications to their order.

Young people were asked about their experiences of engaging in YOSs and their aspirations. It is important to acknowledge that although they weren’t explicitly asked about their history or criminal offences, young people may have found the interview sensitive since they were asked about their involvement in YOSs. Consideration that some young people may have felt uncomfortable talking about their experiences of YOSs, therefore open-ended questions were used allowing participants to guide the direction in which they would like the conversation to develop. A YOS member of staff was also identified to offer post-interview support if required.

All interviews ended with a debriefing, providing young people with the opportunity to ask questions and explore aspects of the interview which they felt warranted further consideration. Two participants commented on the usefulness of exploring their aspirations, the other young people declined the opportunity to debrief further.

3.4.2 Informed consent

Care was taken to ensure young people were informed of the nature and the process of the research. The information sheet contained reduced and simplified language to support young people’s understanding. This was key considering the documented high level of speech and language needs of this population (Hughes et al, 2012). The consent form was also read out before the interview, ensuring young people fully understood the research.
Participants were made aware that they could terminate the interview at any time by either saying they would like to stop, or by clicking the ‘raise hand’ button on Microsoft teams. I also highlighted that this would not affect their involvement in the YJS or their order.

Informed consent was also gained from the professionals who were interviewed (see appendix 4).

3.4.3 Confidentiality in reporting

To preserve anonymity, all participants were given a pseudonym. This was discussed during the interviews, highlighting the confidentiality of the process. Young people were informed that if any safeguarding concerns were raised, information would be shared with relevant professionals. This was clearly stated in the information sheet and verbally repeated prior to the interview. No safeguarding concerns were raised during the process.

3.4.4 Member checking

Transcripts were sent to all professionals to provide an opportunity to modify any aspects of the interview. All professionals agreed the transcripts were an accurate representation of the interview, however two participant’s clarified abbreviations they used in the interview.

Member checking the analysis of themes with the young people was attempted. However due to all participants completing their reparation hours shortly after the
interview, this was not achievable. Implications of this is discussed in the limitation section in Chapter 6.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Analysis of professional’s interviews

A variety of analysis exists under qualitative research which were considered for this research, including narrative and grounded theory. While narrative thematic analysis allows exploration of meanings from participant’s stories and lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), it was considered inappropriate for this study. Narrative research examines experiences within the time elements of past, present and future (Bold, 2011). Enquiring into professionals past experiences would not contribute towards the research questions posed regarding the current context of YOSs. Further, grounded theory’s explanatory nature was not deemed suitable as this study was exploratory in nature. Professional’s interviews were subsequently analysed using a flexible thematic approach which allowed for meaning regarding YOSs context to emerge.

In-line with the social constructivist epistemological approach, an experiential and inductive approach was adopted. This focuses on how the participant experiences and makes sense of the world, without fitting into a fixed or pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Experiential approaches have been criticised due to them being vulnerable to research bias, as researchers are unable to view the world entirely objectively (Burr, 2003). A transparent process was utilised by sharing the thematic analysis within this chapter. To minimise subjectivity, codes were checked with supervisors throughout the analysis.
3.5.2 Process of thematic analysis

Braun & Clarke (2006) advocated a six-stage model of thematic analysis which was used to guide the process, increasing trustworthiness in the data through being transparent at each phase (Nowell et al., 2017). Other models were considered, such as Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s (2006) three-step process, however Braun & Clarke’s (2006) model was deemed most appropriate as it provides a more in-depth framework to applying thematic analysis. It also provides a flexible and nonlinear relationship in the data analysis, allowing for a thorough and systematic process without compromising the depth of analysis (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

**Phase 1-2: Familiarisation and generating codes**

Interviews were read multiple times with initial thoughts being noted. This allowed me to become immersed in the interviews, whilst recognising emergent codes. Each transcript was coded individually by identifying and describing meaningful data, in relation to the research focus. Codes were then reviewed across cases by examining the text several times and refining codes. Table 3 demonstrates an example of initial codes that were generated in Zara’s transcript.

**Table 4**

*Transcript extract with initial codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract (Zara, interview 1)</th>
<th>Initial codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They finished with our order, how do I know that everything that I've, that they've learned</td>
<td>Perceived difficulties transferring skills and knowledge to home environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during this time, they able to apply it into their life or their experiences? Because it's like,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they go back into that, so when they're here they're safe and they've learned something,</td>
<td>YOS is a safe base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
but when they go back into the community. It's just like right, I'm back into the same area, environment that, you know, led me to offend  Contributing risk factors within the YP’s environment

Stage 3: Searching for themes

Potential themes were identified by looking at patterns from the codes. Thematic maps were then created to help identify connections across themes and subthemes, whilst ensuring they were relevant to the research question.

Step 4 and 5: Reviewing and Defining themes

Themes were reviewed and revised through merging, discarding and splitting themes. For example, ‘the importance of a person-centred approach’ and ‘changes within young people’s aspirations overtime’ were grouped into a theme of ‘the significance of a flexible approach within youth offending service delivery’ as an overlap between these themes was recognised. Transcripts were then re-read, allowing me to identify if the themes were consistent across all interviews. All themes were then defined and discussed during peer supervision to ensure they could be accurately understood.

3.5.3 Data analysis of young people’s interviews

A variety of data analysis were considered such as thematic analysis, narrative theory and grounded theory. Whilst grounded theory uses an inductive approach (Birks and Mills, 2010), its aim to construct theories from the data was deemed inappropriate for this exploratory study. Similarly, narrative thematic analysis allows exploration of meanings from participant’s stories and lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), thus was considered inappropriate for this study for many reasons. Enquiring
into young people’s past experiences may have generated sensitive and unethical topics within the interviews regarding their criminal history. Furthermore, young people’s previous experiences did not directly contribute towards the research questions posed regarding their experiences of YOSs and their future aspirations. Lastly, while thematic analysis examines a pattern of meaning to emerge from across participants’ data, it was not deemed appropriate. Firstly, the study strived to capture how young people are making sense of their experiences and therefore required a phenomenological methodology which provided an in-depth exploration and interpretation of individual’s experiences. It was felt that thematic analysis alone would not be able to provide the level of analysis required to appreciate the richness and depth of these experiences.

Alternatively, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) explicitly examines the lived experiences of individuals, through contextualising their views and perceptions (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). IPA is committed to examining each participants’ experience in isolation to ensure the ‘potential of the case has been realized’ (Smith, Flowers & Larking, 2009, p.3.) before examining any similarities and differences across cases. Smith & Osbourn (2015) note the usefulness of IPA in examining topics which are complex and ambiguous. Given the complex systems surrounding the hard-to-reach population within this study, IPA was considered best-suited to provide a detailed analysis of personal lived experience of engaging with YOSs.

3.5.4 IPA and Hermeneutics

IPA can be conceptualised into two elements: interpretative and phenomenological. The interpretative element includes the interpretation of the research, also known as
hermeneutics. The phenomenological component pertains to this hermeneutic process, alongside the narrative of a participant of the said phenomenon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Birkbeck, 2013).

IPA explores how individual’s make sense of their experiences (Smith et al, 2009). Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) convey the varying levels of hermeneutics within IPA. One level is the interactional relationship between the data, whereby the researcher goes back and forth across the data to truly appreciate the data available. Reflexivity is fundamental within this process.

The second level of hermeneutics is described as double hermeneutic (Smith and Osborn, 2003), whereby these experiences are interpreted at several stages. Firstly, by the participants as they recall and share their experiences (hermeneutics). Followed by the researcher as they analyse the transcripts (double hermeneutic). Therefore, I am making sense of the participant, who is making sense of their experiences at youth offending services. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) also maintain a third stage, where the reader is making their own interpretation around what the researchers are saying. As such, the relationship between the researcher and the data, and the awareness of themselves within the context are significant in the analysis of the data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenological enquiry subsequently requires experiences to be examined in the way it occurs, thus researchers are required to consider the implications of individuals taking for granted living in familiar environments and ‘bracket’ (put aside) this to solely focus on our perception of the world that is being explored (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). To ensure transparency within the IPA approach, the analysis used within this research is outlined below.
3.5.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Smith, Flowers & Larkin's (2009) six-step process of IPA was used to guide the analysis. This approach was used as it provides a heuristic framework, which supports the researcher through the process, whilst promoting an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007). This allowed me to progress through the analysis, whilst revisiting and refining the themes. The participant’s language/colloquial expressions were directly transcribed.

**Step 1: Reading and re-reading**

All interview transcripts were read multiple times. During this process, audio recordings were listened to whilst reading the transcript. This was considered an important process by *‘entering the participants’ world’* (Smith, Flowers & Larkin's, 2009, p. 82).

**Step 2: Initial noting**

Transcripts were then reread with notes on the descriptive comments (describing general content), linguistic comments (exploration of specific use of language) and conceptual comments (an interrogative level) were made in the left-hand margin (see appendix 9 for an annotated interview transcript). An example is illustrated in table 4. During this process, I remained open-minded and noted anything of interest, including contradictions, similarities and differences.
**Step 3: Developing emergent themes**

This phase involved mapping the interrelationships, connections and patterns between exploratory notes. Initial notes made in step 2 were utilised to identify emergent themes through capturing the essence of the young person’s narrative and my interpretations. Emergent themes were noted in the right-hand margin, illustrated in table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract from Jack’s interview</th>
<th>Descriptive comments</th>
<th>Linguistic comments</th>
<th>Conceptual comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind of, kind of, because, I say kind of because school would give you week detentions sometimes depending on your behaviour or what you’ve done or just really anything, you come back at the weekend</td>
<td>Hesitation around the difference between school detention and YOSs Detention is linked with a length of time here Jack describes detentions as lasting for a week</td>
<td>Use of ‘kind of’ and repetition, indicates a level of uncertainty/struggling to articulate himself Jack’s use of ‘what you’ve done’ implies a sense of ownership over his actions that resulted in a detention</td>
<td>Sense of inevitability in receiving a detention for many different reasons Acceptance of detention as a consequence An insight into Jack’s previous experiences of school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5**

*Transcript with initial noting*
Table 6

*Jack’s transcript with emergent themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract Jack</th>
<th>Emergent theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind of, kind of, because, I say kind of because school would give you week detentions sometimes depending on your behaviour or what you’ve done or just really anything, you come back at the weekend, so yeah</td>
<td>Negative previous school experiences. Unmotivating factors of engaging in education/ other services Role of self in situation Link between actions and consequences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes**

Themes were mapped and grouped using abstraction (putting similar themes together), polarisation (looking for oppositional relationships), contextualisation (identifying contextual or narrative elements) and numeration (frequency of emergent themes). Themes were written on paper and moved around to find connections. A table was then created consisting of superordinate and subthemes alongside participant quotes. Table 6 illustrates superordinate and subthemes from Kyle’s transcript. As described by Smith, Flowers & Larkin’s (2009), this was an iterative process, whereby I revisited the transcript many times to ensure the themes reflected the young person’s narrative, through refining and clustering themes.

Table 7

*An extract from Kyle’s interview with subthemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate theme: Perception</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of money in success</td>
<td>When you’re rich you have control</td>
<td>Zoe: And what would you be doing differently in your future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Perception of self** | Kyle: I dunno, when you're rich, it's a bit different innit
I mean, I haven't got, I haven't got money like that, I'm still young. I'm not even 18 yet. I'm not working, I don't have money like that personally

'cause I'm kind of lazy (laughs)
I would say, I need to like, I need to be more determined to do stuff.
I mean, I'm alright right now, innit, I'm not that bad. Money and that, I'm not that bad because my parents, they still give me some money. I get money off my parents, I don't have to ask them |

| **Perception of YOS** | Zoe: What made you link police with the youth offending service?
Kyle: It came up in my mind

Zoe: Where would you rate your experience at the YOS?
Kyle: Probably say, 8

Zoe: And why would you say it's an 8 than, let's say not a six?
Kyle: They help me out innit |

**Step 5: Moving to the next case**

This process was repeated until all six interviews had been analysed. Following this process allowed an understanding of individual interviews before moving onto themes across cases. I found this to be an important aspect of the analysis to ensure each individual’s experience was fully understood. It also allowed for new themes to emerge in each case through honouring each individual’s unique experience (See appendix 11 for tables representing the themes generated from each participant).
Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

The final phase involved looking for connections across cases to identify higher order concepts. Themes were laid out from individual interviews and connections were identified. Clusters of themes were created, and theme names were slightly adapted to reflect all participant experiences. A summary of themes from young people’s interviews were then created, with examples shown in table 12. I revisited all six interviews multiple times, checking for the presence of themes and refining and categorising themes. Four superordinate themes and clustered subthemes were identified.

Table 8
Table showing how the individual themes map on to the superordinate themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Themes</th>
<th>Phenomenological Evidence</th>
<th>Line number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The importance of young people’s motivation when engaging with the YOS</td>
<td><strong>Jack</strong>: ‘Because, it’s quick actually and more efficient because it is also online’</td>
<td>274-275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to engage in YOS services</td>
<td><strong>Kyle</strong>: ‘They help me out innit’</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of positive relationships with YOS staff</td>
<td><strong>Adam</strong>: ‘Like it allows you to see the opportunities that you have in life, without wasting them.’</td>
<td>109-113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of YOS</td>
<td><strong>Felix</strong>: ‘I feel like the youth offending team actually cares about you’</td>
<td>168-172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Aaron</strong>: ‘Personally like, I like speaking to them, I actually enjoy it’</td>
<td>133-134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mike</strong>: ‘They know what I mean when I tried to tell them stuff’</td>
<td>137-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of young people in facilitating change</td>
<td><strong>Jack</strong>: ‘You put yourself in trouble without thinking’</td>
<td>193-196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection as a tool</td>
<td><strong>Adam</strong>: ‘Cause there’s still a lot of things I want to achieve yet that I have not achieved’</td>
<td>453-454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership around behaviour</td>
<td><strong>Felix</strong>: ‘The youth offending team helps you take responsibility of the actions that you made’</td>
<td>115-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-progression</td>
<td><strong>Aaron</strong>: ‘I’m slowly getting there, I just need to, there’s a few more steps I have to take to reach there’</td>
<td>367-368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of ownership</td>
<td>Mike: ‘the thing that I done got my excluded and everything like that, I got into a lot of trouble this way’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of current situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological impact of youth offending service involvement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shift in perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection as a tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack ‘YOT will basically bring them back to like, I say civilisation but not really civilisation. But they’ll bring them back to reality’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle: ‘My cannabis used to be like, my smoking used to be really bad but they’ve helped me out, cut it down and stop it’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam: ‘But after a while, then you just understand that the consequences, have a larger effect’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix: ‘It helps you erm have a change of heart and mind’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron: ‘it makes me understand like the type of stuff that you get arrested for’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influencing factors on young people</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to reach future aspirations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the support network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current view of situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack: ‘A couple of my friends were telling me about their experiences with it’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle: ‘I would just let my family, do whatever they want, innit. If I had that much money I wouldn’t let my family work’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam: ‘It helps to gather people’s opinions. The way other young people think’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix: ‘Right now I have erm a clothing line that I’ve been doing with my cousin’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron: ‘You have to still rely on people and don’t just rely on yourself.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike: ‘Because they’ve always wanted a better house. They’re not in the best house right now really’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes were reviewed by research supervisors to provide feedback on the analysis. This ‘credibility check’ evaluates the quality of qualitative research (Elliott, Fisher & Rennie, 1999) and was therefore considered an important step of the process to increase the validity within the themes.
3.6 Quality in Qualitative research

Many qualitative research guidelines have been proposed to evaluate the credibility, quality and trustworthiness within research (Yardly, 2000; Tracy, 2010). Smith (2011) also produced a framework for assessing the quality of IPA research. All three frameworks were reflected upon and the main implications for the present study will be discussed. These frameworks evaluate the validity of qualitative research, thereby increasing the methodologies’ rigor (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Edwards et al., 2021).

Yardly (2000) highlights the importance of acknowledging the context in which the study is conducted. Fulfilling this, I familiarised myself with the literature around young people who are engaged in YOSs and their needs. Secondly, through the implication of a socio-ecological lens, I gathered contextual information regarding the YOSs from professionals. This important step enhances the credibility of the study. Credibility was further increased through allowing the reader to reflect on the interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). Participant quotations and examples of data analysis are subsequently included within the analysis section.

Yardly (2000) discusses the significance of commitment and rigour within research, including engaging with the research for prolonged periods of time. The current research was undertaken over two years through adopting a three-phase study. This, alongside substantial research about how to conduct high quality interviews and IPA also contributed to the commitment and rigour of this research. Tracy (2010) highlights the importance of the sample being appropriate for achieving the aims of the research. All participants were recruited from the YOSs and therefore I was confident the sample
was appropriate for achieving the research aims. Smith (2011) argues that data analysis should be thorough and interpretative by highlighting the prevalence of each theme and showing quotations from participants. I endeavoured to achieve this throughout the analysis and writing of the thesis.

Transparency and coherence are also valuable factors within research (Yardly, 2000). This was achieved through being transparent about the methodology, including my recruitment of participants, the process of the interviews and how the data was analysed. Including annotated transcripts in appendix 5 and 9 also allows the reader to reflect on my interpretations.

Trustworthiness of research can be increased through audits (Smith et al, 2009). This strategy was implemented by supervisors and peers reviewing interview schedules and data throughout the course of the research. This enhanced my reflective thinking around the research design to ensure the research was valuable and credible.

3.7 Summary

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodology used within the research. The sample consisted of five professionals (four of which were interviewed twice) and six young people. Semi-structured interviews were conducted across a time period of two years to explore young people’s experiences of engaging with YOSs from a socio-ecological lens. The findings from the data analysis will now be presented. Chapter 4 details the IPA findings from the young people’s accounts, followed by the reflective thematic analysis from the YOS professionals’ data in chapter 5.
Chapter 4: Analysis of themes across young people’s interviews

Reflexivity:

Reflexivity encourages professionals to ‘engage in both personal reflection and broader social critique’ (Finlay, 2008, p.5). This is often perceived as researchers being reflective, self-aware and to engage in critical thinking (Eby, 2000). Therefore, my motivations for undertaking this research and previous experiences as a TEP may impact the analysis. Peer supervision and supervision with supervisors were undertaken regularly to ensure reflection, self-awareness and critical thinking was conducted throughout, however it’s important to acknowledge my own values, beliefs and experiences will influence my interpretations, subsequently influencing the analysis.

Introduction:

The following chapter addresses research questions one and two:

1) How do young people perceive their experiences of youth offending services?

2) What are the aspirations of young people within youth offending services?

This chapter will outline narrative summaries from the young people’s interviews and outcomes of the Interpretative Phonological Analysis (IPA). As discussed in chapter 3, all interviews were analysed individually before looking at themes across cases. The aim of the analysis was to conduct a phenomenological exploration of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services.
4.1 Narrative summaries

The following summaries were created from information provided by the young people during the interviews. The aim of these summaries is to provide an overview of each young person’s experience at YOSs.

Jack:

Jack is an 18-year-old male who enjoys going out, sport, drama, creative work and music, particularly rapping. Jack described that following getting arrested and going to the courts, he got put on referral, which involves engaging in youth offending services. Jack gave his experience at YOSs a 9 out of 10 because he explained it was quick and efficient having his sessions online. He also shared that he felt ‘better’ after his YOS sessions and felt a sense of achievement.

Jack shared his aspirations which included having a dream house, dream car, financially helping his family, having a sustainable job working for an agency in a warehouse, having children and living in LA. He shared that in this dream everything would be different such as how he lives and his attitude. Jack explained he was a 5 or 5.5 out of 10 towards reaching his goal and felt like he has a plan of how he wants his future to be and on his way towards his goal because he is currently at college doing a level 3 business course and feels he will be able to get a sustainable job afterwards.

Jack shared that if he could tell his younger self something, he would say ‘do your own and don’t follow the crowds and keep your eyes open’ because there’s many aspects of life that you’re not prepared for.
Kyle:

Kyle is an 18-year-old male who enjoys going out with his friends and driving. He explained that following his arrest due to cannabis he was required to attend YOS. Kyle explained that YOS sessions were better now they were virtual sessions and had lots of check-ins with YOS staff. Kyle rated his experience at YOS an 8 out of 10 because he felt the staff helped him to reduce his cannabis use. He explained that the staff he was working with were friendly.

Kyle shared his aspirations which included being a millionaire so he could provide for his family and live a good life. He explained he would like to have multiple businesses including a car wash, barber shop and a construction company. Kyle also shared that he would like to live in Albania with his family. Kyle explained that having money means you have control and he would like his family not to have to work or have any stress. Kyle explained he was a 2 out of 10 towards reaching his goal because he’s still young and does not have a job. Kyle has applied for a plumbing course at college and is waiting to hear back whether he’s been accepted and shared he chose the course because it would be easy.

Kyle shared that if he could tell his younger self something, he would say to be more determined to achieve something.

Adam:

Adam is an 18-year-old male who enjoys going to the gym, boxing and playing football. Adam prefers his sessions since the pandemic as they’re online or phone calls and so he doesn’t need to travel. Adam rated his experience at YOSs as a 7.5 out of 10
because the staff try to connect with him and talk from personal experience. He particularly likes the group sessions and hearing other young people’s opinions in situations. Adam felt that his experience could be improved by doing practical activities such as going to youth clubs.

Adam shared his aspirations which included having a wife, car, house, a job in the financial sector and his parents would still be alive. In his spare time, he would like to do more boxing and martial arts. Adam explained he was a 6 out of 10 towards reaching his goal because he has a good life. Adam started university in September 2020 studying psychology and criminology.

Adam shared that if he could tell his younger self something, he was say ‘don’t procrastinate and don’t take things for granted’.

**Felix:**

Felix is a 16-year-old male who enjoys watching Netflix in his spare time. He attends sixth form and studies business, law and politics.

Felix rated his experience at YOSs as a 10 out of 10 because of how the staff interact with him. He feels like the YOS team care about him and particularly appreciated them visiting him during the pandemic. Felix voiced that he feels safe having his YOS sessions in his home environment and feels it’s easier to talk whilst he’s in a comfortable environment.
Felix shared his aspirations which included a big fancy house, nice car, children, having a world-wide business, going on nice holidays and watch Netflix in his spare time. In the future, Felix would like to be involved with a youth offending team to help other young people to ‘go the right way in life’. Felix explained he was a 6 or a 7 out of 10 towards reaching his goal because he’s in sixth form and there’s nothing bad in his life at the moment. Felix has also started a clothes company with his cousin and uses social media to advertise his clothes and would like more knowledge around how to expand his business.

Felix shared that if he could tell his younger self something it would be not to make the same mistake he did, stay focused in college and focus on more positive things.

Aaron:
Aaron is a 16-year-old male who enjoys going out with his friends. He rated his experience at YOSs as an 8 out of 10 because he enjoys talking to the YOS staff, however, does not like early sessions as he may not wake up in time. Aaron prefer the sessions now they’re online as he feels the questions are less repetitive as opposed to in-person sessions.

Aaron shared his aspirations which included living good in a big house in South Africa, have a family and working as an architect. He would be the same person but more successful which is important for Aaron so he can help out his family. Aaron explained he was a 5 out of 10 towards reaching his goal because he’s slowly moving towards his aspiration but feels there’s a few steps he needs to take such as going to university to getting an apprenticeship.
Aaron shared that if he could tell his younger self something it would to reply on other people and not just himself.

**Mike**:  
Mike is an 18-year-old male who enjoys playing on his PlayStation and playing football. He rated his experience at YOSs as a 7 or an 8 out of 10 because YOS is preventing him from getting a criminal record and felt the YOS staff talk to him in a good manner. Mike would prefer to know beforehand when he will receive a phone call from YOS staff.

Mike shared his aspirations which included living in a mansion, living in a different country, having his own business, lots of cars, he would buy his parents’ a house. These aspects are important to Mike because he wants to achieve in life. Mike explained he was a 4 out of 10 towards reaching his goal because he’s still young and doesn’t feel close to his goal yet.

Mike shared that if he could tell his younger self something he would say to stay out of trouble and don’t get involved with the police.

**4.2 Interpretative Phonological Analysis (IPA)**  
Themes from the interviews were clustered and categorised and four superordinate themes were identified:
**Figure 6**

*Young people’s thematic map*

**Superordinate Themes:**

1. **Theme one** - The importance of young people’s motivation when engaging with the YOS
   - The importance of positive relationships with YOS staff
   - Young people’s motivation to engage in YOSs within the context of Covid-19
   - Challenges that obstruct motivation
   - Young people’s motivation to reach their future aspirations

2. **Theme two** - The role of young people in facilitating change
   - Young people’s reflective insight into their own actions
   - The relationship between actions and consequences
   - Young people’s view on current self

3. **Theme three** - Psychological impact of youth offending service involvement
   - Shift in young people’s perspective
   - Positive emotional changes

4. **Theme four** - Influencing factors on young people
   - Influence of others on young people’s decision making
   - YOSs as a source of support
   - Young people’s perceived role in changing the environment in future success

**Subthemes:**

- Young people’s motivation to engage in YOSs within the context of Covid-19
- Challenges that obstruct motivation
- Young people’s motivation to reach their future aspirations
- Young people’s reflective insight into their own actions
- The relationship between actions and consequences
- Young people’s view on current self
- Shift in young people’s perspective
- Positive emotional changes
- Influence of others on young people’s decision making
- YOSs as a source of support
- Young people’s perceived role in changing the environment in future success
4.1 Superordinate theme one: The importance of young people’s motivation when engaging with the YOS

All young people spoke or alluded to the role of their motivation within different aspects of their lives. This included what motivates them to engage in youth offending services within the context of Covid-19, the importance of staff relationships in promoting motivation, factors which act as a barrier to their motivation and the underlying drivers behind their aspirations. These four subthemes will be explored further.

4.1.1 Subtheme one: The importance of positive relationships with YOS staff

Although young people were not explicitly questioned about staff, five out of six young people raised this theme within their interviews. The young people highlighted the positive qualities of the staff being ‘friendly’ and ‘nice’, suggesting their interaction with staff members created motivation to engage in services. Mike also commented on the way the staff speak to him in ‘a good manner’, suggesting he felt respected and understood by the staff, even when he was finding it difficult to express himself.

Mike: “…they know what I mean when I tried to tell them stuff”

Mike felt understood by the YOS staff, suggesting the professionals knew him well and invested time to ensure he was understood. Similarly, Adam felt the staff worked hard to connect to each of them individually, sometimes going beyond their duties to support them. This relationship building was highly valued by the young people and acted as a catalyst to them engaging in services.
Adam: “They really try, with like connecting to you, they don't just, you see, like, you could tell someone's just doing their job, or if they actually enjoy like talking to young people and connecting with them, basically I can just tell the difference”

Felix felt that staff truly cared for the young people they work with, which was shown in the continuation of their home visits during the pandemic. There was a sense of gratitude from Felix being supported during this time.

Felix: “It just shows that they care about you that they will come all the way to your house, even though there was coronavirus, but they would still come, they actually care”

Aaron and Adam particularly found the mentoring by staff beneficial. They found it a positive experience having someone reliable they could talk to about difficulties they were facing. This was perceived as a positive aspect of YOS support and portrayed a foundation of trust between them and their YOS worker.

Aaron: “I like speaking to them, I actually enjoy it…. Having people to talk to like, there’s people to talk to about your problems”

Adam: “Basically, that the people that I talk to […] that they just they kind of like guide you, without, they don’t even really feel like a mentor, they just talk to you, and they guide you. … and you just learn from them to be honest”

Aaron’s use of language ‘I actually enjoy it’ suggests this may be an unexpected aspect of YOSs. It’s possible that he did not expect to enjoy his sessions, but through fostering a positive relationship with YOS staff, he enjoyed having an adult to speak through any challenges he was facing.
This emergent theme appears pivotal in developing young people’s motivation to engage in YOSs. The positive feedback highlights the staff’s commitment to establish an effective relationship when working with this vulnerable population. An aspect of YOSs which was positively received by all young people in the study.

4.1.2 Subtheme two Young people’s motivation to engage in YOSs within the context of Covid-19

YOSs continued to support young people during the pandemic adapting by using online services. Prison and school visits were suspended during the national lockdowns, but doorstep welfare visits to the most vulnerable young people were undertaken. Following these changes, Jack, Kyle, Adam and Felix all spoke about their preference for their YOS sessions to be conducted online, as opposed to face-to-face. Kyle and Adam made reference to the YOS sessions being ‘easier’ because they were no longer required to travel to the YOS building. The suggestion of “easier” could refer to the physicality of not travelling, including mitigating the financial commitment of public transport, alongside the ease of using online platforms familiar to young people. The accumulation of these factors indicated an increased level of motivation to engage in online YOS services.

Adam: “It’s easier, it's easier. I would rather do that…Because I don’t have to make the journey to go to the youth offending place”

Similarly, Jack spoke about the sessions being more ‘efficient’ because they were ‘quicker’ online, again eluding to increased motivation to engage in services. Felix also expressed a preference for online sessions because he felt emotionally safe within his home environment. He shared that he would feel more nervous going to the YOS
building for his meetings. There was a sense of Felix being able to open up within his YOS sessions because he was in a familiar and safe environment.

Felix: “I find it easier than being in real life to be honest…It’s easier to talk to be honest, I feel like if it was in real life, I would be a bit more nervous maybe…. I’m in my own environment, I feel safe”

Felix also eluded to the positive impact YOSs had on his life:

Felix: “I feel like it [YOS] will impact a lot of people's lives more if they had it in their lives”

This suggests that Felix felt a positive gain from his sessions and perceived YOSs as a supporting factor that has the potential to help a wide range of young people. He spoke about YOSs in a positive manner, describing it as a ‘good thing’ which should ‘carry on more’. Felix's positive perception of YOSs was likely to increase his motivation to engage in services.

Interestingly, all young people cited the changes within the youth offending service delivery in response to the Covid-19 situation in a positive light. When asked, all young people felt there were no changes in the quality and availability of the support they received but described the improvement in the ease and efficiency of virtual sessions. They particularly enjoyed receiving YOS support within their home environment, which provided a sense of safety and containment.
4.1.3 Subtheme three: Challenges that obstruct motivation

Young people shared obstacles that could hinder their motivation to engage in services offered to them. Kyle spoke about a negative educational experience when he missed his exams and then got permanently excluded from college.

Kyle: “I must have erm [pause] missed my exams and then I missed my exams and then I got kicked out of college”

Kyle’s use of language is interesting within this quote. The phrase ‘I must have’ indicates a sense of removal of ownership of his responsibility in the situation. This could be seen as an obstruction in his internal motivation to engage in the college course or could be an indication of perceived difficulty within the exam process. Kyle’s description of ‘kicked out’ provides a sense of rejection Kyle may have experienced within college, which could act as a barrier in engaging in further ETE.

Adam and Aaron both eluded to motivational obstacles within YOSs. They spoke about factors within YOSs which they did not like, such as talking about their offence in detail. There was a sense of repetition in questions that young people were asked in regard to their offence which could act as a barrier to them engaging in services. Adam described the questions as ‘tiring’ and Aaron was beginning to feel ‘fed up’ with the sessions which involved talking about his offence.

Aaron: “They asked me the same questions all over again, so I just started to get a bit fed up […] because they keep asking me like why did you do this? Erm did you feel safe when you done it? Like they give you the same questions like all over again”
Aaron’s description implies he felt unmotivated and disengaged from services at this point. It seemed Aaron did not object to discussing these topics, but it was the repetition which made him susceptible to disengagement.

Mike and Adam also commented on the reduction of practical-based activities usually offered. They both acknowledged that during the pandemic this was difficult but would have enjoyed participating in activities as part of their YOS intervention.

Mike: “If I were to go there, they said I was going to be doing activities and stuff like that”

Adam: “[…] mainly because feel like it’s just talking […] Well, at the moment because obviously the virus but it’s just talking they don’t really bring to any physical things that can help you with like, take you to clubs or whatever, youth clubs”

The lack of practical activities during the pandemic, alongside the increased talking sessions acted as a challenge to young people’s motivation to engage in services. Young people perceived sessions reflecting on their offence as repetitive, which led them to feeling unmotivated during this period. Previous negative educational experiences were also documented by one young person, which could have implications for future engagement in ETE.

4.1.4 Subtheme four: Young people’s motivation to reach their future aspirations

When asked “the miracle question”, all young people painted a rich picture of their aspirations. Jack aspired to have a sustainable job so he could buy his dream home
and dream car. He showed a high amount of intrinsic motivation to succeed and commented on striving to better himself.

Jack: “[…] like when you feel like you’ve reached your goal. There’s always like, you can always do something else, you haven’t really stopped, you haven’t reached your limit”

Similarly, Adam demonstrated intrinsic motivation to study economics as a way of moving towards his aspiration to work in the business sector.

Adam: “[…] I like a lot of like business type jobs. Erm I study […] how the financial, how the economy, economic sector works… Just in my own time, it’s not like a course or anything”

In further probing, Felix shared he had conducted research in his own time around nightclub businesses and was motivated by the lifestyle it would provide.

Felix: “I did more research on erm business owners, the biggest business owners in the world, erm nightclub owners, sorry and I thought like it would be interesting, it’s a lifestyle I would like”

Kyle was highly motivated by money and strived to be a millionaire. He discussed his aspiration to own multiple business, such as a car wash and a construction company. Kyle perceived wealth as a way of being “in control” and this was an important factor of his aspiration. He also wanted to provide for his family which appeared to be his main motivation to reach his goal. His language was very outcome focused, with little insight into the steps required to achieve this goal.
Kyle: “Me being millionaire [...] So I can provide for my family and everything”.

When asked about his short-term aspirations, Kyle described a plumbing course he recently applied for and was driven by money and ease. This appears to be in conflict with his interest and long-term aspirations to own a car wash and construction businesses.

Kyle: “It’s [plumbing course] kind of easy as well [...] it’s way more easier than doing construction or electrical engineering”

Similarly, Mike aspired to be a business owner but struggled to articulate his motivations behind his career path. However, he wanted to be successful to support his family.

Mike: “I’ll buy a house for my parents [...] because they’ve always wanted a better house. They’re not in the best house right now really”

Aaron chose architecture as his aspiration based on his interest in drawing but again lacked clarity on any career planning. Similar to Mike and Kyle, he highlighted supporting his family as a driver in his motivation.

Aaron: “I would be an architect [...] I just, I dunno I just like drawing [...] I would help out my family and all of that”

The variety and rich picture all young people expressed around their future was apparent in all interviews. They all strived for varying careers and had different motivations behind their dreams, including money, success and a responsibility to
support their family. There was also a sense that having dreams and aspirations provided a sense of hope for a positive future, which Felix noted:

Zoe: “Why are these things important to you, what do they give you?”
Felix “They give me hope for the future”

Motivation to aspire in all young people was apparent, however a lack of cohesion between their current situation and their aspirations was noted. This highlights the importance of young people receiving support to think and plan explicit next steps in reaching their short-term goals, in the view of obtaining their wider aspirations.

4.2 Superordinate theme two: The role of young people in facilitating change

All young people referenced the role of themselves across their interviews. This included young people reflecting on their actions, the connection between their actions and consequences and young people’s perception on their current self and situation. These three subthemes will now be elucidated.

4.2.1 Subtheme one: Young people’s reflective insight into their own actions

All young people used intrinsic reflection as a tool when thinking about themselves and their situation. Jack associated the word ‘detention’ with the YOS but surprisingly linked the word detention as a time for reflection to think about his actions.

Jack: “When we have a detention I’m not sitting there because I’m in trouble, I’m sitting there because like I know what I’ve done and I’m thinking back, really, was it worth it? Is it necessary right now?”
Within this quote, the language ‘I know what I’ve done’ promotes a sense of ownership over his actions, suggesting he felt differently about the offence. Jack described the link between not forward thinking and putting himself in a difficult situation. This could be considered a significant step towards achieving desistance.

Jack: “You’re not really thinking […] like people say think twice. There’s not really a thing that people think twice, it’s probably just a one thought and then act, so that’s kind of what I mean, you put yourself in trouble without thinking”

There’s a sense of inevitability within his language ‘there’s not really a thing that people think twice’, highlighting the difficulty for young people to forward plan when in high-risk situations. Jack reflected on the inevitability of unexpected things happening in life but noted the importance of being aware of this.

Jack: “Because in life there’s a lot of things that happen and you’re not really prepared or ready for it. So, I will say that is almost like an eye opener so he’s always on the ball, he’s always ready for what’s next because he’s ready to know that because not everything will go the right way, and not everything will be perfect and smooth”

In commenting ‘always ready for what’s next’ suggests a need to be ready to move forward into the future. Similarly, whilst reflecting on his situation, Adam referred to the importance of being proactive and utilising all time available to achieve something beneficial.
Adam: “Don’t procrastinate too often. Don’t take the day for granted, ‘cause just use that day to do at least something it might not be, at least something that can help you out”

There was a sense of value in Adam’s time which he wanted to use to better himself. It’s possible that previously, Adam had procrastinated which has prevented him from achieving. Similarly, Felix reflected that he would like to tell his younger self to ‘focus more in school’ and ‘focus on the positive things’. Agreeing with this concept, Kyle also identified that he would like to be more determined to achieve.

Kyle: “I need to be more determined to do stuff”

All young people had critical and reflective insights into their actions, which can be seen as a positive influence on their future behaviour. There was a discourse throughout the interviews of young people aiming to increase their motivation or ability to deliberate their consequences before acting. Arguably, young people’s reflection around their previous actions facilitate change. However, they would benefit from further support implementing decision making strategies within high-risk situations.

4.2.2 Subtheme two: The relationship between actions and consequences

There was a strong sense of young people linking their actions to consequences. Mike spoke about the consequences he experienced through getting involved in crime, which led to him getting excluded from school.

Mike: “Because the thing that I done the, the thing that I done got me excluded and everything like that, I got into a lot of trouble this way”
Within Mike’s quote, there’s a strong sense of ownership over his actions, particularly with the repetition of the phrase, ‘the thing that I done’. Furthermore, his use of the words ‘this way’ suggests he believes an alternative path could have been taken and promotes a sense of control over his actions. Similarly, Jack made the association between the YOS and ‘karma’, again reinforcing the role of himself in the consequences he receives. He demonstrated an internal locus of control, noting that he put himself in a position as a result of his actions.

Jack: “Like what goes around comes back around like, if you do something that every action has an action or a consequence”

While Kyle understood the consequences of his actions and spoke about the link between his arrest and cannabis, his language suggests a sense of projection of his actions on to the cannabis rather than himself.

Zoe: “You said cannabis, what made you think of that?”

Kyle: “Because I got arrested because of cannabis”

This dissociation between the action and himself may prevent Kyle from considering the connection between actions and consequences in the future. It’s possible that this may develop as Kyle continues to engage with the YOS. It also highlights the variety of time and support young people require when developing their reflective skills to consider the impact of their actions in the long-term.

Young people referred to the connection between their actions and consequences in their interviews. Although, they weren’t explicitly asked about this, there seemed to be
a facilitative mechanism between their involvement in YOSs and this concept developing. This suggests the YOSs’ ethos around this work is successfully filtering through the thought processes and decision making of the young people they are working with.

4.2.3 Subtheme three: Young people’s view on current self

Three of the six young people demonstrated a positive outlook on their current situation, demonstrating happiness and contentment with their life.

Adam: “Life at the moment is not bad, it's good. Erm like sometimes I might take it for granted. But I'm having quite a good life, there's a lot of, there's a lot of worst things that can happen. I'm happy… My Mum and Dad are around, I'm going to uni, I have good friends. Erm my little brother is starting college”

Felix: “There's nothing really bad at the moment in my life. Like I have a supportive family and friends. It's just like, I think I have a nice life to be honest”

Felix noted that there was nothing negative in his life, suggesting his involvement in the YJS has not influenced his perception of his current situation. The support of family and friends mentioned both Felix and Adam could be considered a protective factor contributing to their positive outlook on life.

Alternatively, Jack and Mike measured their current view of self in comparison to their aspirational view of self. Mike associated his lack of success with his youth:
Mike: “Because I'm still young and not close to anything like that [his aspiration] just yet […] Because, as I said, I'm not close to it yet”

Furthermore, Jack felt his current situation was the contrary to his aspirational dream, citing his lack of children and financial security.

Jack: “It’s the opposite, like I don't have kids. I'm not even there yet, like financially”

When asked what he would be doing differently in 10 years’ time, Jack suggested that all aspects of himself and his life would be different. There was a sense of Jack being the key person in control of promoting a positive future for himself.

Jack: “How I live, how my attitude, everything will be different”

Aaron showed a similar theme of the role of himself in creating change. He used an analogy of ‘steps’ towards his goal and felt on the correct trajectory towards achieving his aspirations.

Aaron: “Because I’m slowly getting there, I just need to, there’s a few more steps I have to take to reach there […] go college, go uni, get an apprenticeship”

This internal locus of control within the young people’s language, suggests they have an awareness of control in their actions, providing a sense of empowerment over their future.
In contrast, Kyle related his perception of the current situation to an external factor, namely his level of wealth. He felt that his situation was ‘not that bad’ because he received money from his parents.

Kyle: “I’m not that bad. Money and that, I’m not that bad because my parents, they still give me some money. I get money off my parents, I don’t have to ask them”

Kyle’s reference to money in relation to his current situation could act as a risk factor in the future. He appeared to hold a money phenomenon as central to his perception of success, which could make him vulnerable to be influenced by negative financial drivers in the future. The ideology of young people’s perception of their current situation in relation to their future could be further developed. This could provide an insight into perceived risk and protective factors in an individual’s life to support realignment of their current situation to their wider aspirations.

4.3 Subordinate theme three: Psychological impact of YOS involvement
All young people within the study referred to psychological changes in themselves due to engaging in YOSs. A shift in their perspectives were reported, in addition to young people referring to emotional changes following their engagement in YOSs.

4.3.1 Subtheme one: Shift in young people’s perspective
Three young people demonstrated shifts in their perspectives following their involvement in the YOS. Adam discussed the role of YOSs in supporting young people to pursue opportunities available to them.
Adam: “Like it allows you to see the opportunities that you have in life, without wasting them. It could be anything. It depends on the person.”

Interestingly, Adam’s use of the phrase ‘allows you to see the opportunities’, suggests the opportunities available to him have not changed, but his perception of them have. This suggests that following his involvement in YOSs, Adam’s awareness of opportunities had increased and his internal drive to pursue opportunities available to him.

Comparably, Felix and Aaron demonstrated a shift in their perspective regarding life choices:

Felix: “They [YOS] help you think more about your life choices than before, like, as before. I wouldn’t really think about my life choices I just live for now but youth offenders has helped me think about the, the far future, as in yeah, so what happens now is going to affect me in the future, eventually”

Felix’s quote highlighted a change in perception from a focused view of the present to a broader long-term vision. His narrative indicates that prior to YOS involvement, he had little awareness of the long-term outcomes of his actions, whereas he developed the power to influence his future.

Similarly, Aaron’s quote highlights a change in his perception of what is considered criminal behaviour.
Aaron: “It [YOSs] makes me understand like the type of stuff that you get arrested for, if that makes sense?”

Equally, Jack developed an alternative perception of criminality, demonstrating a shift from engaging in criminal behaviour to considering other positive opportunities that were available to him. His opinion around crime had shifted, lowering the importance of crime in his life.

Jack: “There’s more to the world than just like crime.”

Jack perceived the YOS as being a key factor within this change in perspective and described its role in bringing young people back to ‘reality’.

Jack: “YOT will basically bring them back to like, I say civilisation but not really civilisation. But they’ll bring them back to reality”

Jack’s use of the word ‘reality’ highlights his previous involvement in crime no longer exists in his world. It suggests that he perceived his previous criminal behaviour as belonging to an alternative life.

The prominent theme of YOSs’ role in supporting young people’s shift in perception of crime highlights the prevalence of this within a young persons’ journey towards desistance. This is further supported by realigning their perception of opportunities available to them and the consideration of their long-term future.
4.3.2 Subtheme two: Positive emotional changes

Emotional changes were expressed by Felix, Jack and Adam following their involvement in YOSs. Felix described a personal emotional growth he experienced since engaging with services.

Felix: “It [YOSs] helps you erm have a change of heart and mind or how you were before and then turning you into a more positive person, in my opinion […] not a positive but like a good person, a better person in general”

Felix's expression of seeing himself as a ‘good person’ suggests he saw his previous self in a less favourable light. Emotionally, Felix felt he has challenged himself to see himself more positively and attributed this to his engagement in YOSs.

Adam’s use of language demonstrated an emotional shift towards striving for desistance. He commented on the increased resilience he feels since being enrolled in YOSs. Time was a key factor within Adam’s perspective, as he felt he needed time in order to feel this change.

Adam: “It (YOS) kind of makes you resilient and wants to like, kind of makes you not like want to like commit another offence, because after, obviously not at first, but after a while, then you just understand that the consequences, have a larger effect”

Jack expressed a feeling of positive emotional well-being after each YOS session, enabling him to experience a sense of achievement.
Jack: “I feel better after the talks and like the sessions, I feel better […] ‘cause I feel like, it’s the feeling of like completing something[…] you just feel amazed like, you feel like you can do it again and nothing can stop you”

The accumulation of these successful sessions completed by Jack could be considered vital in providing him a sense of confidence to succeed in the future. It also highlights the value of each segment within an individuals’ YOS intervention.

Both psychological shifts and emotional changes were experienced by young people in the study. Time appeared to be a key factor, with young people highlighting this change over the course of their involvement in YOSs. Through this process, a development of a positive self-image was apparent, which is likely to support young people on their journey towards achieving identity desistance.

4.4 Subordinate theme four: Influencing factors on self

Young people referenced a variety of influential factors, such as the role of others on their decision making, other people as a source of support and young people’s perception of changing the environment in their future success. These three subthemes will now be discussed.

4.4.1 Subtheme one: Influence of others on young people’s decision making

The role of family and peers on young people’s decision making was a prevalent subtheme across the interviews. Jack strived for a sustainable job but was influenced by his friends when choosing what career sector to enter. His friends had previously
shared that they enjoyed the flexibility of being able to choose when they work which influenced his decision to follow suit.

Jack: “I think because a couple of my friends were telling me about their experiences with it [agency warehouse work] and how they actually liked their like, how he basically you can call them on I think any day, and then tell them you would like to come in and work and there would probably be a spot for you and you can do that every day or just whenever you want”

Interestingly, Jack later mentioned that he would tell his younger self not be influenced by others around him.

Jack: “It will have to be to do your own, don’t follow the crowd”

This suggests an inconsistency between Jack’s desire to follow his own life path and the value he places on his peers’ opinions. It’s possible that Jack has not been exposed to other job opportunities and therefore has limited experience of possible careers options.

Similarly, Kyle was influenced by his father to enrol in a plumbing course because he perceived it as easy with a good earning potential.

Kyle: “I mean my dad’s been telling me cause’ like he’s done his own construction business […] he used to do plumbing before himself innit, and he told me that it’s an easy course, good money”.

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Interestingly, Kyle’s wider aspiration did not contain aspects of plumbing. Rather he aspired to own a construction and car wash company. Arguably, Kyle valued his father’s opinion and role-modelling, choosing a plumbing career with a long-term view of developing into a construction business owner, mirroring his father’s career path.

Adam spoke of a wider influence outside of his family, expressing his interest in hearing young people’s perspectives within his YOS group sessions.

Adam: “The group […] that Bob does. He just talks to young people at like the same time, and it helps to gather people’s opinions. The way other young people think is probably the better thing out of YOT”

Adam’s phrase ‘the way other people think’ indicated he may have experienced different thought process around situations discussed in the group sessions. His comments implied a sense of learning from his peers’ which could influence his decision making in the future.

Young people within the study were influenced by different sources within their immediate environment. This may be an area which needs further exploration into supporting young people to understand where their influences have derived from. It also highlights the importance of young people being exposed to all opportunities available to them to ensure they can make an autonomous decision around their aspirations.
4.4.2 Subtheme two: YOSs as a source of support

When asked to rate the YOSs on a scale from 1 to 10, young people gave a score in between 7 and 10, thus highlighting a relatively positive perception of YOSs. Many young people made reference to a variety of sources of support they had available at the YOS. Felix shared that a YOS staff member had provided additional support around his aspirational career path of being a nightclub owner:

Felix: “One person from the youth offenders team said that they have friends that could, are nightclub owners and could help, like, they could try get them down here to come talk to me about it”.

Felix’s narrative implied the YOS staff have gone beyond their duty to offer additional support with his career planning. There was also a sense of uncertainty within his language ‘try’, however Felix’s demeanour during this conversation suggested to me that he was hopeful and commented he would be ‘very interested’ in this happening.

Aaron also made reference to the YOS as a source of support. When asked what he associates with ‘youth offending service’, Aaron replied ‘detention’. When probed further, surprisingly he discussed the link between detention and the caring nature of the YOS.

Zoe: “What makes you think of detention?”

Aaron “The whole point [of YOS] is like to see if you’re OK and that, if there’s anything that’s going on that concerns you”.

Although many people would associate the word ‘detention’ as a punitive experience, Aaron perceived it as a channel and opportunity to share his anxieties. This highlights
the importance of understanding how young people perceive their world by ensuring their language is interpreted correctly. It’s possible that Aaron was referring to the structure of the YOS meetings or the personal approach of the YOS workers described in his interview.

YOSs was also attributed as a support mechanism by Mike. He perceived the YOS as a source of support and an alternative to him gaining a criminal record. He referred to this twice at different points in the interview highlighting the importance to him.

Mike: “Because erm they’re making me get out of the situation that I’m in, and so I don’t go to court and get a criminal record. And yeah, instead of that they’re just doing a youth conditional thing”

Kyle described the support received from YOS staff as a primary contributing factor to reducing his cannabis smoking. He alluded to personal growth within this area by describing his previous smoking habit as ‘really bad’, thus providing a sense of gratitude towards his workers at YOSs.

Kyle: “My cannabis used to be like, my smoking used to be really bad but they’ve [YOS staff] helped me out, cut it down and stop it”

Value was given to the practical and emotional support offered by the YOSs through providing additional career support via introductions to positive role models and supporting young people through the YJS. The unexpected emotional support noted by one young person, also highlighted the importance of regular check-ins allowing them to share their concerns in a timely manner.
4.4.3 Subtheme three: Young people’s perceived role in changing their environment in future success

The role of changing their external environment was a prevalent theme across four interviews. Mike, Jack, Aaron and Kyle referred to moving to a different country when talking about their future.

Mike: “I might live in a different country […] I would just be living differently in general […] different house, erm different, different surroundings and stuff like that”

Jack: “I’m thinking LA”

Aaron: “I want to live in like a new country like, South Africa […] Because I’m from there[…] The houses are nice there as well and It’s a bit cheaper as well so […] nice hot weather there[…] I think it’s a good place to start a family there to be honest”

Kyle: “I see myself living in a different country […] Albania […] That’s where I’m from […] It’s not even that I’m from there, I like the country”

The narratives implied a sense of a different country offering them an improved life. This indicated a belief held by the young people that their external environment was a key influencer on their life outcomes. Similarly, Felix explained young people from certain geographical areas would benefit from YOSs.

Zoe: “Who do you think would benefit from it [accessing YOSs]?”
Felix: “erm mostly the youth obviously, people that are in like bad neighbourhoods and stuff like that.”

All young people attributed their physical location as a contributing factor to criminality. The removal from their current environment to their escaped location was seen by them to provide improved opportunities and lifestyle. This could be an important bridge within YOS work to analyse what aspects of this ideology can be transferred to their current situation and future aspirations.

4.5 Summary of findings from young people's interviews

The views of young people provided an insight into their experiences at YOSs. The importance of young people’s motivation when engaging with services was discussed, in relation to factors which contributed and disrupted their motivation. All young people discussed their varied aspirations, however a disparity between short-term and long-term aspirations was noted. Young people reflected on the role of themselves in facilitating change in their future, highlighting the link between actions and consequences. There was also a strong sense of YOSs acting as a catalyst to young people experiencing psychological and emotional shifts, which later led to young people developing a positive self-image. Young people placed value on others’ opinions when choosing their aspirations and perceived a change in country as providing wider opportunities.
Chapter 5:
Thematic analysis of professional’s interviews

This chapter addresses research question three regarding what professionals identify as supportive factors and barriers affecting young people they work with. The analysis is presented in a thematic map with four themes and their subthemes. Each theme is then examined in detail along with quotes from participants.

Figure 7
Professionals’ thematic map

Themes:  Subthemes:

- Theme one- Developing shared perspectives amongst YOS staff
  - Working collectively towards joint goals
  - Complications with shared communication

- Theme two- The complexities of working with young people within youth offending services
  - Vulnerability of young people enrolled with the YOS
  - The challenges of making changes within the young person’s wider systems
  - The significance of a flexible approach within youth offending services
  - The importance of attuned relationships between the professionals and young people

- Theme three- Societal barriers for young people attending YOSs
  - Lack of opportunities available to young people who have offended
  - Negative attitudes towards young people

- Theme four- The role of transition within young people’s enrolment in YOSs
  - Young people’s aspirations
  - Transference of knowledge from YOS sessions to home environment
5.1 Theme one: Developing shared perspectives amongst YOS staff

Analysis of the interviews highlighted staff working together to develop shared perspectives. Including professionals from different disciplines uniting in the best interest of the young person.

Subtheme 5.1.1 Working collectively towards joint goals

Emerging from the interviews was the importance of teams working together. Jane highlighted the fluidity within her role to ensure she is working collectively with the new clinical psychologist.

Jane: “We’ve got a new CP that’s started with us and we’re, we’ve been having different days of working out how we’re going to work together” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Multiple professionals talked about the importance of working collectively towards joint goals, despite what team they’re in. Jane, Zara and Claire explained the significance of sharing knowledge ensuring the best approach is taken to support young people within YOSs. There was a sense of ease in doing so, with Zara sharing she can “walk around the office and go and speak to that person” she requires information from.

Jane: “We have a weekly health team meeting [...] so we can discuss referrals that we get in, people, but you know each of us can feed into each other what we found when we’ve worked with them [...] so that it can help develop how we work” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

1 Clinical psychologist
Claire: “When you got these very complex cases, erm there is something about the network getting together is the most effective thing.” (EP)

Zara shared that she sought information from a young person’s psychotherapist who works in the Service for Adolescents’ and Families (SAFE) team. This allowed Zara to identify the best way of working with that young person whilst utilising what’s worked well previously.

Zara: “I tend to talk with the safe worker to see what works, what’s been, what we’ve done? What’s been going well? What hasn’t been? What do you think is the best approach?” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Laura shared the uniqueness of their YOS team having internal specialists within the building, which creates ease for young people only travelling to one location.

Laura: “In terms of YOT, we’re lucky that we’ve got in-house specialists. So, a lot of youth offending teams don’t have that. So, it does make it a lot more accessible for the young person, if they just have to be coming here.” (Case Manager)

Jane also spoke of external agencies and voluntary organisations they can refer young people to when necessary. There was an abundance of services that offer additional support, such as supporting individuals with their self-esteem, finding a job or college course with Jane sharing “there’s loads, just loads” of external services.
Jane: “We’ve got a lot of multi-agency connections so you know, [...] we’ve got ‘Prevent’, which is about you know, those who are risk of maybe getting caught up in sort of terrorism [...] we’ve got ‘Works Works’, that are another organisation that come in with young people to try and get them into jobs[...]college or do apprenticeships” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Claire also referred to the increased creative working within the context of Covid-19. She described the change from individual work with young people to a team approach.

Claire: “Everything’s been virtual [since Covid-19] … I haven’t been able to work directly with young people at all.... we were thinking more about having a professional meeting … targeted around the one person …that side of it is quite interesting actually, like with all work, … we have all become more creative” (EP)

Subtheme 5.1.2: Complications with shared communication

Several professionals described instances where communication acted as a barrier in their work. Gary talked about other services becoming involved with young people without informing the YOS, which in-turn disrupted the support he was offering. He expressed the importance of information being shared between different services to confirm everyone is working towards the same goal.

Gary: “Recently we just had an issue where that same, another company got involved with one of our young people without telling us [...] This person out of nowhere came and spoke to the young person, disrupted the whole interview [college interview], the young person then got kind of confused and didn’t go. So, it’s just trying to make sure everyone’s kind of working towards the same goal” (ETE worker)
Jane spoke of the time constraints of meeting regularly and sharing information amongst staff. Consequently, resulting in information not being shared with relevant professionals.

Jane: “We’ve got somebody working with a young person and they might pick up on something relevant and they don’t think to let everybody know who’s working with that young person. And I know that there’s time constraints we can’t always sit down every morning and sort of like have little meeting you know, but yeah, communication is a barrier I think” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

However, Claire reported ease in contacting case managers following the move to online working due to Covid-19. There was a sense of virtual platforms increasing multi-disciplinary working, which had a positive impact on their relationships.

Claire: “I think in some ways it [Covid-19] had a positive impact because it was easier to get hold of case managers… so that’s improved those relationships” (EP)

Jane reflected on the challenges for young people within her therapeutic sessions. They enter an unknown environment with a “stranger” and are asked to share personal information that will inevitably be seen by multiple professionals. Jane feels that this can prevent young people from fully engaging in the therapeutic process and described it as having “boundaries” when developing relationships with young people.

Jane: “They’re meeting with a stranger, we have limited boundaries, it’s not usual in therapeutic, confident,
confidential confidentiality, because it's just between you and the therapists [...] I'm updating on the system [...] that's nine different people that can read that entry.”

(Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Interestingly, these challenges were mitigated during Covid-19, when Jane switched to conducting her sessions over the phone. This provided young people with a safe environment which increased their levels of engagement.

Jane: “[…] would you feel you would have spoken as much if we were face-to-face and he said no, he said because you know he said it's been easier to talk over the phone”

Jane described the difficulty of transferring kinetic tools, such as the sand tray to virtual settings, however concluded the move to online working had been positive within her therapeutic work.

Jane: “The only disadvantage to not be face to face is [...] I can’t use my sandbox [...] colouring pens and doing sheets of paper and doing your timelines or making things a bit more visual”

5.2 Theme two: The complexities of working with young people within YOSs

This theme captures the complexities of working with young people who are engaging with YOSs. Both within-child and environment factors were mentioned in relation to considering the needs of young people. A person-centred approach and attuned relationships were highlighted as significant factors to successfully support young people in YOSs.
Subtheme 5.2.1: The vulnerability of young people within YOSs

All professionals discussed the vulnerability of young people who are enrolled with the YOS. To address specific needs, an AssetPlus assessment is completed upon entry to the YOS. The AssetPlus was designed to create a holistic perceptive of the young person’s needs allowing professionals to plan the most beneficial intervention programme, which includes a wide range of different programmes such as attending CAMHs sessions, group sessions or meeting with different professionals. However, many professionals discussed the difficulty of prioritising interventions if the young person’s needs are complex.

Gary: “[…] this young person needs education. However, the drugs and alcohol issue, is more important in this moment in time, so we try and get that sorted first” (ETE worker)

Zara: “[…] he had a lot of issues regarding family dynamics, his emotional and mental well-being was just at a low, so we were like ‘okay we can’t work with him yet until that is addressed because he won’t be able to process anything” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Laura expanded on this, discussing young people’s priority of need changing over time as different areas emerge. The complexities of human beings were mentioned, which prevents a sequential order of intervention as originally planned by the YOS.

Laura: “Whilst we write an intervention plan and everything's meant to sort of be sequenced and go in an order, because you're dealing with humans, it doesn't always work that way because there might be an issue that's
The learning needs of young people were highlighted across professional's accounts. Claire mentioned a majority of young people have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs or an EHCP and have therefore been known to the educational psychology team previously.

Claire: “Quite a lot of them [young offenders] are known to us [the educational psychology department], and have, a lot of them have EHCPs or SEMH” (EP)

Professionals discussed the high level of undiagnosed speech and language needs of young people. Claire reflected on how a young person she worked with was perceived as not trying ‘hard enough’ in school. There was a sense of young people progressing through life without having their needs identified until they were enrolled within YOSs. Echoing this, Jane highlighted that YOSs were the first people to identify speech and language difficulties.

Jane: “There's a lot of undiagnosed speech and language communication issues that have not picked up, have not been picked up on in in schools or by parents” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

“[…] speech and language needs, like this young person where I assessed them and they were first percentile for verbal reasoning. So youth offending had picked it up, but nobody else ever picked it up […] so he was just always
‘he didn’t try hard enough at school’. That’s what the school report said” (EP)

The move to online services during the pandemic heightened the vulnerabilities of some young people with YOSs. Gary spoke about the difficulties of supporting young people online. He could no longer physically guide them through forms and college applications, particularly due to the restricted resources some young people had access to.

Gary: “I’m providing information and hoping that they do it, so where I would sit with them and go through forms and stuff that. Now I’m doing it where I’m giving them advice on how to do it”

Gary: “If they struggle then we’ll do video calls, but some of these young people don’t have that option to do video calls and so that that was difficult”

The disparity in resources some young people had access to acted as a barrier to receiving the support anticipated by the professionals. The YOSs subsequently resumed face-to-face sessions that were suboptimal when transferred to online services, such as sessions which include filling out paperwork.

Subtheme 5.2.2: The challenges of making changes within the young person’s wider systems

Many professionals commented on the array of difficulties within the young person’s wider systems when trying to support them to make positive changes. Claire discussed young people who have complex learning needs which has resulted in negative school experiences. She describes the difficulties in supporting young people towards
positive outcomes when their wider system, such as their family background is complex.

Claire:  “The young people I’ve been involved with it's kind of split between ones with very complex needs. I've been, you know, that have had difficulties in school possibly were at the PRU erm have an EHCP, very complex family background […] and it's quite difficult to know how to move that on.” (EP)

Similarly, Zara discussed young people’s continuous exposure to violence which creates difficulties when supporting them to make positive changes in their life. There was a sense of inevitability of returning to crime due to the vulnerable environment they are exposed to.

Zara: “Given the environment that they live in, they're always exposed to violence here and there […] the road is their lifestyle and then you know they find themselves back in it again” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Jane also shared the difficulty of supporting young people when they have continued involvement in crime whilst they’re enrolled in YOSs.

Jane: “I think some of them unfortunately when they're at that stage [involved with YOS] tend to be already committing other offences at the same time and it just all goes pear shaped” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Laura expanded on this, explaining the thrill-seeking environment young people may have experienced prior to enrolling with YOSs. She reflected on the difficulties of
finding activities that offer ‘equal stimulation’ compared to criminal offences, such as robbery. This indicates a difficulty within YOSs to ensure their interventions are motivating for young people.

Laura: “This then transpires into this sort of thrill seeking, nothing’s going to stimulate me, like robbing a drug dealer is […] and so then how do we, at that late stage, how do we offer something that’s going to be of equal stimulation and enjoyment?” (Case Manager)

Zara spoke about the vulnerability of some young people due to their parents being absent therefore resorting back to criminal activity for financial reasons.

Zara: “[…] but just to know that we know, you won’t relax back into the offence again, so well, if my mum isn’t around and my dad isn’t around, and I lose my job, of course I’m gonna go back into it.” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Zara also recognised that young people’s families may also be involved with criminal activity, thus normalising criminal behaviours.

Zara: “Cause obviously with trauma kind of misconstrued or kind of changes your perception of how you approach situations you know so some girls who may have maybe witnessed a murder or those who have always been, who their family are pro-criminals. That's their norm” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)
Many professionals expressed difficulties of young people having location restrictions due to gang affiliations, meaning they cannot enter certain areas in the borough. These restrictions result in staff travelling to different locations to offer their services. Gary also mentioned training providers not being available if young people are prohibited from entering that particular area. These restrictions allude to reduced opportunities for young people in YOSs.

Jane: “I’ll see them off site as well because we’ve got a lot of young people on the ‘keep apart list’ or cannot come here for risk or safety reasons.” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Gary: “So, you’ve got a few trading providers. However, a lot of them are based in X² so we’ve got young people that can’t come to X, that excludes them from that.” (ETE worker)

Professionals also spoke of the negative preconceived belief that some individuals have developed about YOSs from peer groups. Laura shared that often young people will enter YOSs with “a barrier up” which can prevent them engaging with services.

Laura: “I think young people have a preconceived notion of what the YOT [youth offending team] is […] all of their friends might say ‘YOT is shit’, you know, ‘it’s long’ or ‘it takes forever’ and ‘they don’t care about you’, like they’ve got a preconceived notion so they’ll often come in with sort of a bit of a barrier up already.” (Case Manager)

² Location within the LA
Gary:  “But they’ve come in with that whole ‘YOT’s ruining my life’”  
(ETE worker)

Echoing this, Claire reported some young people completely disengaging from services and avoiding YOS appointments.

Claire:  “As a service there’s a problem with some young people, not everybody, but with engagement, you know that they might not turn up” (EP)

A confliction was noted between young people not wanting to like the YOS, but actually liking the professionals. Laura reflected on the “the biggest testament” she receives from young people when they approach her for additional help.

Laura:  “So, then they’re quite conflicted themselves as to like ‘I really want to like you’ but they don’t like what you stand for, kind of thing. You can see that level of conflict, but you can also see, the biggest testament to, if you know that you’re supporting them as if they ring you and say: ‘can you help me?’” (Case Manager)

Laura discussed the limited time available within statutory orders to complete meaningful interventions. She highlighted the importance of young people building a relationship with professionals prior to participating in an intervention and short orders not providing adequate time to complete this process.

Laura:  “I think the nature of YOT, also is very challenging in that, say for instance you have a six-month order, that may not
be enough time to develop a relationship with the CAMHS worker and complete a CAMHS intervention” (Case Manager)

Similarly, the lack of continuity within interventions was outlined as a difficulty. Jane spoke about young people sometimes offending during their order which resulted in interventions not being completed due to other priorities.

Jane: “[...] the young person will errr end up going into custody and so our sessions don’t end properly, or they don’t attend so get a breach […], there isn’t always a follow up with my sessions because a priority is to do something else” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Subtheme 5.2.3: The significance of a flexible approach within youth offending service delivery

All professionals raised YOSs’ person-centred approach to ensure support is adapted to meet the needs of each young person. This requires professionals to continuously adapt and evaluate their practice. Zara and Laura both explained the importance of getting to know the young person to ensure the support offered is fit for purpose.

Zara: “[…J] I realised okay this [content within the group session] isn’t working. So, I had to rejig it on the spot kind of thing, so every day is kind of like, I have to think creatively how to tap into that young person”. (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Laura: “Each young person is a human so they’re going to bring that human challenge of, you know you need to create an
individual package, you don’t know what that might look like until you sort of get to know them” (Case Manager)

Claire discussed a complex case which required staff to travel to the young person’s house in an attempt to engage them with services. She reflects on this being an unsuccessful strategy but highlights staffs’ commitment.

Claire: “There was one young person […] in an attempt to get him to engage at all. Everybody was going to the home, but he still didn't come down, so erm it wasn’t entirely successful, but it shows a willingness to try new things” (EP)

Gary mentioned the importance of supporting young people with their current aspirations, as goals may change over time. He encourages young people to express if they are unhappy with the support they are receiving or would like to change the focus.

Gary: “The young person might change his idea [future aspiration] or try and change direction, so try and be quite fluid with it as well […] I will say to the young people all the time ‘I’m here to support you, If I do something wrong, let me know’ because there’s no point me keep going in the wrong direction.” (ETE worker)

Expanding on this, Gary spoke of the importance of ensuring the support offered is beneficial to the young person, either currently or in the future. For example, with job applications or their CV. There was a sense of creativity and flexibility in the way Gary works with young people at YOSs to ensure his support is meaningful for each individual.
Gary: “OK we’re not going to education but let’s do some applications like fake ones, so when you’re ready to do it, you do it, whether it’s a CV or have a bank account or email address, something which kind of might benefit you at some point” (ETE worker)

Following national lockdowns due to Covid-19, the flexibility of YOSs were even more paramount. All services moved to online working, apart from necessary doorstep visits. Claire described the welfare checks as a positive adaptation following online services. Conversely, supporting young people towards making positive changes, including group sessions was described as a difficulty for all departments.

Claire: “I think, the welfare side of it has been really positive but the actually sort of trying to do work to bring about change. I think that's been challenging for the whole service” (EP)

Similarly, group sessions were described as challenging via online platforms. Distractions in young people’s environment, interruptions to the session and difficulties in interpreting what they are communicating without the information from non-verbal cues, all acted as a barrier to the group session working effectively.

Zara: “It's just a lot of interruptions. Again, you can't tell from bodily cues like what you're getting in person to over the phone […] or you can hear Netflix in the background” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Positives from online working were also discussed, such as an increase in multidisciplinary working and young people feeling safe within their home
environments during sessions. Gary alluded to the potential for more YOS work to be conducted from individual’s home in the future.

Gary: “So many people have worked from home, it’s been. Well, let’s not say a rolling success but it has shown that it can be done. There’ll be an element of people working home more” (ETE worker)

Subtheme 5.2.4: The importance of attuned relationships between young people and YOS staff

Professionals discussed the importance of having positive relationships with the young people attending YOSs. Gary and Zara expressed the importance of how professionals speak and being truthful in what they say.

Gary: “[…] how you speak with them, how they engage with you. Again, some young people will engage with the workers, even though the workers are giving them bad news. So, it comes down to the relationship you have with that young person” (ETE worker)

Zara: “[…] being able to relate, like these kids can see right through you, like if you’re chatting rubbish at them then they know for a fact, they completely turn off kind of thing” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Professionals discussed making a special effort to ensure each individual is having their needs met. Zara expressed the importance of ‘humanising’ their experiences and ensuring that young people are supported to aspire to meaningful goals as opposed to anticipating a life of crime.
Claire: “These people [YOS staff] are good at thinking ‘oh he doesn't like that because’ […] ‘how can I make that different?’ ‘what thing might work?’ What are they interested in?” (EP).

Zara: “[…] it’s about you taking the extra mile to make sure that at least you provide an alternative narrative for them and they can foresee that, that there is life better than, you know offending […] So, it's just to humanise their experiences really” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Having positive relationships with keyworkers resulted in young people seeking out professionals for further support or approaching key adults in the future. Jane spoke about a young person who expressed they would approach YOS staff or speak to their foster placement if they wanted to seek additional support.

Jane: “[…] then he identified that if he wanted to speak to anybody again if he had his problem, he would talk to his placement, he’s in a care home, or he would talk to YOT, which is amazing that he would say that he would speak to his workers” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

5.3 Theme three: Societal barriers for young people attending YOSs

All professionals discussed the barriers young people face when trying to achieve desistance. Societal barriers such as minimal opportunities available and negative attitudes towards young offenders were frequently mentioned by all professionals. Within this theme, there was a sense of tension between YOS’s aim to encourage
young people to engage in ETE and the level of acceptance in society for this population.

**Subtheme 5.3.1: Negative attitudes towards young people**

A prominent theme emerged around the negative attitudes towards young people who are enrolled with YOSs. Gary and Laura spoke of young offenders being categorised by the public due to their previous criminal offences. Additionally, Gary shared the difficulties of changing the perceptions of young people within YOSs, suggesting a real challenge to progress in life.

Laura: “They might have made one mistake but if you fall into sort of this trap of being categorised in a certain way or people perceive you in a certain way” (Case Manager)

Gary: “Someone committed an offence a number of years ago. We’ve got to realise that these young people still need a chance to kind of progress in life and that’s, that’s a struggle” (ETE worker)

Staff spoke of the negative perception schools can have of young people with complex needs. Zara mentioned how schools perceive young people as “difficult” and exclude them, rather than exploring possible explanations for their behaviour. This results in all children and young people with high levels of learning needs or SEMH needs in one setting, such as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

Zara: “Schools just see them as difficult and expel them and send them to the unit and you have you know a whole
place of just young kids who are just in one area” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Jane discussed the multiple factors that could impact individual's behaviour which frequently go unnoticed by schools. She reflected on children with undiagnosed learning or SEMH needs being categorised and subsequently missing learning experiences.

Jane: “When you do a timeline it goes back to primary school, behaviour difficulties is being, you know, being excluded or, or being in trouble, or becoming disaffected from learning, and actually, is that what is that reason for? Is there an undiagnosed sort of Speech Language communication difficulty? Is it because they're worried because their mum's been battered at home or, or she was last night and they think it's still happening today? and then, it affects their attention, and so and then they act out [...] and then they get labelled as being naughty and then they lose out in their education so then they don't bother and then it just becomes a cycle” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Similarly, Laura shared anecdotes of individuals who were actively engaged in education and are turned away once they declare their criminal history. She described how colleges often use risk assessments when justifying their rejection of young people involved with the YOS.

Laura: “We've had kids who are actively engaged in education and then they declare their criminal conviction and they
Gary spoke about his attempt to engage young people in work opportunities within council projects, however difficulties arose around managing employers’ expectations. The council expected young people to adhere to usual working rules such as starting work early, however Gary shared the difficulties for young people meeting such demands. He described his role as “bridging” the relationship between employers and young people.

Gary: “[…] there’s so many regeneration projects going on. I just try and make sure that our young people can have a chance to kind of work with them […] and it was harder than it should have been […] for young people to go to work at 7.30am, for them it’s foreign. But for the council, they’re like ‘if you want a job, this is what it entails’, so just trying to bridge that gap” (ETE Worker)

Subtheme 5.3.2: Lack of opportunities available to young people who have offended

The interviews highlighted the minimal opportunities available for young people within the YJS. Gary discussed the difficulties of enrolling young people in college during certain points of the year. Many colleges only accept intakes in September and January so unless young people are willing to travel further afar, they are required to wait until these times to enrol in education.

Gary: “There aren’t many opportunities for young people. So, it’s outside of college intake now, so you’ve got a few trading
providers […] Just the lack of opportunities, so if the young person now wants to get an education, there’s so little opportunity, unless they’re willing to travel” (ETE worker)

Gary expanded on this by talking about the financial difficulties for young people accessing oyster cards. A twenty-pound fee is required to buy an oyster card which prevents a lot of people from accessing them.

Gary: “The issue about travelling, and young people who haven’t got oyster cards. So, although you are 16, couldn’t get an oyster card, you have to pay for that twenty pounds fee or parents have to sign up for it” (ETE worker)

Gary shared the difficulties of young people who do not have qualifications in English and Maths being offered courses intended for English speakers of other languages (ESOL), which is highly unmotivating when English is their native language.

Gary: “Normally, if your maths and literacy is that low, they like you to do an ESOL course which is for English for speakers of other languages, which is great, but not if you’re born in this country, and English is your first language” (ETE worker)

Laura shared the lack of opportunities available and ensuring young people are supported to pursue a career they desire. She reflected on courses being offered to young people often not being conducive to their goals, which creates significant challenges when trying to encourage young people to engage in ETE.
Laura: “It's not often conducive to what the young person wants, so if you're not meeting their goals or what they want to be doing, then it's a bit more of a challenge because you can't just say 'just go and do anything just for the sake of doing it' because if you or I were told that, we would say no” (Case Manager)

The wider impact of the pandemic on young people's reduced opportunities was also discussed. Gary described the reduced job opportunities available for young people enrolled in YOSs. This challenge is further exacerbated due to additional job losses in the pandemic, therefore creating a higher level of employment competition.

Gary: ‘[…] the job market is kind of dwindling with opportunities… and then they’re competing against people who’ve got vast experience” (ETE worker)

This emphasises the long-term challenges young people may face during and after the pandemic. It highlights the importance of young people receiving individualised support to identify their aspirations and consider small steps they can take towards their goal. With the reduced opportunities available in the current climate, it creates challenges for professionals to identify and support young people towards available opportunities.

5.4 Theme four: The role of transition within young people’s enrolment in YOSs

This theme captured the transition periods within young people's enrolment in YOSs. Professionals discussed the transference of knowledge between the YOSs and young people's home environment. They highlighted the complex nature of these transitions
and expressed their concern of young people returning to high risk environments. They also discussed young people’s minimal aspirations, indicating a need for them to be supported to explore meaningful goals.

**Subtheme 5.4.1: Transference of knowledge from YOS sessions to home environment**

Many professionals expressed their concerns around young people transferring the skills they have learnt at YOSs into their home environment. Zara referred to young people as ‘safe’ when they’re enrolled with YOSs, however expressed concern around them returning to environments containing factors which have led them to offend.

Zara:  “I still have to go home to my mum, I still have to walk down that particular street you know, so when they’re here [in YOSs] they’re safe and they’ve learned something, but when they go back into the community, […] I’m back into the same area, environment that, you know, led me to offend”  
(Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Similarly, Claire shared an anecdote of a young person who was meeting their targets when they had an electronic tag. However, once it was removed, they returned to high risk areas of the Borough.

Claire:  “He was doing really, really well in that setting [custody], and then he came out he was on a tag and he was doing alright then […] soon as the tag came off, he was back in the area he shouldn’t be with the same group of friends”. (EP)
Subtheme 5.4.2: Young people’s aspirations

Professionals spoke about the limited aspirations young people have. There was a sense of young people choosing careers suggested to them, with limited knowledge of the profession. Claire also discusses young people not accessing work experience.

Gary: “But aspiration wise, there’s not much with the young people that I work with” (ETE worker)

Claire: “I’ll say ‘what are you interested in?’, and they always say something like mechanics or something, and I go ‘Did you get any work experience, have you done that before?’ ‘No’” (EP)

Gary shared the difficulties engaging young people in ETE. There was a sense of tension between young people’s aspirations not aligning with the YOS’s aim of engaging everyone in ETE. In these cases, Gary highlighted his role to work with the young person around their motivation.

Gary: “It’s a tricky one because from the YOTs point of view, everyone should be doing something, however as the education worker, I understand that people have to, have their rights at that stage to kind of say ‘no I don’t want to do nothing’. But what I would then do, is work with them around motivation, I try and get them so when they are ready, they know what to do” (ETE worker)

Similarly, Jane discussed her role exploring young people’s interests to ensure their aspirations were internally motivated.
Jane: “Then it's kind of like ‘what things did you used to like at school? What subjects did you like? What was you good at? What would you be interested in? What do you, you know is anything you've ever seen on TV” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

When staff asked young people about their career ambitions, they discussed practical-based professions, such as mechanics and construction work. Claire and Gary mentioned the possibility of young people being influenced, particularly because they often can’t provide a reason for why they’re aiming for a profession.

Claire: “I think these are things maybe are suggested to them like building skills, erm like construction, construction mechanics.” (EP)

Gary: “One young person said he wanted to do mechanics, but then wasn’t able to demonstrate why and or where his enthusiasm has come through. So many people say it and don’t have much about why?” (ETE Worker)

Laura mentioned that some young people aged over 16 years old, prefer to engage with employment, rather than education or training to provide them with an income.

Laura: “A lot of them when they've left school and they're over 16, they don’t seem that interested in going to college, and very much want a job” (Case Manager)

Expanding on this idea, Claire and Zara discussed young people aspiring towards earning vast amounts of money. Claire described this as “unhelpful” and shared her
ambition to broaden young people’s aspirations to align them to positive and realistic outcomes.

Claire: “You want to broaden people's mind, because I think some of what they hope for is actually about money and wealth and status, and, and that's not very helpful.” (EP)

Zara: “So, it's just the wealth aspects, so the easy money phenomena just kind of attracts them, so it's like anything to get easy money, I will deal with the consequences later.” (Gangs and sexual violence group worker)

Laura recognised that some young people had earnt large amounts of money illegally prior to engaging with services, and therefore shared the difficulties of encouraging them to aspire to other professions with less earning potential.

Laura: “They're in positions where they've earned money illegally, so they know what it's like to have quite a bit of tangible cash lying around[…] saying you have to do this apprenticeship and you're going to earn five pounds an hour, or seven pounds an hour, to them, doesn't really look that achievable they sort of want the end goal of the money” (Case Manager)

Claire subsequently shared the importance of having a realistic ambition that suits the needs of young people.

Claire: “So, it's not about having a grand ambition, it's about having a realistic one that we know works for people”. (EP)
The limited feedback staff receive from young people was also discussed. Therefore, the success rate of reaching their aspirations is often unknown to professionals. Jane discussed only being aware of young people re-offending when notified at multi-agency meetings.

Jane: “We never get no feedback. The only time we might know something happens is [...] the MARAC Multi-agency risk assessment [...] so I have to check whether anyone's known to our service, and a name might pop up as a perpetrator usually of someone who used to work with our service, so I might see that” (Therapeutic interventions social worker)

Gary mentioned the national instrument 45 (NI 45), which is a service level tool to monitor young people’s outcomes. However, there was a sense of difficulty in measuring outcomes with Gary’s use of language 'we try to measure it', suggesting it may be difficult to track what young people go on to do when they transition from YOSs.

Gary: “As a service, we try and measure it, there's a national indicator, called NI 45, and that's the how, our YOT does [...] it takes a cohort, whoever has finished, between let's say, this week and that week, and look at them and where they ended up” (ETE worker)

Summary of professional’s perspective:

The views of professionals provided a great insight into how YOSs operate and the varied support they offer to young people. The complexity of the wider systems around young people (family, environment, societal attitudes) were noted, with a high rate of
undiagnosed SEND and educational needs amongst young people within YOSs. Professionals attached value to building positive relationships with young people and reflected on the individualised approaches they use to engage them with services. An overriding sense of concern around young people’s ability to transfer skills they’ve learnt from YOSs into their home environment and a level of uncertainty of the success rates amongst staff was noticed. There was also a sense of incompatibility between YOSs’ role to encourage young people to engage in ETE and the level of opportunities available to young people who have a criminal record. Staff reflected on their role of bridging the gap between young people’s aspirations and societies’ acceptance of young people’s history.
6.1 Introduction

There is a paucity of research exploring the experiences of young people who are enrolled in YOSs. In response, this research explored young people’s experiences of engaging with YOSs through a socio-ecological lens. Six young people who were enrolled in a YOS and five adults from various roles were interviewed to ensure the young people’s accounts could be understood within their context. The research questions posed were:

1) How do young people perceive their experiences of youth offending services?
2) What are the aspirations of young people within youth offending services?
3) What do professionals identify as supportive factors and barriers affecting young people they work with?

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and relevant literature. The third research question is intertwined into the discussion of research question one and two, as it provided valuable context to the young people’s accounts. The limitations of the study are then examined and suggestions for future research are presented. Lastly, implications for EP practice conclude the chapter.

6.2 How do young people perceive their experiences of youth offending services?

Across each of the young people’s accounts, the practices within the YOSs were perceived as supportive in nature. When presented with a scale (from 0-10, with ten
being the most positive), young people scored YOSs between seven and ten, suggesting they perceive the service in a positive light. The young people’s responses described YOSs as a source of support and an opportunity to reflect as opposed to a punitive experience. These findings are aligned with Shepherd's (2019) study, who found that 95% of participants reported receiving good services from YOSs and 96% felt listened to by staff. Expanding on this, findings from the current study highlighted multiple aspects of YOSs which contributed to young people’s positive experiences, such as hearing other perspectives within group sessions. This insight is contrary to previous research by Dawes & Larson (2011) who showed young people have no levels of motivation to engage with YOSs.

YOS sessions provided young people with a physical and psychological reflective space, acting as a catalyst for reflection by providing time to consider their situation. There was a strong sense of young people considering the role of themselves in facilitating change in their actions. This was conceptualised by Farrall (2002) and Giordano et al. (2002) as the ‘openness’ to change. Within the study, the access to a reflective space facilitated a shift in perspectives, with young people vocalising the reflective insights into their actions and explicitly linking them with consequences. There was also a sense of gratitude towards YOSs in changing their perception, ‘allowing’ them to see opportunities available to them. It can therefore be assumed that previous to enrolling in YOSs, young people in the study perceived their opportunities as minimal, which may have contributed to their involvement in crime (Halsey & White, 2008). Arguably, these perspective shifts play an integral part in supporting young people to achieve identity desistance and highlights how valuable YOSs are in supporting this process.
A shift in young people’s perspectives from solely focusing on the present to thinking more about their future was also reported. This shift in perspective appeared to feed into developing their autonomous motivation by evaluating the value of criminal behaviour towards their long-term aspirations. Staff reported young people entered the YOS with a negative preconceived notion of what the service involves, acting as a barrier to them engaging in services. However, professionals described their perception of YOSs changing over time. In the young people’s account, there was also a sense of altering their perception of crime and striving for desistance. However, results suggested this developed incrementally with young people highlighting this change over the course of their involvement with YOSs. This concept provides a new lens in which to consider the role of a safe and reflective space in the ongoing shift of young people’s perspectives.

The findings revealed multiple components which supported the development of a supportive and reflective space. Young people reported the professionals made a genuine effort to make connections with them and felt truly understood, particularly when they found it hard to articulate their thoughts. Young people valued having adults they trusted and could talk openly with, highlighting the importance of young people accessing a non-judgemental environment, particularly when discussing personal or sensitive topics (Rogers, 1951). Similarly, within the adults’ accounts, the authenticity of their actions and speaking truthfully were highlighted as key in supporting young people’s engagement in services. Young people valued the responsiveness of the professionals, citing examples of staff travelling to young people’s houses during the Covid-19 pandemic and offering mentoring support. Due to professionals responding to young people’s emotional needs, a safe and reflective space was developed for
YOS sessions. Staff within the study utilised principles of attachment theory; providing unconditional regard, authentic engagement, safety and security, opportunities for growth, active participation, responsiveness and empathy which facilitated a positive mentoring relationship (Zilberstein & Spencer, 2017).

Introducing online sessions was successful in supporting young people and contributed to the development of a safe and reflective space. Young people favoured its ease and efficiency to access services. Professionals added context to this, commenting on barriers young people may face when travelling to the YOS building, such as the financial obligation of public transport and the location restrictions due to gang affiliations. This study revealed young people’s psychological safety in their home allowed them to speak more freely about their situations and feelings, as supported by Kazmer & Xie (2008), who highlighted online interviews allow participants to remain in a familiar and safe environment.

Staff members reported some young people found it difficult to discuss personal topics in-person. They noted an improvement when sessions moved to a virtual platform. Online interactions have significantly increased for young people (Baines & Blatchford, 2019), creating virtual socialising norms. A virtual environment subsequently contributed to the development of a safe space for young people within the study. The analysis of the responses supports the usefulness of a hybrid service delivery model when supporting young people within YOSs. Virtual sessions designed to incorporate the talking element of the young person’s order, facilitates them to feel more comfortable and engaged in the process. Alongside this, the face-to-face sessions would support practical-based activities and group sessions. The flexibility of a hybrid
model would also provide young people with a sense of control and choice during their involvement with YOSs.

The use of virtual platforms also created a reflective space for professionals. Adults within the study spoke about the importance of multi-disciplinary working within the YOS, particularly sharing knowledge to identify the most beneficial way of supporting each individual. This joined-up working between professionals was described to improve the level of support offered to young people within the YOS, which is in line with the Children and Families Act (2014). Within this research, challenges with shared communication were outlined. Particularly the restricted time available to physically meet and share information amongst professionals. The introduction to online working was described to mitigate this challenge, through virtual platforms providing an efficient reflective space for the staff members to liaise and share information with one another. This finding has important implications for developing the use of virtual platforms within multi-disciplinary working to ensure information is continued to be shared amongst the professionals within YOSs. The flexibility of a hybrid service model would provide professionals with the opportunity to connect with each other from various locations, increasing the level of multi-disciplinary working within YOSs.

Young people described the personal growth they felt following YOS sessions. Adam described himself as being more ‘resilient’ and Felix felt like a ‘better person’ following his engagement with YOSs. These results provide further support for the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002), highlighting everyone has intrinsic motivation to fulfil three psychological needs of: autonomy, competence and relatedness and an individual’s environment is either supportive of the person’s needs
or a barrier to meet their needs. In this instance, the YOS had supported the young people’s needs and subsequently increased their positive self-image, which is likely to lead to maintained change (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Comparably, each YOS session provided Jack with a sense of completion which fed into his increased levels of self-esteem and motivation to succeed in the future. Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) argued when young people are evaluating their future, an appraisal process of past and present events occurs. This research has found that support from YOSs can create shifts in young people’s appraisal of past and present events towards supporting them to think more positively about their future. Young people having positive experiences within YOSs, including building relationships with YOS staff and successfully completing YOS sessions supported them to speak confidently about their aspirations. For Jack, completing YOS sessions made him feel like he can achieve in other areas of his life and contributed to his personal growth. There was a sense of young people experiencing feelings of achievement for the first time within YOSs. In comparison to their previous experiences of being excluded from college for their offence or for not completing exams (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). This indicates that YOSs can play an integral part in disrupting the theoretical framework discussed by Fitzpatrick et al. (2015). In contrast to young people having negative experiences to appraise their past and present events and entering the ‘stuck in uncertainty’, ‘threat to future disappointment’ and ‘protecting self’ stages, which can inevitably inhibit young people from achieving their aspirations. Youth offending services and educational institutions have the influence to provide positive experiences and to create shifts in the ‘appraisal of past and present events’ to support young people to value their aspirations and commit to future goals. In this study, high
quality transitional processes for young people within YOSs contributed to their personal growth which was an integral outcome of their sessions.

A myriad of factors contributed to the development of young people’s personal growth, particularly the way professionals worked with young people. The use of a flexible approach utilised by staff allowed for individualised interventions and support. Professionals within the study frequently adapted their practice to explore the best methods of supporting young people within the service. Changes to young people’s priority areas of need over time were referenced, signifying the importance of flexibility within the YOS service delivery. Acknowledging the individual’s changing needs allowed them to target specific areas. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) enables flexibility in YOS service delivery, which appears to be key in ensuring young people’s needs are appropriately supported. Expanding on this, all professionals expressed the significance of a person-centred approach in providing meaningful support to young people within the YOS, also advocated by legislation (SEND COP, 2015).

Additionally, multidisciplinary working was also a contributing factor to providing targeted support. Sharing strategies and knowledge allowed for professionals to utilise the best way of working with this population. This joined-up approach with common goals, allowed professionals to draw upon the strengths of each individual to provide a cohesive support around the young person.

A sense of the qualities required for YOS staff when working with this population was highlighted in the study. Being approachable, non-judgemental and humanising their experiences all fed into young people feeling supported. Professionals created a non-
blame culture and emphasised a fresh-start approach. Professionals within the study were also mindful of the challenges young people face, including previous trauma, fragmented educational experiences and complex home environments. This awareness created a flexible and reflective process within their work, with young people describing anecdotes of when professionals had gone beyond their job role to support them, highlighting staff’s passion to support this population. These intrinsic qualities of the professionals enhanced the interactions and development of personal growth for young people within the study. Young people were aware when these characteristics were present, with Adam describing how he can tell when someone is genuinely interested, which contributed to them feeling cared for within the service.

Aspects of YOSs which could act as potential barriers for young people experiencing personal growth was also demonstrated in the findings. Young people spoke about their frustration in being asked repetitive questions regarding their offence, which led to feeling unmotivated during this period. Hart & Thompson (2009) assert when young people do not feel listened to, they quickly become disengaged from the activity. This highlights tension between the YOSs’ aim to support young people to reflect on their offence and young people not feeling listened to because of the repetitive questions being asked around their offence. The high level of speech and language needs within the young offender population (Hughes et al., 2012) is also likely to exacerbate their frustration of verbal questioning in sessions. Young people noted their preference for physical activities within their order, such as attending youth clubs and practical based interventions. These findings highlight the challenges involved in supporting young people to reflect on their offence, whilst also maintaining motivation to engage in YOSs. It appears to be a fragile balance which requires a varied and person-centred
approach to support young people to engage in services. Hill (2017) highlights the importance of personalised interventions within YOSs. Arguably, the lack of user feedback gained within YOSs could be considered a missed opportunity to gain valuable information regarding how best to support this population to reflect on their offence. Increasing the opportunities for young people to share their perceptions and experiences is therefore required to truly implement a person-centred approach, whilst providing guidance to professionals regarding how best to support this vulnerable group (NACRO, 2008; Hart & Thompson, 2009).

Professionals discussed the time constraints within young people’s orders which created barriers to complete interventions. Having limited time to complete interventions could prevent the development of an attuned relationship and reflective space. Which in-turn could have ramifications on young people experiencing personal growth and shifts in their perspectives. This signifies the importance of the time element of the PPCT model (Tudge et al., 2009) when considering the young person’s engagement in YOSs. Arguably, flexibility in the time to complete an intervention could facilitate this. The current rigidity of orders prevents this from occurring, but optional engagement offered to young people following their order to ensure interventions are complete could facilitate the development of personal growth and shift in perspectives described by participants in the study.

The transference of the young people’s knowledge gained from the YOSs to their home environment was reflected upon in the professional's interviews. Young people were perceived as being ‘safe’ during their involvement in YOSs. Difficulties appear to arise during their transition from the service. Young people being re-exposed to the
risk factors which had previously led them to committing an offence were described to create challenges for young people achieving identity desistance. In line with previous research (Laufer & Harel, 2003; Hurry & Moriarty, 2004), adults within the study referred to challenges in supporting young people who have complex family backgrounds and may be exposed to environments containing aspects of violence. Lacking financial support from parents, being exposed to thrill-seeking activities and involvement in criminal activity during their order were all reported as potential barriers for young people achieving desistance. In this research, proximal processes between the young people and their context were central in supporting young people towards achieving desistance. During their order young people receive on-going support and a reflective space, however, there appears to be a lack of support when they complete their order. Young people are frequently exposed to factors which may have contributed to their involvement in crime, such as gang affiliations, minimal or no parental support which is likely to contribute to the reoffending rates. More consideration into how we support young people during these transitions is required to ensure a form of sustained and continued support is available. This research subsequently highlights the need for young people to receive a transition plan when their order is finished to bridge the level of support from YOSs to their home environment. Consideration into the context of the systems surrounding each individual, including their community, peer group, educational setting and home life must be an integral aspect of the transition plan (Collins, 2019).

Young people’s experiences of engaging with YOSs have been outlined, highlighting significant contributing factors. The work with the YOS provided a consistent reflective space, which facilitated a shift in young people’s perspectives. They valued having
this safe and reflective space and highlighted the significance of each session. Receiving sessions remotely and having trustworthy and non-judgemental relationships with YOS staff contributed to the development of this environment. These findings also reveal the personal growth experienced by young people as an outcome of their YOS sessions. The flexible and individualised approach, in addition to qualities held by professionals all contributed to supporting young people to feel personal growth. Challenges such as transitioning from YOSs and completing interventions were highlighted, asserting the significance of providing sustained support for young people after their order has finished.

6.3 What are the aspirations of young people within youth offending services?
Comparable to their peers, all young people spoke in detail about their future aspirations and activities they enjoy. These included material aspects such as striving for homes and cars, in addition to careers such as business owners, warehouse worker and becoming an architect. This is contrary to Hurry et al (2005) findings and the professionals’ views within the study, which both suggested young people within the YJS mainly aspire towards vocational careers. This inconsistency may be due to the unique aspirations held within the participant groups in the research studies. Yet, it highlights the importance of young people not being stereotyped into one professional sector and ensuring their aspirations are accurately obtained to confirm they are supported towards a meaningful goal. Having meaningful aspirations explicitly outlined was described by Felix as providing him with ‘hope for the future’, thus emphasising the importance of goal setting for all young people (Menzies, 2013).
This contrasts with previous research which showed young people within YOSs have limited aspirations (Nurmi, 1989; Albert & Luzzo, 1999), thus emphasising the importance of *how* aspirations are elicited. It is likely that some young people find direct questions about their career aspirations challenging to answer but when supported to think about their aspirations holistically, young people can then be supported to plan backwards from their dream. Using the ‘Miracle question’ (De Shazer, 1988) in the present study provided rich detail into young people’s aspirations, which allowed for further unravelling such as their motivation behind their goals. This backward method of supporting young people to consider aspirations is conceptualised by planning tools, such as ‘Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope’ (PATH) and ‘Making Action Plans’ (MAP; Pearpoint et al. 1993), frequently used by EPs. Consideration into using these tools with young people within YOSs will be discussed further in section 6.8.

As identified across young people nationally, a disparity between young people’s short-term and long-term aspirations was identified within this study. Young people all had high aspirations, but challenges emerged around how to achieve them. Jack aspired for a sustainable job but also wished to pursue a career in warehouse agency work. Similarly, Kyle aspired to own a construction business but enrolled onto a plumbing course at college. This discrepancy is commonly seen in the general adolescent population (Menzies, 2013), thus normalising participant’s aspirations within society.

Findings from the study highlight the need for young people to receive support around keeping their aspirations on track. Young people were influenced by their
Adolescents turning towards other relationships, such as peer groups for support and role modelling is typical within attachment theory (Zilberstein & Spencer, 2017). The exposure of career opportunities is the main difference between young offenders and their peers. Menzies (2013) argues young people require exposure to work experience, high-quality career advice and learning focused mentoring to support the realignment of the present and future. However, professionals reported young people within YOSs are not having exposure to work experience. Young people are subsequently being influenced by others without any further knowledge of the alternative opportunities available to them.

The lack of autonomy in young people’s career choice could significantly impact on their goals being part of their internalised self-concept, which in turn could influence their motivation to pursue and persist within these job sectors (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010). This emphasises the importance of young people receiving guidance on career planning to broaden their aspirations, as they ‘cannot be what they cannot see’ (Mann et al., 2020, p.5). Career advice would typically be available from education settings, but as documented by Heath & Priest, (2016), up to 40% of young offenders are not accessing education or employment. As such, YOSs can be young people’s first opportunity to explore their career opportunities. This highlights the importance of YOSs’ role in supporting young people to explore what careers are available, what they involve and how to move towards their goal. Identifying available careers could be an integral aspect of reducing NEET rates, with 2020 PISA information showing young people are unaware of new careers emerging and are limiting their aspirations to a small list of traditional jobs (Mann et al., 2020). Having up-to-date career advice
and guidance could create more meaningful aspirations and subsequently support young people to engage in ETE. This ideology is conceptualised by Amemiya, Kieta & Monahan (2017), who highlighted working towards long-term goals as a key component in supporting young people towards achieving desistance.

Within the study, further exploration into young people’s motivations underlying their aspirations were elicited. There was a strong sense of young people being motivated to support their families, subtracting any stress linked to monetary concerns. This demonstrates empathy, compassion and a connection with their family group which could contribute to their motivation to engage with ETE. These findings are mirrored within the general population, with adolescents reporting family as the largest motivator behind their aspirations (Gardiner & Goedhuys, 2020), highlighting aspirational similarities between young people within YOSs’ and their peers. The concept of internal motivation is powerful in driving young people’s career aspirations, and therefore it’s vital that young people are supported to identify and consider these factors during their career planning. YOS staff using an open dialogue exploring young people’s internal and external motivations towards their future career path could be a significant factor in accessing ETE.

Professionals in the study discussed the money phenomena often present in young people’s aspirations. Young people strive to make large amounts of money in their future but are unsure how to achieve this. Kyle, Felix and Mike aspired to be business owners because of the lifestyle they thought it would provide but they were uncertain on what explicit steps to take. A similar dilemma was also documented in a study by Amemiya et al. (2017), where young people had broad aspirations such as wanting to
be ‘successful’ and ‘do positive’ in life. Again, broad aspirations are documented amongst the adolescent population, including striving for wealth. However, differences occur within the vulnerable situations young people may have encountered prior to engaging in YOSs.

Professionals shared some young people have been exposed to high amounts of money illegally prior to engaging in services. Therefore, no other job or training opportunities can be offered with a similar level of earning potential. This prior exposure to illegal activities is likely to contribute to the level of NEET rates following YOS involvement and highlights the vulnerability of this population. YOSs play an integral part to uncover equally motivating ETE prospects during the personal growth period described by young people, allowing them to see alternative opportunities available. However, professionals documented many career challenges young people enrolled in YOSs may face, exacerbating the difficulties of engaging young people in ETE.

Numerous societal barriers were reported within the study, such as limited ETE opportunities available to this population. Restricted times of the year when young people can enrol onto college courses and courses not being conducive to their aspirations all fed into young people not feeling motivated to engage in education. Similarly, the professionals within this study, reported concern regarding training and job opportunities. Professionals discussed the challenges of work routines for these young people, such as expectations for them to start work at 7.30am. These are demanding expectations for young people to adhere to, with no flexibility to consider
each individual’s needs. This further reinforces the discrepancy of support young people receive within the YOS, compared to when they enter society.

Limited opportunities available to young people were also highlighted, which is challenging when young people cannot enter certain geographical areas due to gang affiliations, thus again reducing opportunities. This is further exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Professionals commented on the increased level of competition young people are facing due to a high number of adults in the UK losing their job in the pandemic. This is of concern as it removes a protective factor amongst this vulnerable population with the dangers of being bored and NEET being significant risk factors of young people engaging in criminal activity (Amemiya et al., 2017). Within the governments’ ‘plan for jobs’ initiative (2020) focusing on supporting and creating jobs across the UK following the pandemic, it is imperative this vulnerable population are considered, however, to date there are no mention of young offenders. This research highlights the importance of navigating how the pandemic could play a significant role in exacerbating challenges faced by this vulnerable population. As will be discussed in section 6.7, further research would be beneficial to explore young people’s experiences of accessing ETE opportunities in-light of these new challenges.

Societal negative attitudes associated with young offenders was discussed by YOS professionals. Schools labelling children as ‘naughty’ and excluding them without exploring possible reasons for their behaviour contributes to the high level of young people entering the YOS with undiagnosed learning and language needs. McAra & McVie (2016) argue that young people within the YJS should be treated as vulnerable young people as opposed to offenders. This is consistent with previous research
(Carroll et al, 2013; MoJ & DfE, 2016) documenting the link between young people’s undiagnosed needs and negative school experiences, exclusions and involvement in crime. This recognised cyclic phenomena continues to be perpetuated within schools, promoting the need for professionals to continue striving for equality within education and actively challenge discriminative practice. Within the study, there was a sense of young people progressing through school without having their needs identified and appropriately met and YOSs being the first service to identify their needs.

Educational institutions excluding young people when they disclose their offence was also reported by professionals in the study. Young people within YOSs are frequently categorised in a negative manner, significantly reducing the opportunities available to them. This negative and closed-minded approach creates barriers for young people who are attempting to engage in education on their journey to transitioning into adulthood (Halsey & White, 2008). Thus, extending the findings of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (2019) which outlined a high level of children and young people within YOSs were not accessing educational provisions.

Findings from this study revealed young people within YOSs hold similar aspirations to their peers, including the misalignment between their short-term and long-term goals. The disparity is evident within the societal barriers young offenders experience in contrast to their peers. Young people within YOSs have significantly reduced opportunities available to access ETE, which is further exacerbated by negative societal attitudes. This highlights the importance of creating enabling environments for all. It emphasises changes within mesosystems and macrosystems are necessary to truly support young people within YOSs towards engaging in ETE successfully and to
combat the high reoffending rates. Changes to young people’s wider environments, such as challenging schools’ and colleges’ perception of young people who are enrolled in YOSs, appears to be an imperative aspect of supporting this population to have fair access to education, training and employment opportunities.

6.4 Summary of discussion and key contributions to knowledge

This study has added to the minimal research regarding young people’s experiences of YOSs, providing an insight into what young people valued about the service and how to better support them to achieve desistance. Through a socio-ecological lens, this research explored facilitative features and potential barriers young people may experience when engaging in YOSs, which have significant implications when considering how best to support this vulnerable population.

Interviewing young people whilst they were enrolled in YOSs allowed for their opinions to be captured during the experience. The work within YOSs created a safe and reflective space for young people, which supported a shift in their perspectives, including more consideration around their future and changes to their perception of crime. Contributing factors included online sessions and staff’s non-judgemental approach, which were appreciated by young people in the study.

Young people also experienced personal growth as an outcome of their involvement with YOSs. The flexible approach and multi-disciplinary working utilised within the service contributed to young people having their emotional and well-being needs met during their order. The findings also highlighted staff qualities which contributed to the successful work within YOSs, including being approachable, passionate and non-judgemental. Qualities young people valued within the study.
Findings also highlighted challenges young people experienced during their personal growth. For some young people, talking repetitively about their offence acted as a barrier to their engagement, emphasising the need for creative and practical ways of supporting young people to reflect on their actions. This research has highlighted the importance in gathering young people’s opinions and utilising their voice within the creation of YOS sessions, particularly those involving discussing their offence. Incorporating this will truly embed the person-centred approach intended by the government (SEND COP, 2015).

Challenges within transition were also revealed. Within YOSs, young people receive a continuous level of support and opportunities to access a reflective shared space with professionals. However, there is a lack of continuous and sustained support when they complete their order which is likely to contribute to the high level of reoffending rates. These findings subsequently highlight the requirement for sustained support for young people, including consideration of their community, peer group, educational setting and home life as they transition away from services.

Young people enrolled in YOSs held similar aspirations to their peers, including a misalignment between their future and current situation. These findings highlighted the significance of YOSs’ role in supporting young people to identify meaningful aspirations, their internal and external motivating factors and explicit steps required to reach their goal. Albeit, societal challenges create barriers for this population to access ETE, in contrast to their peers. Reduced opportunities (which is further exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic), limited awareness of young people’s needs and negative attitudes all contribute to young people being NEET following their
engagement in YOSs. This study highlighted the need to move away from a within-young person perspective to identify and acknowledge wider systemic issues when considering why a large part of this population are NEET.

6.5 Limitations of the current study

The purposive sampling strategy may have created limitations within the study. The study relied on the reparation officer within the YOS to share information regarding the study with young people. This could have impacted on young people feeling obliged to participate. While consideration was given to ensure young people were fully informed, gave informed consent prior to participating and were fully aware of my position removed from the YOS (chapter 3), the adults who worked in the YOS were inevitably gatekeepers. Due to the research being conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to visit the YOS building and share information with young people. As such, the reparation officer was chosen to advertise the study, as all young people within YOS have reparation hours as part of their order, and therefore it provided opportunities for all young people who were enrolled at the time to engage in the study.

Young people within the study are a hard-to-reach population, particularly within the context of Covid-19. Due to the limited length of time within the young people’s order, it was not possible to member check the themes. This could have strengthened the credibility of the findings by gathering young people’s reflections of the analysis. However, capturing the voices of young people within a YOS was achieved, while highlighting the complex systems often surrounding this population.
The sample in the study were all male. Although this was reflective of the predominant male demographic within the YOS and YJS, it would have been interesting to explore female’s experiences of YOSs to ascertain if there are any gender differences.

It is important to acknowledge that six young people were interviewed, and the views captured may be different from those of young people who did not participate in the research. The sample size was limited due to the courts being closed during the national lockdowns, subsequently reducing YOS referrals during the pandemic. Conducting the recruitment process at an alternative time, may have produced a wider sample of young people who are enrolled in YOSs. However, the use of IPA promoted an in-depth exploration of the participant’s experiences of the YOS, thus achieving the research aim.

The research was conducted in a YOS in one LA. Although utilising a larger range of YOSs may have offered a wider perspective, little research has been conducted within this area. Therefore, it is important to understand a particular context in-depth prior to looking across LA’s to ascertain its generalisation.

Due to the research being conducted during a pandemic, online interviews were used to ensure the safety of young people in the study. Face-to-face interviews may have provided more affordance within the process, such as capturing bodily cues. However, no in-person field work was allowed at the time of the research. All young people were subsequently working within an online environment. Young people also spoke positively about online working, providing a safe and containing environment.
Conducting the interviews virtually therefore likely contributed to the rich data gathered, with participants speaking openly about their experiences of YOSs.

### 6.6 Future research

Whilst the current study aimed to explore young people’s experiences of YOSs, time constraints of orders prevented follow-up interviews. Future research could work with young people to design and identify the best methods and tools to support them to reflect on their offence. This would help professionals to engage young people within their order and decrease the likelihood of disengagement.

Similarly, future research focusing on working alongside young people to explore the optimum approach to align their long-term and short-term goals would be beneficial. A participatory approach within research would allow young people to be centralised throughout the design and implementation of the study. Within the current study, completion of activities was identified as an important factor in promoting levels of self-esteem from the views of young people. A participatory approach could subsequently be a rewarding and meaningful experience, whilst empowering the views of young people enrolled in YOSs.

A longitudinal study could provide further insight into the psychological and emotional changes young people reported following their engagement in YOSs. Exploration into the longevity of these changes would be insightful to further understand if and how they contribute to young people’s journey towards desistance. Through adopting a longitudinal study, exploration into young people’s life after YOS involvement including; career, aspirations and if they had any further involvement in crime would
contribute to the literature regarding young people’s experiences of YOSs, building on the time element of the PPCT model.

The current study was conducted in one LA, using IPA to explore how young people perceived their experiences at the YOS. However, future research could utilise multiple LAs allowing for a comparison of services offered. Currently, YOSs have flexibility within their service delivery model therefore, exploring what works from the views of young people could provide an insight into the most effective models and interventions, which could be shared nationally.

This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the time constraints of the DEdPsy course, exploration into the impact of the pandemic on this population was not conducted. Future research could explore the impact of this unprecedented time on young people within the context of their social, emotional and mental health. In addition to considering the wider impacts of the pandemic on opportunities available to young people and the influence this could have on them achieving desistance. The use of a socio-ecological lens may support the context being fully explored from young people and professionals within YOSs. Interviewing parents could also add a unique insight into their perceptions of the pandemic on young people’s mental health and career opportunities.

6.7 Implications for Educational Psychology practice

EPs work within multiple system levels surrounding children and young people and therefore implications were considered in relation to Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (2005). Person and process were considered together as they interplay to create
proximal processes. The context surrounding young people was considered, in addition to how young people perceived changes over time within their order at the YOS.

6.7.1 Process and person

The well documented link between negative educational experiences, exclusions and young people entering the YJS (Mori’s, 2004; DfE & MoJ, 2016), signifies the importance of EPs working with vulnerable groups and schools to challenge this cycle.

As acknowledged in the professionals’ interviews, young people often enter the YOS with undiagnosed speech and language or learning needs. EPs should be supporting schools to explore and understand what young people’s behaviour may be communicating and questioning schools’ decisions to exclude children and young people. EPs typically have positive relationships with school staff which allows them to use non-judgemental and curious questions around school exclusions. The rate of exclusion is the third highest for Black Caribbean pupils (DfE, 2021), which is translated to an over representation of this ethnic group in the YJS.

EPs are well placed to support schools in understanding factors which could contribute to the high exclusion rate of Black pupils. For example, having higher behavioural and academic expectations of Black pupils which can translate into higher academic performance and increased opportunities following school. In addition to identifying the function of behaviours, ensuring any speech and language or learning needs have been identified and ensuring behavioural policies are fit for purpose, are all aspects EPs can support schools with.
As highlighted by Jones (2020) transferring behaviour and outreach support from PRUs to mainstream schools could also facilitate a more inclusive educational system. EPs could offer solution circles (Forrest & Pearpoint, 1996) to teachers and YOS staff, as a space to share any concerns and generate joint solutions. Solution circles have been attributed to promoting inclusion in schools (Brown & Henderson, 2012). However, they could also be used in the context of YOSs to help professionals when supporting young people towards desistance. Particularly when considering the complex backgrounds described by professionals within the study.

Young people in the study also emphasised the importance of relationships with staff members in the YOS. They described being listened to, respected and understood which played an integral role in supporting their engagement in YOSs. EPs could increase school staffs’ understanding of the relational needs of children and young people, thus supporting the development of positive relationships and improve engagement in school. This could form a foundation to make positive changes to young people’s school experiences. Tools such as Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) can support this process, something EPs are well placed and skilled to deliver to schools. Offering VIG to children and young people who are at risk of exclusion and enrolled in YOSs could subsequently support teachers to build positive relationships and pupil engagement (Quinn, 2017). Offering supervision to school staff is another role EPs can take, including consultations and drop-in sessions (Dunsmuir, Lang & Leadbetter, 2015).
EPs play an integral role of ensuring children and young people’s views are obtained and listened to, which is in-line with government legislation (Children and Families Act, 2014). Professionals in the study commented on the limited feedback they receive from young people within YOSs. EPs can support YOS staff to use a person-centred approach when collecting feedback from young people. Utilising young people’s words in this process ensures their voices are captured. Using approaches such as the GEM, allowed young people to share their perceptions of YOSs, without being constrained to a set of questions and could be useful in collecting feedback from young people within YOSs. EPs could also support YOS staff in using other approaches such as personal construct psychology (PCP) and scaling to further explore how young people perceive and make sense of their experiences at YOSs. Using person-centred approaches for feedback will also support YOS staff to adapt their practice accordingly, an aspect professionals highlighted as imperative in providing meaningful and individualised support for young people.

Young people in the study discussed a vast array of aspirations they held, which contrasted with the professionals’ opinion. EPs are well placed to support YOS professionals in obtaining young people’s aspirations using a person-centred approach. EPs frequently use MAPS and PATHS to support young people to consider their long-term aspirations and then implement backward planning to create a step by step path to achieving that goal. This would support the realignment of young people’s long-term and short-term goals, explicitly outlining the small achievable steps young people can take towards their aspirations. The flexibility within the tools also allows for adaptations to be made, personalising it for each young person, in addition to exploring their motivations behind their aspirations. Ownership by the young person would be
increased within this process due to the personalisation of the plan, reinforcing their motivation to reach their goals.

Young people in the study spoke of the frustration they felt when asked repetitive questions regarding their offence. Reflective practice is an integral aspect of restorative justice and therefore highlights the importance of a person-centred and creative method being used to ensure it is meaningful for the young person. The high level of speech and language needs within the YJS, highlights the use of a varied and practical approach that may support young people’s access to the intervention. EPs are well-equipped to support YOS professionals within this process. Approaches such as meta-mirroring\(^3\) and narrative psychology could support young people to consider and reflect on their offence in a creative and visual method. EPs can either conduct these with the young person or train and supervise a YOS member of staff to conduct them.

6.7.2 Context

Professionals, including EPs, can play an integral role in challenging educational settings’ perception of young people who are enrolled in YOSs. Sharing research and knowledge around the vulnerabilities of this group can help to challenge any stigma associated with young offenders. Additionally, sharing Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) research with educational institutions can provide a useful framework to develop understanding of the importance of providing positive educational experiences for this

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\(^3\) Using chairs to encourage young people to sit and see other people’s perspective, answering questions of what this person may be thinking or feeling. The first chair is their perspective, then the other chair is someone else’s perspective who was involved in the incident. Lastly, the third chair is an outside perspective. These can be adapted for each individual’s case-adding or subtracting different perspectives.
vulnerable group. Creating this shift could alter young people’s appraisal of past and present events, subsequently supporting young people to think more positively about their futures.

Sharing the work of YOS with schools and ensuring a joined-up approach can support the young person and shift teachers’ perspectives. EPs typically ask about vulnerable groups in their planning meetings with schools, such as LAC, however EPs should also be asking about children and young people who are enrolled in YOSs. These conversations can increase confidence levels within schools when supporting young offenders, in addition to EPs ensuring their needs have been accurately identified and supported. This is even more relevant within the context of Covid-19, showing an increase in inequalities between the socio-economic groups. EPs identifying young people enrolled in YOSs within their planning meeting could be the first step in ensuring this vulnerable group’s needs do not go unmet.

Implementing and evaluating whole-school attachment and trauma informed approaches is an area EPs are frequently supporting schools with (McCluskey et al., 2008). Including aspects of young people’s voices and their journey into offending could show how these approaches are vital for a wide range of young people. They could also develop a non-blame culture within schools that leads to a more inclusive ethos.

6.7.3 Time

Supporting schools and YOSs to consider the time element within a young person’s environment is a crucial role for EPs and other professionals. Considering the
individual within their context over time and adapting input is an essential aspect of effectively supporting this population. This is even more crucial within the context of Covid-19, evaluating the influence this may have on vulnerable children and young people and ensuring within-child perspectives are moved to an interactionist perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Applying psychological theory, EPs can support young people, schools and YOSs through a graduated approach, allowing the time element to be captured and explored. This is pinnacle within the context of YOSs, with professionals describing the changes within young people’s primary need and therefore services are adapted frequently. A similar level of understanding is also required within educational settings, ensuring support is frequently evaluated and adapted to meet the young person’s needs within their current context and time.

6.8 Next steps

This thesis will be presented to the EP and YOS where the research was undertaken. I will discuss with both services how the implications can be utilised to improve the support offered to young people within YOSs and their educational settings.

Additionally, findings will be disseminated to the reparation officer, who has the young people’s email addresses to share the findings with them. This will be a summary of key findings, using clear and concise language. The document will also contain how to contact me for additional information.
6.9 Conclusion

This research interviewed young people who are enrolled in YOSs, exploring their experiences through a socio-ecological lens. Providing a unique insight into young people’s perception and experiences of YOSs whilst also adding to the current literature base. Previously, the views of young people within YOSs have been elicited from one perspective, which often resulted in information being missed. This study aimed to address this gap through exploring young people’s experiences, whilst capturing the complex systems surrounding them which can contribute or disrupt their journey towards desistance.

These findings highlight the supportive nature of YOSs perceived by young people, particularly the importance of creating a reflective space to develop a shift in perspective. The move to online sessions following the Covid-19 pandemic was positively received by young people in the study, creating ease to access services and developing a safe and non-judgemental environment. A hybrid service delivery model could subsequently support young people’s engagement within YOSs.

Personal growth was experienced by young people following their engagement in YOSs. A flexible service delivery, multidisciplinary working and positive staff qualities all contributed to young people experiencing emotional and psychological developments during their court order. This personal growth contributed to young people internalising a non-offending identity, supporting them towards achieving desistance.
These findings highlight the challenges for young people transitioning away from YOSs. Within YOSs young people receive a myriad of support, however there is currently a lack of continuous and sustained support when they complete their order. This discrepancy between the support offered within YOSs and the community is likely to contribute to the high level of reoffending rates across the country. Greater sustained support for this vulnerable population is required for a wider range of young people to achieve desistance.

Comparable to their peers, young people held vast and varied aspirations. A misalignment between their short-term and long-term aspirations was noted, which is also mirrored within adolescents in society. Young people’s and professionals’ accounts have illuminated the current societal failures preventing young people from accessing education, training or employment. These include reduced opportunities and negative attitudes towards young people who have been enrolled in YOSs. Challenges which are likely to be exacerbated due to the reduction of job opportunities following the global pandemic. EPs have a vital role in supporting educational settings to challenge their perceptions around young people enrolled in YOSs and to offer guidance around how to support their needs. The findings from the research highlight further implications for EPs, within the context of the PPCT model.

The limited feedback sought from young people enrolled within YOSs was palpable in the study. To fully deliver a person-centred approach, young people’s voices should be regularly elicited and acted upon to increase professionals’ understanding of young people’s perspectives. Consequently, empowering young people and fundamentally increasing their motivation to engage in services.
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## Appendix 1

**Description of orders given to young people involved or at risk of criminal activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>young people of intervention/order</th>
<th>When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth crime prevention programmes</strong></td>
<td>For young people who are at risk of offending or are engaging in anti-social behaviours. Participation is voluntary. Anyone (schools, professionals etc) can ring the multi-agency service hub (MASH) and ask for involvement from the YOS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Triage</strong></td>
<td>An informal process that means a child and young person will not be prosecuted, given a community resolution or a youth caution. The child or young person is asked to go to YOS appointments but it’s not compulsory. It’s recorded on the police system, but nothing further is done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out of court disposal</strong></td>
<td>For young people who commit low levels of crime and accepts responsibility. There are three types: 1) community resolutions (CR) 2) youth cautions (YC) and 3) youth conditional cautions (YCC). CRs and YCs are voluntary engagement and cannot be enforced. YC is a formal notice that cautions the young person not to reoffend and warns them of the potential consequences of doing so. YCC is similar to a YC but has specific compulsory requirements for young people to engage with YOS for up to three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A referral order</strong></td>
<td>A community sentence, usually given for first time offenders. The young person must attend appointments given through the youth offending service. Referral orders are between 3 and 12 months in length.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth rehabilitation order</strong></td>
<td>The young person has to comply for up to three years- this order will include different elements, such as appointments at the YOS, drug testing, curfews, exclusion (young person can’t go to certain areas), unpaid work etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive Supervision and Surveillance</strong></td>
<td>For persistent offenders, an alternative to custody and is the top-level community sentence or used for young people on bail. This order typically includes an extended activity requirement of between 90 to 180 days, a supervision requirement and a curfew requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On remand</strong></td>
<td>Young people get taken to a secure centre until their hearing at the magistrates’ court. Support from YOS is typically emotional welfare based. YOS workers can’t talk about the offence, if they’ve pled not guilty. Young people are put on remand if they’ve committed a serious offence, it’s thought they won’t turn up to their hearing, they might commit another crime, or if they’ve committed a serious crime in the past. The shortest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial sentence</td>
<td>Young offenders can receive custodial sentences, but they will only be imposed in the most serious cases, such as murder etc. YOS provide support to young people in custody, visiting approximately once a month to ensure the young person’s needs are being met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2
Details of literature search

The following databases were used to conduct a literature review: university library search engine, Web of Science, PsychINFO, Education resource centre, Scopus and British Education Index. The databases were selected for their relevance to education, psychology and social sciences. Search terms such as ‘youth offending services’, ‘engagement AND youth offending services’ and ‘young OR youth offenders AND aspirations’ were used amongst literature from the United Kingdom from January 2000, as this was when youth offending services became operationalised nationally. Whereas, international and UK literature were included amongst other researched areas such as ‘adverse childhood experiences’. Following this initial search, additional inquiry took place by perusing the reference lists of relevant articles, to explore the sources of information used by their authors.

Websites such as the Youth Justice Board and Department for Education were also explored to ensure relevant legislation and statistics were included.
Appendix 3
Interview schedule for professionals

Introduction:

- Explain purpose of interview, importance of their views and experiences, right to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity
- Check participant is still happy to participate, if yes, sign consent form
- Ask if participant has any questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of professional</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to find out more about the youth offending service and how young people are</td>
<td>Do you work directly with the young people? In what capacity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supported. First of all, can you tell me a little bit about your role within the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>youth offending service?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How long have you been in this role?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you tell me about other professionals that you work with in relation to</td>
<td>How frequently? Do you have joint goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supporting young people within the YOS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the biggest challenges within your role?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of YOS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do children and young people get referred to the service?</td>
<td>Difference between given a statutory order or young person being at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>risk of offending?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the pathway out of the YOS?</td>
<td>How long are young people typically supported for by YOSs? Do they access any support once they leave the service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What typically happens when the young person turns 18-years old?</td>
<td>Do they access another service? Handover/transition to other service?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Can you please describe the profile of young people that you typically work with? | Age, gender, background, SEN/EHCP, type of order 
What kinds of experiences have they had?

What educational provisions do the young people access alongside YOSs? | How is their time split between provisions and YOS? 
If they have an EHCP, who takes control of their plan? 
Does the YOS run any educational lessons/activities itself?

Can you tell me of any facilitators or supporting factors that have helped young people to engage with YOSs? | Relationships with adults, aspirations, moving away from peer groups etc.

Can you tell me of any barriers young people face which prevent them from engaging with YOSs? | Home environment, school experiences, peer groups etc

Implications of YOSs

What are the aspirations of the young people that you work with? | How do you elicit the young people’s aspirations?

What do young people typically go on to do after they leave the YOS? | Training, employment, education etc.

How do young people feel about the support they receive from YOSs? | How do you know this?

What impact do you think the YOS has had on supporting young people to move away from offending behaviour? | How do you know this?

Closing
Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you taking time out of your day for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know? Just to finish, I would like to let you know what the next steps are. I will transcribe the interview and send you a copy to read and check over. Feel free to make any amendments you wish and then return the transcript back to me. I will then analyse and aggregate the information from this interview and others I am conducting to produce a report. Any information you provide will be confidential and anonymised.

Thank you again for your time today.
Appendix 4

Information sheet and consent form for professionals

An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services. Implications to educational psychology practice.

January 2020 to July 2021

Information sheet

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Zoe Hancock and I’m currently a trainee educational, child and adolescent psychologist at UCL, Institute of Education. I am inviting you to take part in my research project, ‘An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services. Implications to educational psychology practice’.

Why is this research being conducted?

The project will consist of two main phases: the aim of the first phase is to find out more about the context of the youth offending service, as well as exploring how professionals support young people within the service. The second phase will explore the experiences of young people who are engaging with a youth offending service.

This information sheet will try to answer any questions you may have, but please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Who will take part in the study?

In the first phase of the study, professionals who work with the youth offending service will be asked if they would like to participate.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

By agreeing to take part in the research you would be agreeing to be interviewed to help me gain an understanding of the context of the youth offending service and how young people are supported. The interviews will be recorded via audio only and later transcribed. Interviews will last approximately 40 minutes.

What questions will be asked?

Questions will focus on the context of the youth offending service, young people who are involved with the service and your role within the service.

Will anyone know I’ve been involved?

Any information provided will be held securely and kept anonymous. Data will be destroyed on full completion of the research. You can withdraw at any time by contacting the researcher up until August 2020. On completion of the research, a summary will be provided to individuals who participated in the study and the youth offending service.
Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you if you choose to participate in the research. I hope that you choose to be involved and find it to be a valuable and positive experience to share your experiences of the youth offending service.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This ‘local’ privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our ‘general’ privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the ‘local’ and ‘general’ privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: ‘Public task’ for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to: z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, please contact me on z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee

An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services. Implications to educational psychology practice.

January 2020 to July 2021
If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk.

Yes

No

I have read and understood the information sheet about the research. [ ] [ ]

I am happy to take part in the interview. [ ] [ ]

I am happy for the interview to be recorded. [ ] [ ]

I understand that if any of my words are used in reports, they will not be attributed to me and that all data will remain anonymous. [ ] [ ]

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and that if I choose to do this, none of my data will be used. [ ] [ ]

I understand that I can contact Zoe Hancock at any time if I have any questions about the research. [ ] [ ]

I understand the results will be shared with me when the research is finished. [ ] [ ]

Name ______________________

Signed _____________________                Date __________
Appendix 5
Copy of Zara’s interview transcript with initial codes

I: Okay, so first things, can you tell me a little bit about your role?

P: Yeah, so I’m the gang and sexual violence group worker. So, mainly any young person that comes into YOT, I work with them in terms of their offences, looking at factors contributing to their offence, why they did what they did.

I: Yeah.

P: How we can just realign them to a path where they don’t have to reoffend again, because again, given the environment they live in, they’re always exposed to violence here and there. So, how do you make that conscious decision to be like ‘Right, this is where I need to do something that brings me happiness as well, but doesn’t put me in this position where it puts me at risk or prison, you know’.

I: yeah, and is that on a one to one basis or a group?

P: So we have groups, so depending on your offence, erm you get tailored or we get allocated to certain groups, so if you’ve got a possession, so you’ve got a knife crime prevention programme, if you’ve got a sexual offence and explicit, we look around consent and sexual offending behaviour. So normally with the sexual offences we tend to do one on one because it is quite a sensitive area to do as a group, but most of the knife crime alternative route programme, um we’ve got YCR which is ‘Youth Conflict Resolution’ so that’s to do with how to deal with conflict in schools or at home or what not, on the roads. They have ‘Alternative Road’, I just said that, so goals and values Goals into why we did what we did and our own goals to make sure that we don’t get back into those habits. Erm and one last one ‘Wipers’ as well so wipers is this a business enterprise programmes so if, you know, just gaining skills in regard to businesses and if you want to have your own business, how you can go best about it. So normally they typically range from like two to five young people, that’s if they come, because again, they come in quite resistant anyways. Erm but sometimes you can do one on one basis based on their needs if they have any learning difficulties or anger management. Or if we feel like, we have one young person who is quite, he puts on a show for an audience, So that wouldn’t be the best environment, groups wouldn’t be the best environment, we do one-on-one with him. So, it varies in size dependent on the offence and depending on the young person themselves.

I: Okay.

P: And how long would you work with them for?

I: So, erm normally groups are, so dependent on what groups it is, three to four weeks, sometimes, so the ones which are four weeks are the ‘Smack programme’ so it’s, that’s emotional regulation. And yeah, ARP which is also four weeks and the rest are about three weeks. But again, it depends on the needs. If we feel like they need more than we will do one on one sessions. Erm some young people get put on three groups anyway so they do
three weeks with us, and then they'll be put on to the next one, next couple of weeks later
so, yeah

I: Okay. And you said they get to them get referred to service and then how is it decided they
need support from your...

P: Groups?

I: Yeah

P: So based on their case manager because obviously the case manager sees them on a
regular basis, but ideally majority of young people who do come in, are eligible for groups
because we are now kind of looking into your offence as to why you did that?

I: Yeah

P: Just, more awareness of the changes in the local area so, more or less. The case manager
will refer them through CVYI, and it comes up on our referral, and then we accept it on
service, once we screen them.

I: Yeah

P: So we do a screening, yeah, we screen them and see if they're accepted on service, if it's
necessary so we have one young person who he has, he, he had a lot of issues regarding
family dynamics, his emotional and mental well-being was just at a low,

I: Yeah

P: So we were like 'okay we can't work with him yet until that is addressed because he
won't be able to process, anything'. So, we do a screening before we know whether we can
work with them.

I: Yeah, I see. And then you prioritise what's needed?

P: Yeah definitely

I: Okay and then do you work with other professionals as well?

P: Yeah, so, um, yeah so depending again on the needs of the young person so we work
with so I did a girls group yesterday so I work with, maybe Jane, if I've something's popped
up in our session that if they have any relationship issues or, I feel like this is a problem, we
should address that. Then I'll speak with Jane, or the clinical psychologist, Nancy.

I: Yeah

P: Who does have good input in terms of the groups as well, erm case managers, all the
time, we're always reiterating back with case managers.
I: Yeah

P: In terms of vulnerabilities and how they've been and just, just updating with a lot of information regarding the young person and their engagement in groups.

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah, even victim restorative justice as well so the victim workers will do work with them, so it kind of varies depending on, you know, the young person themselves.

I: So you just kind of see what needs are.

P: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, and like particularly with one young person because he is very vulnerable so he has a safe worker so I tend to talk with the safe worker to see what works, what's been, what we've done? What's been going well? What hasn't been? What do you think is the best approach? So I guess it depends on the professional itself.

I: Yeah

P: Really and truly, if it's in the service or just outside the service, yeah, just the best way to work around the young person.

I: One thing I've noticed is this is such a huge team here.

P: Yeah, yeah

I: And everyone's kind of based here, is that right?

P: Most people yeah basically yeah, yes so you just walk around the office and it go and speak to that person, so yeah, it's pretty good (laughs)

I: And how long you been doing that job?

P: Erm I've only been here since October, I've only just started. Yeah. I've been here since October yeah, I've just finished from uni and got into this role because I've lived in my whole life

I: Yeah

P: So again I've seen how things have changed drastically in, given the violence and knife crime and it's just, it's just gotten worse over time. Yeah, so it's just a matter of like, how can I best help?

I: Yeah.

P: In the community that I live in, so yeah
I: And what is the hardest thing about your job? What challenges do you face?

P: Oh, I think, do you know what it is? I think, is my personal thing is just that you do build a relationship with the young person, and it's like, I don't know if I have attachment issues, that when they do finish with our groups, it's like, okay, they finished with our order, how do I know that everything that I've, that they've learned during this time, they able to apply it into their life or their experiences? Because it's like, they go back into that, so when they're here they're safe and they've learned something, but when they go back into the community, it's just like right, I'm back into the same area, environment that, you know, led me to offend so how do I know, so I think it's, just that problem is for me, it's just that okay, am I certain that they managed to engage and just make that change, because some of them in their mind they do want to change and they've understood they've learned new things of what not, they don't see things from this perspective and what not, but when in that situation can they process, can they really tap into that awareness? That okay, right you know, so I think that's the one thing I don't think resistance from young people is my, like my problem either, because yeah they all come in resistant anyway regardless you know, but then you do have that one odd like, they know they're gonna reoffend again so they know this isn't going to help me kind of thing.

I: Yeah

P: So, it's just the consistency so it's having to, because every day I come into work knowing that right I have to do a different approach, so you have a content. So yesterday, I had a whole content like a whole session planned for the girls.

I: Yeah

P: And I realised okay this isn't working. So, I had to rejigger it on the spot kind of thing, so every day is kind of like, I have to think creatively how to tap into that young person.

I: Yeah

P: When you're in groups you have different personalities, so you have to cater for those different you know individuals, so it's just figuring out how to tie it all back, it's quite chaotic, it does, it does get quite, quite, chaotic. So it's just knowing how to tailor to each individual, yeah, in that environment.

I: Do you run the groups by yourself?

P: So, I have my boss as well, who normally works with me, so particularly again with the guy with the programmes mostly boys that come in and the girls are more on prevention, so you have those who are on a court order, post court and those who don't just get a warning basically, so like a YCC.

I: Okay
P: Caution, or just triage, so it’s not anything too serious.

I: Yeah.

P: So, we have the girls that I just do because if the girls if they were to have a guy, they would kick him out! They definitely would so um, so yeah so I run it by myself, not myself, I have another worker, she’s a student social worker who works with me and does it, but me my, my boss we’re in the hands of each other in the groups, yeah, and whatnot.

I: And does it make a difference what kind of order or triage or whatever it is for your group or do they have the same kind of pathway within your....

P: Erm, So, what we tend to do, we don’t mix those who are post court and those who are prevention or triage.

I: Yeah,

P: Because again, that, what the funny thing is, those who are on prevention, they’re a bit more, they’re more likely to come to sessions, they’re not as resistant, because again it’s a bit of a like, ‘oh my gosh, I’m at YOS’, kind of thing, and it’s nothing too serious like their offence aren’t too serious and I haven’t been to court so the realities of it isn’t really.

I: Yeah

P: But for those who are in the erm in post court, or referral orders or YIRO, Youth Informed referral order, again they come a bit more, so we don’t tend to mix them because it’s just, it’ll be yeah, it won’t make sense.

I: Yeah

P: Kind of thing, so that needs to be taken into account

I: I see, do you run similar for each...

P: Programmes yeah, well obviously,

I: Whatever their need...

P: Yeah, well, yeah, I think that with the prevention session we tend to have a generic prevention session, but erm we’ll kind of, we’re going to re-jig that because some of the young people when they come in with, who are in prevention and different completely different offences, like we have one boy who stole a Boris bike, then you have one boy who brought a weapon to school and he was lucky to get prevention, because normally you get a post court, so you get very different offences, and it’s just like okay, so we need to kind of re-jig the prevention programme so they don’t really go on to the post court, so knife crime and ARP or whatnot. We have just a generic prevention programme for them, even with the girls, this is a pilot study, like pilot group sessions I’ve started it last two weeks ago. Yeah, so...
It's trying to find ways into how we can work with prevention, particularly with girls because there isn't enough spaces for girls who are in, you know, crime and... Support for girls is limited.

P: and are gang affiliated, so it's just trying to create that space for them to speak their narrative and experiences, ya know, and seeing how they navigate in the community, and whatnot, so it depends like with prevention, it's completely separate to what they do, what the post court young people do.

I: Yeah, that's interesting, yeah and what type of people do you typically work with like, age, gender?

P: Majority are boys.

I: Yeah

P: Majority are boys erm around, I would say, 13 to 16, no 13 to 17 you normally get, normally 13-17, you do get a lot of, most of them don't even look their age or anything, most of them do look a lot older but between 13-16. The girls you don't get a lot of girls that come through, and most of the girls well, I've got six girls in the prevention, so I only have a like three girls that are in post court, so it's quite rare, we don't really get a lot of girls but I think that's generally because there again, there isn't a space or not actually actively looking at 'okay we're not focusing on girls who are on streets who are part of violence' because they are the carriers of violence if anything and if anything when girls are in serious violence, they are the most notorious ones if anything. So, what we tend to miss out is that we're too busy bagging the boys, we'll kind of get the boys in, but there are girls who are on the streets who are at the age, are at risk and whatnot. So I, I don't think it's a representation of the girls we get here, is a representation of how many girls who are you know, on the street who are you know, offending and whatnot, but majority that we do get majority are African Caribbean that we do come in that come in here, that we do get, actually majority are ethnic minorities, rather that we do get here, but mainly boys?

I: Yeah, I think it's amazing you've got your girl prevention group

P: Yeah, it's good it's, yeah, it's good. (laughs) The first session was really good because we managed to kind of gauge their needs. Ideally we want them to kind of lead it themselves because it's only for them so rather than me getting at them, it's an experience for all of us.

I: Yeah

P: And to learn you and learn me. But yesterday we did a, we tried to go very abstract way in terms of 'had a stencil girl on the floor, and it was like 'what get's us up in the morning?' Our feet- So our goals and our values and what keeps us up at night? and our heads, so our stresses, and how do you feel the stress in our body so we try to go very abstract way and putting things on paper, and seeing this is our typical girl in...
how we could find toolkits or just coping mechanisms to kind of help her. But, yeah, it kind of it went pretty good but managed to gauge, most of it. But again, the needs, like some of them are very, their attention is everywhere in terms of, like, because they know to each other as well so they’re talking about the different fights and things that they’re part of and whatnot. And what we do try and get them to do is challenge each other’s views, but funny enough they do tend to be on the same level.

I: Yeah

P: They all kind of agree like, ‘yeah, I would beat her up’, ‘yeah, I would smack her in the face’, kind of thing, so it’s just like right, that’s not what we want to do kind of thing (laughs) so it’s going pretty well like some, with these groups some things won’t always go the way you want it to go so it’s just a matter of try and making it person centred but still very generic in a way, you know, but again, you know, take into account that they’ve also experienced their trauma. So sometimes their trauma has led them to be in this in this position. So how do we address that trauma? How do it, how do you address, how they’re feeling and ‘cause obviously with trauma kind of misconstrued or kind of changes your perception of how you approach situations you know so some girls who may have maybe witnessed a murder all those who have always been who their family are pro-criminals. That’s their norm.

I: Yeah

P: So if anything when it comes to someone you or someone gets on to me I’m definitely going to react back because I’m not an idiot. That’s their, that’s their norm kind of thing, so it’s just a matter of having to change that. Yess role to change it’s negative norms.

I: Yeah

P: And just empowering them as individuals, Students role to empower up.

I: Absolutely, and I was gonna ask actually, what do you think is a supporting factor that helps them to engage with services like your groups?

P: um, I think it’s down to the facilitators themselves, like in terms of being able to relate like these kids can see right through you, like if you’re chatting rubbish at them then they know for a fact, they completely turn off kind of thing. So, it’s kind of not coming down to their level obviously still having those boundaries in place, importance of being truthful to engage up.

I: Yeah

P: But still humanising them as well so not seeing them as offenders but as young people who have just taken a different route. Basically, you know, and then, because obviously with me I’m not, I’m not as old, I’m practically the same age as them anyway so I can kind of relate to their experiences. So again, it’s just trying to be relatable um keeping it real, that’s the most thing that they tend to say ‘just keep it real with me’ because again they can see right through it.
I: Yeah

P: And just the fact that you care. I think that's just the main base of it because obviously you come in here, you don't want to come here, kind of thing and you just have someone that's talking to you, and it's like, I know for me, I always say it's easier said than done, but you know it's all about us working together so it's again humanising their experiences as well as mine, and seeing how we can find the middle ground for it. Generally the consistency, like, I, there was some young people that are still my friends who have come to the YOS and it was like they just know that, they don't care and they're just trying to get their job done, kind of thing, but it's about you taking the extra mile to make sure that at least you provide an alternative narrative for them and they can foresee that, that there is life better than, you know offending, kind of thing.

I: Yeah

P: So, it's just to humanise their experiences really.

I: Yeah that's great. Um how about barriers, what barriers do they face that prevents them from engaging?

P: Ah barriers, I think, with when it comes to even offending, just in general, I think is what they experienced out there so again when they come here. It's all well and said and done but the reality is I still have to go to school and still face that particular individual,

I: Yeah

P: I still have to go home to my mum, I still have to walk down that particular street. You know so it's, again it's just those barriers and they don't foresee an alternative narrative that it's like, do you know what, I feel like I have all these goals I have all these ambitions

I: But I don't really see them going anywhere, I don't see myself getting any closer to it because of the position that I'm in. So, again, it's just that kind of wall they put up anyways, I don't really see myself, elevating or whatnot, in school. I don't like school but I have to go to school kind of thing, and I'm gonna act out so I don't go to school. So, it's just some of the factors in their life that they can't foresee as you know, bringing anything, any happiness towards them if anything so I think is ideally that, but then again it's all about trying to find means for their life. So for some kids didn't like school, but they've always wanted to do hair and beauty for example. So how does that bring happiness? Making that the priority and then also you have to do, so and so and so, because there's always going to be times where you're going to, there's always going to be someone you don't like, there's always places you're not gonna be at, or they're not going to be accepted and whatnot so it can't just be working on that, yeah.
I: Definitely, and then, what kind of aspirations do young people have? I don't know if it's something you cover in your groups? You mentioned hair and beauty.

P: Yeah so a lot of them, yeah hair and beauty, some of them want to lawyers, so it's funny because if you're going to be a lawyer, you need to sort this out kind of thing (laughs). So yeah, a lot of them are into sporting activities, so footballers, um basketballers, there's a lot that want to do businesses. So, they do have, yeah they do have, you know, dreams and whatnot, some of them just don't see it, you know, some of them it's just like the road has just been their life, and in particular like, if that's all you're seeing it becomes your norm so for some of them it's like, they just want to make money, and that's the, that's the problem with most the young people here 'I just want to make money', their money making culture, given with social media as well, playing into their minds and whatnot. So, it's just the wealth aspects, so the easy money phenomena just kind of attracts them, so it's like anything to get easy money, I will deal with the consequences later. But, you know, the easy way and whatnot.

I: That's fair enough, it's quite scary isn't it?

P: Yeah, so it is.

I: Yeah.

P: You by all means possible like, you know, one young person he, he did his offence because he was just getting money. Now he's realised 'okay I shouldn't have done that'. So, I'm now looking at apprenticeship, he's going to school. That's good, that all well but let's say if stuff, you know, don't go your way. What then happens? What Plan B do you have? Not saying you have to have a plan B, but just to know that we know, you won't relax back into the offence again, so well, if my mum isn't around and my dad isn't around, and I lose my job, of course I'm gonna go back into it. So is that right? This is exactly the problem.

I: Yeah.

P: So yeah the easy money phenomena is really...

I: Yeah, and do you know what a lot of them go on to do?

P: Yeah. So again, just moving like drugs, the rare case you get heroin, but mostly just weed. Some of them again county lines as well so they travel out. Robbery is a different alternative but robbery as well. What else do we get? Knife point robbery and possession.

I: Yeah, a bit of everything.

P: Everything. I think most of it for the girls is more violence and assault, um theft, really petty stuff, but the boys a bit more, possession of cannabis, supply and intent, and whatnot, weapons and stuff like that.
P: Yeah. Do you ever hear about that the success stories about when they leave the youth offending service and what they kind of go on to do?

I: I haven't been here long enough but yeah but um, based on something some kids have you know eventually, you know done some yeah some change in their lives. I think must have been like a wake up call for them. So, but I'm hoping with some of the kids I'm working with, I'll hear their success stories in the next couple of months, hopefully yeah. Yeah, I'm hoping, yeah I'm hoping, that we've had we've had one young person who's come back, unfortunately. Um but, again, I think it's just down to him as an individual, how long his order was because sometimes the one problem I have is that when you look at a young person's um offence history it's just so great that it's inevitable that they're going to hurt someone. They're gonna stab someone, that that's the reality of it. They got possession upon possession upon possession and they put on an order and it's kind of like the same thing, again and again and again, and then it's a matter of, I think the most important part is the support after the order. That's the problem, because it's like okay I've done what I need to do, I just wanted to get my attendance and go, yeah, kind of thing and it's like I'll go back into the same environment and whatnot. And they do their thing again.

I: Yeah

P: Because they think they won't get caught the next time if anything you know so then we've had one young person who has... countless, countless offences! And again, I guess it's based on the court decisions and whatnot. And obviously having hoping the young person - that they will change but some of them just don't want to. The road is their lifestyle and then you know they find themselves back in it again yeah, or they've killed someone who you know, or they have been killed. So, yeah.

I: After, after do they have any support?

P: Right now, so one of the workers, she's put up a mentoring programme. So, I think the cut-off point was when they have three months before, three months before their order finishes they get given the mentor, and hopefully that should help but I think she's kind of opened it up to everybody to get a mentor, so the mentoring programme has definitely been something that will help them after their order, so that's really good. Yeah, I have some ideas in mind, to kind of hopefully that there is support outside and yeah I think, again, the schools are very important in terms of how the schools can accommodate these young people, because school just see them as difficult and expel them and send them to the unit and you have you know a whole place of just young kids who are just in one area, you know. So, again, working with schools, my boss is starting to do that now, he's working with schools. In terms of, because it starts in the school for most of them anyway so hopefully those are, the mentoring and working with schools.

I: Yeah

P: Are support enough
I: What kind of educational provisions do they attend, alongside the youth offending services?

P: Um, so, some of the kids are NEET. So, if there NEET um we have Works Works, so that's referrals, so if they want to get into jobs or apprenticeship programmes. They work with the two workers, _____ and _____, I think, so they do work with Works Works and do that. Um also, the Wipers as well so if you're not in education, you will do Wipers, so again that's about skills in terms of,

I: Wipers?

P: Wipers is, I don't think it stands for anything but it's also part of our group so so in terms of the business enterprise course and it's accredited, so it's an eight-week course, once you finish it you get a certificate of like you know that you've managed, know how to to build a business, entrepreneurship, all these skills regarding business and working and whatnot. But yeah, so what else, there is the Wipers programme, Works works um and, I don't think there's any education, we have a psychologist in case in terms of those who have learning difficulties or whatnot, so they can refer to that.  

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah. But yeah, an educational psychologist is around so she's able to obviously work with those who have learning difficulties and whatnot but again, a lot of the young people who come they do have educational difficulties, they're SEN and whatnot so navigating around school was quite hard, difficult. I think it's down the case managers to be working closely with the schools, to make sure that they receive the best learning, if possible, but even dependent on the individual so for myself, some young people who come in and they have interests in, so go, I might have connected with them so that they'd be able to get into, some of them like school or college so we can find ways to to do some work experience here and so I guess it depends on yourself and how far you're willing to go in terms of, you know, providing that, that individual differences with YO staff.

I: and do you know how the young people feel about the support they get from the youth offending service?

P: It varies, it varies, (laughs) like some may feel supported and some, again, just come resistant.

I: Difficult in YO's perception of YO.

P: You know, some just don't like the work that they're working with, they want to change it. So um, it depends, but some of them, they know that it is necessary and needed for them, they just don't want to do the work. I know that you can do something better with your Monday or Tuesday evening, but unfortunately you're here, you know, but I guess it depends on the worker themselves in terms of building that boundary and that relationship with the young person and just to come to consensus that we're here to, I'm here to work with you, rather than working at you and for you sort of thing. And obviously, as time

P: Working collaboratively with the YP.

I: Yes is perceived as work.
progresses, I'm sure those barriers tend to come down and actually feel that okay do know what? they genuinely care. 

I: Yeah

P: Because it's just it's bigger than just working in here, it's everything regarding their, you know, their life and their experiences so yeah I guess, I think it depends on the worker itself and how receptive, they are because, yeah, when you see them in the courtroom, and they're, you know, all jittery and nervous and whatnot but when they come in here, it's just that they don't do the work, but again it's just that consistency, I believe.

I: So, if they're on a court order, they have to attend the intervention? So, whatever they've been given?

P: Yeah so they have to so, um based on the conditions of their order they have to attend to all appointment given and if they do breach it, it's a warning, I think they get two breaches or three and then it gets taken to you'd have a failure to comply panel and whatnot and then it gets taken to court and it's a breach and whatnot, of your order. So they have to, if you're on a court order, you have to take all your appointments. Unless you provide sufficient evidence as to why you didn't come in if you ill you need doctors note, kind of thing. Yeah, to those extents you can't just say 'I didn't want to come in'.

I: Yeah

P: If there's traffic, you need to be calling to let us know why you're gonna be late. There's a 15-minute mark as well so if you come after 15 minutes you might be turned away. If, for example, I had one young person, what was their, I can't remember what their excuse was, so they had this very, that they had to comply with, even with certain rules and if they're failing to engage, if they're disruptive, um if they leave early because they don't do the work, that is also a breach of your order as well because you're supposed to, you're supposed to get something out of it you know? It's supposed to be reflection, so when you go back into court to see whether your order should be extended or if you should be let go early because normally if you've been attending with good behaviour and your case manager, the workers will like, you can get an early revocation. So you can come off your order three months early, six months early and whatnot, if we don't think your risk yourself or others. So yeah some young people are eligible for that, some if they breach, they get three months added, or six months added or whatnot.

I: I see, so each order will have a length of time, that's how it's...

P: A length of time yeah. So I think on the CVVJ you have 'How likely are they are to reoffend?'. How likely are they a risk to themselves and others? and that will depend on how long they give, whether it's a three months or six months or whatnot. And then again, once you go into court, they look at what you've done, if you've breached, have you been attending? And then okay, you can be let me let go, or whether so, for example if you fell in within your order.
I: Yeah

P: If you offend within your order, that will be straight into court. Yes, a you know, a fail to comply with your order, so again, that could be an extended, or worst-case scenario custody or whatever. So, it depends.

I: I see and then with the preventative route, do they have to turn up to their appointments on that route?

P: Umm, yeah, like they have to like, most likely, yeah they have to but it's not as as grave as though who are court order, if they don't turn up, they don't turn up, kind of thing, because they're just on a prevention, um, but I think it depends on their offence but they attend anyways those on prevention attend, but it's all down to case managers and reiterating that information back to the young people but the prevention sessions, they attend. Yeah, they're, they're more likely to attend if anything, than the court order ones. I don't know why that is, I'm trying to figure out 'cause yeah but, yeah

I: Thank you, that was so useful. Is there anything that I've missed, that you think is important for me to know?

P: Umm I dunno, I'm not too sure. I just think, again, it's just in terms of, again, it's just with the worker and in terms of how we are receptive to the young person and understanding their experiences in here and outside in the community and whatnot. Because always like to believe that it's for some kids, it's a phase where they do tend to, you know, kind of you offend here and there and kind of take a different route, and friends that you associate yourself with and hopefully you step out of that phase and some of them just don't. Unfortunately, and they find themselves past 18, trying to tell them, right, you offended, I always tell them like, the fact that you're this age, you've offended, and you've been caught right now, I guess it's good because you've been given a second chance. When you're 18 what happens? You would go to jail, kind of thing, so it's that reality, you know, it's hitting them with the realities but taking a very trauma informed approach. And again, kind of explore their experiences as to what's led you up to here? What would stop you from, you know, taking a different route? Um how can we best help you? What are your needs? And whatnot. It's just creating that safe space for them to kind of just speak their narrative really.

I: Brilliant, thank you very much.
Appendix 6

Information sheet and consent form for young people

An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services. Implications to educational psychology practice.

January 2020 to July 2021

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Zoe Hancock and I am inviting you to take part in my research project. I’m training to be an educational psychologist, which means that I work with schools, parents and children and young people to support their learning and help make people happier.

This leaflet will try to answer any questions you may have but if you can anymore please contact me on the email address at the bottom of the page.

Why are we doing this research?

I want to explore the experiences of young people who are engaging with Youth Offending Services (YOS). I am hoping this research will provide young people with a platform to share their experiences and feel that they are helping others by developing professionals’ understanding of the young people’s perspectives they work with.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

I will meet with you either in person or online via Microsoft Teams, whichever you prefer. I will ask you about your experiences of engaging with youth offending services and about your goals in life. We will engage in some drawing activities and you can choose how you answer questions by either talking, typing (if online) or drawing. The interviews will be audio recorded and you can choose not to answer any questions and also stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

The time you spend in the interview will be used as part of your reparation hours at the youth offending service.

Will anyone know we’ve been involved?

Any information provided will be held securely and kept anonymous (you will be given a pretend name to keep you identify secret). Data will be destroyed on full completion of the research. You can withdraw at any time by contacting me up until January 2021 without giving a reason.

Are there times when my information cannot be kept confidential?

If you tell me anything that could put someone’s or your safety at risk, then I may have to share that with others to keep you or others’ safe. I will talk to you first if this is the case. To
protect your identify in my research I will give you a made up name so others cannot recognise what you have said.

Do I have to take part?

No, you don’t have to take part. It’s up to you to decide. You are free to stop doing to research at any time and this won’t affect any work you are doing with YOS.

What will happen to the findings from the study?

I will write it up as part of my course. I will also share it with YOS so they can hear about young people’s experiences. I might also share the findings with other professionals working with young people. I also want to tell you about what I write if you would like. We can decide how you would like to know about the findings such as me explaining them to you or I could send them to you.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This ‘local’ privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our ‘general’ privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the ‘local’ and ‘general’ privacy notices.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your personal data are: ‘Public task’ for personal data.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you would like to take part, please complete the following consent form and return to: z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, please contact me on z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee
An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services. Implications to educational psychology practice.

January 2020 to July 2021

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk.

I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I am happy to take part in the interview.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I am happy for the interview to be recorded.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that if any of my words are you in reports, a pretend name will be used, and no one will know who it is.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and that If I choose to do this, none of my data will be used.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that I can contact Zoe Hancock at any time if I have any questions about the research.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand the results will be shared with me when the research is finished.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

Name ___________________________  Age _____

Gender: F / M / Prefer not to answer

Signed __________________________  Date _________
Appendix 7
Consent form for parents/carers

An exploratory study of young people’s experiences of engaging with youth offending services. Implications to educational psychology practice.

January 2020 to July 2021

If you are happy for your child to participate, please complete this consent form and return to z.hancock@ucl.ac.uk

Yes  No

I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.

I am happy for my child to be interviewed should they give consent.

I am happy for the interviews to be audio recorded, if my child gives their consent.

I understand that if any of my child’s words are used in reports, all data will be anonymous.

I understand that my child can withdraw from the project at any time and that if they choose to do this, none of their data will be used.

I understand that I can contact Zoe Hancock at any time.

I understand that the results will be shared with me when the research is finished.

Name __________________________

Name of young person: __________________________ Age ______

Gender: F / M / Prefer not to answer

Any known special educational needs or disabilities? Y/N (if yes, please give brief details below)

__________________________________________________________________________

Signed __________________________ Date __________
Appendix 8
Interview schedule for young people

Introduction:

- Explain purpose of interview, importance of their views and experiences, right to withdraw (either verbally or by pressing the ‘raise hand’ button in Microsoft teams), confidentiality and anonymity
- Read the consent form to the participant and if they are still happy to participate, sign consent form (or if previously signed, start the interview)
- Ask if participant has any questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Prompt/ follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?</td>
<td>What kind of things do you like to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been involved with the youth offending service?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often are you required to come to the YOS?</td>
<td>What support do you currently receive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced any big changes this year?</td>
<td>In relation to COVID-19 or changes that have happened in your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have there been any changes in YOSs’ support since COVID-19?</td>
<td>Is anything different? Are you meeting with staff online or in person at the moment? Have you meetings with professionals changed in any way?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiences of YOS

Grid elaboration method (GEM; Joffe & Elsey, 2014):

I am interested in what you associate with your experiences of the youth offending service. So, I’ve divided the page into four and I was hoping you could tell me four things you think of when you hear “youth offending service?” You can either write, draw or tell me your answer. Your answer can be anything, there is no wrong answer.

1. 2.

3. 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>You wrote/drew …., can you tell me a little bit more about that? (for all four answers)</strong></th>
<th><strong>You mentioned… what do you mean by that? What else…</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On this scale, with 1 being the worst it could be and 10 being the best it could be, where would you rate your experience at the youth offending service at the moment? (See appendix A for scale)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Follow with questions such as.. You said a 5, why is it a 5 and not a 4? And what makes it a 5 and not a 6? What would make it go up by one point?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where would you have placed the YOS on the scale before lockdown?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What’s changed?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where would you like your experience at YOS to be on the scale?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Follow up questions such as- What could be put into place to help you get to a 7… (for example)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aspirations**

**Potential Follow up questions:**
- What will you notice; what else; what else; what else?
- What will you see?
- What will be different?
- What will other people notice about you?
- What would you be doing differently then?
- What will you see yourself and others around you doing differently that will show the change?
- What do you think other people will see you doing differently?

**Prompts:**
- Why is that important to you?
- What does X give you?
- Where would you be living?
- What would you be doing? With who? What would you be doing in your spare time?
- What job would you be doing?
- What made you choose X as a profession?
- Have you had experience in that sector?

**Follow up questions such as:**
- What makes it not lower?/ What makes it a 4 and not a 3?
- What or who has helped you to reach a 4?
- What makes it a 4 and not a 5?
- What would make it go up by one point?
If you could tell your younger self something, it can be anything, what would you say?

Closing

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you taking time out of your day for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?

Just to finish, I would like to let you know what the next steps are. I will transcribe the interview and send you a copy to read and check over. Feel free to make any amendments you wish and then return the transcript back to me. I will then analyse the information from this interview and others I am conducting to produce a report. Any information you provide will be confidential and anonymised.

Thank you again for speaking with me today.

Scale prompt

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

😊😊
In 10 years’ time…
Appendix 9
Young person's interview transcript

Interview 1: YP

I: Do you have any questions for me before we start?

P: Not really no.

I: Awesome. Well, if you have any, as we go along just shout them out. No problem.

P: Alright

I: Okay, so first of all, erm can you just tell me a little bit about yourself, what kind of things do you like to do?

P: I like to, erm, I like erm I like going out, sport, drama, creative work, erm I like music, like rapping a little bit erm...

I: That's awesome.

P: Yeah, I'm very like energetic person

I: Yeah what sports are you into?

P: I used to play football when I was young. And then, as I was getting older, Erm I like basketball.

I: Oh, nice. I've tried playing basketball but it's so hard! (laughs)

P: Yeah, it's more simple than netball.

I: Yeah, because I played netball before for and that's fine, if I try and shoot into a basketball hoop then I've got no chance.

P: Basketball is better because there's a backboard, in netball there's no backboard and you can't dribble when you have the ball.

I: Yeah in netball you're literally stuck with the ball but in basketball you can move around. Oh, that's awesome. Do you support any teams?

P: Erm Golden State, that's the one with Steph Curry.

I: Yes, that's the one that I probably support, I've got a I've got a hat and a jersey (laughs) Curry is great isn't he?
P: Yeah

I: And um, mentioned that you're at college as well?

P: Yeah, in sixth form.

I: Oh nice what you doing there?

P: Business level three, second year now.

I: Wow, are you back there now?

P: Erm, yeah. I'm going back.

I: Has it just opened?

P: Yeah.

I: That's pretty cool. Awesome. Um, and how long have you been involved with the youth offending service?

P: Erm, when I got arrested and then after the courts, I got put on referral so, yeah, was it? I think, I think not even too long. (pause) I can't remember to be honest.

I: That's OK, is it months?

P: Yeah, a few months.

I: OK.

P: It's better actually.

I: How come?

P: It's quicker.

I: Yeah, it's quicker, because you can just login at home.

P: Yeah.

I: But you still have the exact same sessions as you normally would just online now?

P: Erm, I think so.
I: Yeah. How many, how many times a week do you have to attend YOS sessions?

P: It would depend, it would depend, so I think once, one time it will be twice a week and then once a week, then a break, yeah

I: Ok, I see so it changes each week kind of thing?

P: yeah

I: Nice. Okay, that sounds cool. It's nice to hear that you like doing it online, I quite like being at home as well. It just makes it easier doesn't it?

P: Yeah, very easy

I: Okay, so what I want to do now is (pause) Okay, so what I want to do now is wanna have a think about what you associate with your experiences at the YOT. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to have four, four boxes at once want you to tell me the first thing that comes to your head when I say YOT, and it can be anything.

P: Alright, starting now?

I: Yeah so what comes to mind when I say YOT?

P: Anything?

I: It can literally be anything, it can be a word, it can be a phrase

P: Kind of like a detention.

I: okay, what else comes to your head?

P: Erm kind of trouble

I: Trouble. Nice, another one?

P: (pause) I say consequence

I: Consequence, And one more?

P: (pause) ermm I'm not sure, I say youth, I say young people. Yeah.
I: Perfect, Okay, so the first thing you said was detention. So what do you mean by that?

I: Kind of like, do you know that we get detention. You have to sit back and then do the time, kinda like, like what's it called? Oh what's the word? It's like (pause), it's like basically helping, it's like basically when we have a detention I'm not sitting there because I'm in trouble, I'm sitting there because like I know what I've done and I'm thinking back, really, was it worth it? Is it necessary right now? Like, yeah

P: I see, so you kind of see it as like erm a space where you can think about everything?

I: Yeah.

P: Okay. But it's not necessarily because you're in trouble?

I: No

P: Okay. Does it kind of remind you, is it similar to kind of detention as in like the school used to give you, or is it does it feel different?

I: Kind of, kind of, because I say kind of because school would give you week detentions sometimes depending on your behaviour or what you've done or just really anything, you come back at the weekend, so yeah

I: I see, so it's like the length of time? It's not a one off and you have to do it over and over?

P: Yeah

I: Yeah, they're really nice answers like that is anything else that comes to mind with word detention?

P: No, not really

I: OK, that's brilliant. How about trouble? What did you mean when you said trouble?

P: That (pause) erm that you put yourself in that position basically

I: In what way?
P: erm I say in the way that's like, you're not really thinking.

I: You're not really thinking?

P: yeah like people say think twice. There's not really a thing that people think twice, it's probably just a one thought and then act, so that's kind of what I mean, you put yourself in trouble without thinking.

I: in trouble without thinking, these are great ideas. Anything else around trouble?

P: Erm No that's it.

I: Great, Okay, consequence. What did you mean by consequence?

P: Like a Karma

I: Okay. In what way?

P: erm like what goes around comes back around like, if you do something that every action has an action or a consequence.

I: I see, so what goes around comes around and everything has consequences and that's what you were thinking of?

P: Yeah.

I: Anything else around consequence?

P: Erm no that's it

I: Okay. And last of all, you said young people, What did you mean by that?

P: I mean like, like there's young talent, being thrown away. Over like silly actions, basically. Like there's, there's talent wasted in like when young people do something that they really shouldn't be doing and they get in trouble for it, because they're really wasting time and opportunities that they could be having, and, yeah, actually a couple of young people I know that's changed their life, kinda like forever.

I: What YOT will change their life?

P: Long term consequences of engaging in crime both in time & opportunities. Crime is seen as: silly actions? Crime has changed their life.

I: What YOT will change their life?

P: loss of young people skills within the process. Change of perspective around time. Less or time & opportunity with crime. Long term consequences of time.
P: Yeah YOT will basically bring them back to like, I say civilisation but not really civilisation. But they'll bring them back to reality.

I: Nice and when you say reality, what do you mean?

P: Like there's more to the world than just like crime.

I: Yeah, these are really nice ideas. Is there anything else you wanted to add to any of them?

P: No, I think that's it.

I: Okay. So, if I was to show you (pause) Okay, so I'm going to show you this scale. So on a scale of one to 10. So, one is the worst it could be and 10 is the best it could be. Where would you rate your experience at YOT at the moment?

P: Like I give it a nine.

I: A nine?

P: Yeah

I: And why is it a nine, and not an eight?

P: Because to be honest, I missed one lesson. And I feel like, personally I know like I shouldn't have missed a lesson, I should actually be on the ball. So, yeah, I'm kind of criticising myself.

I: Oh, I see. Is that why you are given a nine and not an eight?

P: Yeah

I: I see, and then why would you say your experience is a nine, and not a 10?

P: Because, it's quick actually and more efficient because it is also online. What, I'm not really sure actually, yeah I suppose it's a nine.

I: I see so, um, was it a nine before lockdown or would you place it somewhere else?

P: I think it would place it somewhere else.
I: What would you give it before lock down?

P: Probably a five

I: A five, oh wow so it’s it’s jumped from a five to a nine, and is
that kind of because you were saying you like it being a home?

P: Yeah.

I: Yeah. Nice.

P: Yeah I feel better after the talks and like the sessions, I feel
better

I: I see, so you feel better after you’ve had your YOT session?

P: Yeah

I: Why do you think that is?

P: Cuz I feel like, it's the feeling of like completing something,
and accomplishing something.

I: Yeah, what else on the - if get this
feeling from?

P: And taking advantage, sort of, really I just like it

I: Nice, and what kind of things do you like about it?

P: Just like the feeling of completing something; you just feel
amazed like, you feel like you can do it again and nothing can
stop you.

I: Yeah, that's a really nice idea. Is there anything that would
make it better?

P: Erm no.

I: No? Nice. Is anything any particular session that you really
like from YOT?

P: Erm (pause) I think probably reparation

I: Yeah you like reparation?

P: Yeah
I: Why is that?

P: it's kinda like, (pause) erm I'm not sure, it kind of helps me structure something, like, I'm not sure why I like it.

I: Okay. You mentioned that gives you a structure?

P: Yeah.

I: Nice. Yeah, I can imagine that's nice having structure. For sure. Oh, nice. Is there anything else you want to say about your experience at YOT?

P: No I think that's it.

I: Great, the next section, we're going to look at is your aspirations. So I'm going to share my screen with you. So I'm going to ask you a bit of a strange question. So I want you to pretend that tonight, you're going to fall asleep, and then suddenly a miracle has happened. You're 10 years older. So how old do you now?

P: 18.

I: Okay so tonight you wake up again tomorrow you're 28 years old, and everything you've ever wanted comes true. What would this look like?

P: I think I have to be, even like, anything, anything,?

I: Everything?

P: I guess (pause) dream house.

I: dream house?

P: dream car

I: what car would you have?

P: erm I don't know what it's called but it's a mirror, I forgotten what the actual name is called. You know transformers, bumble bee?

I: yeah one of them?
P: Yeah and I would help my family financially. Erm I don’t know erm probably have kids.

I: Yeah

P: erm a sustainable job

I: Sustainable job. Okay, do you know what job?

P: erm right now, I don’t even know. But I’m liking the agencies and the warehouses

I: That sounds good. So what would you notice within this? What would be different from how it is now?

P: Right now?

I: Yeah.

P: erm it’s the opposite, like I don’t have kids. I’m not even there yet, like financially I’m hoping I find a sustainable job. And yeah once I get this job then I can work for my dream house and dream car.

I: I see. I was about to ask actually why sustainable job is important to you. Is that kind of why?

P: Yeah for the long run.

I: For the long run?

P: yeah

I: Nice. And what would you be doing differently in this kind of like dream in 10 years time?

P: How I live, how my attitude, everything will be different

I: so how you live, your attitude?

P: Yeah.

I: Nice. And then what would everyone else been doing differently around you?

P: They will have to do the same, because I’ll have to motivate like everyone else to do

I: is there a big expectation for me to change others around him?

P: You have to. No one else can help him.
I: Oh, nice. When you say everyone, who do you mean?

P: Probably, family, friends, anyone

I: So just everyone in your life kind of thing?

P: Yeah

I: Oh, nice. I'm where would you be living in this dream?

P: erm I'm thinking LA

I: LA oh nice in your dream car, that would be good

P: Yeah

I: Brilliant erm who would you be with? Who would be around you?

P: erm (pause) I'll sa, I'll say definitely my mum, probably probably a girlfriend. But I don't know that's in 10 years time.

I: Yeah you can say anything you want, Oh nice so your mum and potentially a girlfriend. And what would you do in your spare time?

P: Just work on elevating again

I: what do you mean by that?

P: Like once that once you basically reached, like when you feel like you've reached your goal. There's always like, You can always do something else, you haven't really stopped, you haven't reached your limit so I feel like every time you complete something, there's another objective that you probably don't know, like you need to complete.

I: I see, so you constantly want to be reaching for something else and kind of keep going for the next thing?

P: Yeah

I: That's great. Erm So you said this is the job you would want, something sustainable, you like the agency at the moment, warehouse, what made you chose that?
I: Oh, I see. So it sounds like you like the flexibility that you can kind of choose when you go in, is that something that's important to you?

P: Yeah.

I: And, have you had experience in that, so far?

P: erm I've done work experience in secondary school, that one I had to work in ASDA, retail I was, and it was me and two other friends. So it was pupils and colleagues, and we were there. We looked after the storage room, and that you had to pile up the clothes, stack things. And I feel like I kind of enjoyed it because I was hidden and then I can just focus on my work, and actually get it done.

I: Nice. So is that something that's important to you as well when thinking about your future?

P: Yeah.

I: Great. And just going back to the, erm your college course, How did you decide what you want to do there?

P: Actually when I finished secondary school I wanted to continue drama but didn't actually finish English and math properly, so then I had to re-do it and then when I came to this college I don't think they had the drama course I wanted. So I just applied for business and I actually like business now.

I: So are you glad you're doing that course?

P: Yeah

I: Brilliant

P: I like to learn new things that I don't know. I like to expand my mind.
I: Yeah. Brilliant. And did YOT help you get into college or you're already enrolled?

P: I was already enrolled.

I: Oh, okay and you've just continued with it?

P: Yeah.

I: So if you could change to any college course now would you stay with business or would you go to something else?

P: No I would stay.

I: It sounds like you're really enjoying it. Oh brilliant. All right I've got a few more and then we're done. So, with your ten year dream, which sounds amazing. we're gonna pretend that here at the 10 and then one is the opposite. So where would you say you are now on this scale, with 10 being the dream, and one being the opposite of that?

P: erm I would say a five point five or five.

I: Nice. So what makes it a 5.5, or five, than let's say a three or four? what puts it here?

P: I'd say because I feel like I have like a general plan of how I want it to happen and like Right now, I'm kind of on the way. Like I'm in college, I'm finishing a business course. After that with the qualifications I get I will probably find a sustainable job then.

I: yeah, that sounds great, and what makes it a 5 or 5.5 and not a 7?

P: because I know there's still some obstacles in my way and then, yeah there's stuff I need to complete like college for example or anything, so yeah ok or anything? - are they inside the road?

I: Great, is there anything that's kind of helped you to get to your 5.5 Now, or anyone or anything that's helped you to get there?

P: I would say yeah, I would say the college has helped me, a couple of friends and like yeah that how they work basically, what they do. What kind of job they do, kind of inspired me a little bit, like seeing the varieties, yeah

- Importance of friends in 5.5/5 out of 10 towards dream.
I: Brilliant, so like seeing what your friends have been doing has inspired you as well?

P: Yeah.

I: Do your friends go to the same college as you?

P: erm no.

I: what do they do?

P: Ones like at uni, I think he went back, erm a couple of them are trying to go to uni and yeah I've got one or two friends that go to the college I go to now

I: Brilliant. Um, one last question with this scale so what would make it go up to a six? So one point?

P: I will have to be, the qualifications I get, or finding a job like sooner. So or working around qualifications vs. job

I: Yeah

P: and then working from there.

I: Sounds awesome, really nice. And one last question. erm if you could tell your younger self, anything. What would it be?

P: erm It will have to be (pause) it will have to be to do your own, don't follow the crowd and keep your eyes open. (pause) Don't follow the crowd, however he goes. I: Keep your eyes open? Importance of being prepared

P: yeah because like, I would say that basically because in life there's a lot of things that happen and you're not really prepared or ready for it. So, I will say that is almost like an eye opener so he's always on the ball, he's always ready for what's next because he's ready to know that because not everything will go the right way, and not everything will be perfect and smooth. - Is this a reflection on how he passes his life has been?

I: That's such good advice I wish I wish I could tell my younger self that as well. Well, thank you so much that was really, really useful.

P: Thank you

I: Is there anything else you think that would be useful for me to know it can be anything to do with your experience or aspirations?

P: ermm no I think that's it.
Appendix 10
Second Interview schedule for professionals

Introduction:
- Explain purpose of interview, importance of their views and experiences, right to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity
- Check participant is still happy to participate, if yes, sign consent form
- Ask if participant has any questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
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<tr>
<td>How have you been since we last met?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has there been any recent changes to your role?</td>
<td>What impact did the pandemic have on your role?</td>
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| What impact did the pandemic have on the service? | How were young people supported during this time?  
Did you continue delivering support to young people? In what capacity? |
| Have you noticed any changes in the young people during this period? | Their well-being, engagement, motivation, behaviour? |
| Do you think there are lasting impacts of the pandemic on the young people within YOS? | If so, in what way? |
| Do you think the service will make any adaptations in how and what services they provide to young people? | To meet any potential new needs regarding the impact of the pandemic? |

Closing

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you taking time out of your day for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?

Just to finish, I would like to let you know what the next steps are. I will transcribe the interview and send you a copy to read and check over. Feel free to make any amendments you wish and then return the transcript back to me. I will then analyse and aggregate the information from this interview and others I am conducting to produce a report. Any information you provide will be confidential and anonymised.

Thank you again for your time today.
### Table 9
*Jack’s super-ordinate and emergent themes*

#### Role of self in situation

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<tr>
<td>Reflection as a tool</td>
<td>Kind of like, do you know that we get detention. You have to sit back and then do the time, kinda like, like what’s it called? Oh what’s the word? It’s like (pause), it’s like basically helping, it’s like basically when we have a detention I’m not sitting there because I’m in trouble, I’m sitting there because like I know what I’ve done and I’m thinking back, really, was it worth it? Is it necessary right now? Like, yeah. Jack: erm I say in the way that’s like, you’re not really thinking. Zoe: You’re not really thinking? Jack: yeah like people say think twice. There’s not really a thing that people think twice, it’s probably just a one thought and then act, so that’s kind of what I mean, you put yourself in trouble without thinking.</td>
<td>145-151</td>
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<td>Ownership around behaviour</td>
<td>Because to be honest, I missed one lesson. And I feel like, personally I know like I shouldn’t have missed a lesson, I should actually be on the ball. So, yeah, I’m kind of criticising myself. erm like what goes around comes back around like, If you do something that every action has an action or a consequence. That (pause) erm that you put yourself in that position basically.</td>
<td>262-265</td>
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#### Psychological Impact of YOT involvement

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<tr>
<td>Shift in perspectives</td>
<td>Yeah YOT will basically bring them back to like, I say civilisation but not really civilisation. But they’ll bring them back to reality. Like there’s more to the world than just like crime.</td>
<td>236-238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional changes</td>
<td>I mean like, like there’s young talent, being thrown away. Over like silly actions, basically.</td>
<td>226-232</td>
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Like there’s, there’s talent wasted in like when young people do something that they really shouldn’t be doing and they get in trouble for it, because they’re really wasting time and opportunities that they could be having, and, yeah, actually a couple of young people I know that’s changed their life, kinda like forever

Yeah I feel better after the talks and like the sessions, I feel better … ’cause I feel like, it’s the feeling of like completing something, and accomplishing something…and taking advantage, sort of, really I just like it

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| Motivation to engage in YOT services | Because, it’s quick actually and more efficient because it is also online  
It’s kinda like, (pause) erm I’m not sure, it kind of helps me structure something, like, I’m not sure why I like it | 274-275, 332-333 |
| Striving for self-progression    | erm it’s the opposite, like I don’t have kids. I’m not even there yet, Like financially I’m hoping I find a sustainable job. And yeah once I get this job then I can work for my dream house and dream car.  
I like to learn new things that I don’t know. I like to expand my mind | 395-398, 514-515 |
| Role of others                  | I would say yeah, I would say the college has helped me, a couple of friends and like yeah, that how they work basically, what they do. What kind of job they do, kind of inspired me a little bit, like seeing the varieties, yeah  
I think because a couple of my friends were telling me about their experiences with it, and how they actually liked their like, how he basically you can call them on I think any day, and then tell them you would like to come in and work and there would probably be a spot for you and you can do that every day or just whenever you want | 560-563, 471-476 |
| Perceived barriers              | erm because I know there’s still some obstacles in my way and then, yeah there’s stuff I need to complete like college for example or anything, so yeah | 552-554 |
Yeah because like, I would say that basically because in life there's a lot of things that happen and you’re not really prepared or ready for it. So, I will say that is almost like an eye opener so he's always on the ball, he's always ready for what's next because he's ready to know that because not everything will go the right way, and not everything will be perfect and smooth

Table 10
Kyle's super-ordinate and emergent themes

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<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The role of money in success</td>
<td>When you’re rich you have control</td>
<td>310</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zoe: And what would you be doing differently in your future?</td>
<td>306</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyle: I dunno, when you’re rich, it’s a bit different innit</td>
<td>399-400</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I mean, I haven’t got, I haven’t got money like that, I’m still young. I’m not even 18 yet. I’m not working, I don’t have money like that personally</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of self</td>
<td>'cause I'm kind of lazy (laughs)</td>
<td>433</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I would say, I need to like, I need to be more determined to do stuff.</td>
<td>428-429</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I mean, I’m alright right now, innit, I’m not that bad. Money and that, I’m not that bad because my parents, they still give me some money. I get money off my parents, I don’t have to ask them</td>
<td>408-410</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of YOS</td>
<td>Zoe: What made you link police with the youth offending service?</td>
<td>110-111</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kyle: It came up in my mind</td>
<td>117</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoe: Where would you rate your experience at the YOS?</td>
<td>172</td>
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</table>
Zoe: And why would you say it's an 8 than, let's say not a six?

Kyle: They help me out innit

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<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to engage in YOSs</td>
<td>I just can’t be arsed to go all the way there</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>My cannabis used to be like, my smoking used to be really bad but they’ve helped me out, cut it down and stop it</td>
<td>184-185</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The people that work with me right now, they’re friendly and that</td>
<td>201</td>
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<tr>
<td>To engage in present events</td>
<td>It’s kind of easy as well…it’s way more easier than doing construction or electrical engineering</td>
<td>377</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zoe: Oh brilliant. How did you decide that's what you wanted to do?</td>
<td>346-348</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kyle: I mean my dad's been telling me cause’ like he’s done his own construction business. Erm and he used to work on, what’s it called, he used to do plumbing before himself innit, and he told me that it’s an easy course, good money.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To reach future aspirations</td>
<td>Me being millionaire (laughs)</td>
<td>221</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoe: Why is that important to you?</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyle: So I can provide for my family and everything</td>
<td>323-324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would just let my family, do whatever they want, innit. If I had that much money I wouldn’t let my family work …</td>
<td>328</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wouldn’t put them through that stress and that</td>
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Table 11

*Adam’s super-ordinate and emergent themes*
### Theme 1: Personal Growth

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<tr>
<td>Self-progression</td>
<td>I like, I like a lot of like business type jobs. Erm I study that in part-time that how the financial, how the economy, economic sector works. Stuff like that</td>
<td>348-350</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Just in my own time, it’s not like a course or anything</td>
<td>358</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cause there’s still a lot of things I want to achieve yet that I have not achieved, if that makes sense?</td>
<td>453-454</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoe: OK, And how about resilience?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection as a tool</td>
<td>Erm don’t procrastinate too often. Don’t take the day for granted, cause’ just use that day to do at least something it might not be, at least something that can help you out. Don’t just waste it, that’s what I would say</td>
<td>471-474</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It's basically I thought that it kind of makes you resilient and wants to like, kind of makes you not like want to like commit another offence, because after, obviously not at first, but after a while, then you just understand that the consequences, have a larger effect. They’re not just a small thing.</td>
<td>169-174</td>
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### Theme 2: Perception

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<tr>
<td>Perception of YOSs</td>
<td>erm Yeah. They just talk to you about erm, they might ask questions sometimes. Sometimes they might talk to you about erm like other offences or sometimes just general, like general things. Alright basically, when, like when you said youth offending, I just reminded me of like a, erm a programme to just help people with erm offenses they've committed. And just help them get past that and just see like the consequences and opportunities, they have with like other things…Like it allows you to see the opportunities that you have in life, without wasting them. It could be anything. It depends on the person.</td>
<td>75-78</td>
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Perception of self

Zoe: So just going back to this kind of like 10 years time, amazing dream you've talked about. Erm would you be doing anything differently?

Adam: I don't think so.

Zoe: So we're gonna pretend now that 10 is your 10 year dream you've just told me about and one is the complete opposite. So where would you say you are at the moment?

Adam: A Six.

Perception of life

Zoe: So what makes it a six on not a four?

Adam: Cause' erm basically that life at the moment is not bad, it's good. Erm like sometimes I might take it for granted. But I'm having quite a good life, there's a lot of, there's a lot of worst things that can happen. I'm Happy.

Zoe: That's really nice. And what makes your life good at the moment?

Adam: My Mum and Dad are around, I'm going to uni, I have good friends. Erm my little brother is starting college, so a lot of things are just, Yeah

Theme three: Motivation

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<tr>
<td>Motivation to engage in YOSs</td>
<td>Yeah they do phone calls...It's easier, it's easier. I would rather do that...Because I don't have to make the journey to go to the youth offending place. Something that I like is erm the what's it called? The group calls that Bob does. He just talks to young people at like the same time, and it helps to gather people's opinions. The way other young people think is probably the better thing out of YOT</td>
<td>57-66</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>266-269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of relationships</td>
<td>erm basically that the people that I talk to, like Bob, erm that they just they kind of like guide you, without, they don’t even really feel like a mentor, they just talk to you, and they guide you. They talk about situations and what could be done or what could have been done. And this, and you just learn from them to be honest. because they, they like they really try with like connecting to you they don’t just, you see, like, you could tell someone’s just doing their job, or if they actually enjoy like talking to young people and connecting with them, basically I can just tell the difference. Yeah, I don’t, I don’t like when people are just doing their job, just, you can just see through it… Basically, you can see through it.</td>
<td>128-133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unmotivating aspects of YOSs</td>
<td>erm mainly because feel like it’s just talking, like it’s not really like they don’t. Well, at the moment because obviously the virus but it’s just talking they don’t really bring to any physical things that can help you with like, take you to clubs or whatever, youth clubs or I dunno, if you’re interested in sports, maybe they can help you with that, they haven’t really done that yet erm I think having to actually like discuss the offense in detail, and going through it over and over again, I think that’s a bit tiring</td>
<td>223-229</td>
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Table 12
*Felix's super-ordinate and emergent themes*

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<th>Perception</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of YOSs</td>
<td>Who do you think would benefit from it?</td>
<td>P: erm mostly the youth obviously, people that are in like bad neighbourhoods and stuff like that. I think it's been as good as it can be.</td>
<td>141-142, 163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of relationships with staff</td>
<td>erm just the way, how you interact with them like they actually try to get to you as if, and someone else could have maybe like not really tried they'll just think that it's just their job but I feel like the youth offending team actually cares about you. and like, they, it just shows that they care about you that they will come all the way to your house, even though there was coronavirus, but they would still come, they actually care.</td>
<td>168-172, 204-207</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current situation</td>
<td>erm I actually like how I’ve been at the moment like, I’m at sixth form, with all my friends, I’m enjoying it. I go out with my friends sometimes there’s nothing really bad at the moment in my life. Like I have a supportive family and friends. It's just like, I think I have a nice life to be honest</td>
<td>355-359</td>
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**Impact of YOT involvement**

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<tr>
<td>Sense of ownership</td>
<td>Zoe: You said also being reformed? Félix: I think erm youth offending, the youth offending team helps you take responsibility of the actions that you made, the wrong actions you made and it helps you like erm understand like why you shouldn’t have done that, why it shouldn’t be happening and why you shouldn't do that in the future. Don't make the mistake that I made</td>
<td>115-119, 421</td>
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Emotional changes
It helps you erm have a change of heart and mind or how you were before and then turning you into a more positive person, in my opinion.

Zoe: And erm what does a positive person look like?
Felix: erm I think a positive person not really, not a positive but like a good person, a better person in general

Change in perspective
Yeah youth offenders erm it helps you, they help you think more about your life choices than before, like, as before. I wouldn't really think about my life choices I just live for now but youth offenders has helped me think about the, the far future, as in Yeah. So what happens now is going to affect me in the future. Eventually.

Zoe: And then you said positive?
Felix: Yeah I think erm youth offenders is actually a really good thing. It should carry on, maybe even more erm than it's happening now. Yeah I feel like It will impact a lot of people's lives more if they had it in their lives

Motivation

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<tr>
<td>To engage in YOS services</td>
<td>I like it to be honest…erm I find it easier than being in real life to be honest…it’s easier to talk to be honest, I feel like if it was in real life, I would be a bit more nervous maybe.</td>
<td>68-74</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Erm I like how they have formal visits to come and check up on you</td>
<td>191-192</td>
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<td></td>
<td>One, one p, one person from the youth offenders team said that they have friends that could, are nightclub owners and could help, like, they could try get them down here to come talk to me about it. Check erm my inspiration and stuff like that.</td>
<td>406-410</td>
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<tr>
<td>In future aspirations</td>
<td>In the future to be honest I want to be some sort of manager or business owner to be honest</td>
<td>7-8</td>
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Right now I have erm a clothing line that I’ve been doing with my cousin. We sell it on, we promote it on Snapchat and Instagram. And we get a few sales, we’ve been we’ve been designing new designs and hoping to get more products as well…. At the moment we only have T shirts and we’re going to have hats soon. And then possibly towards, more of a colder winter we’re gonna start doing tracksuits… erm my cousin designs it on his computer, and then we just talk about it see if it needs any changes and then we'll change it to make it better and then we'll just promote it. And sell them

Zoe: why are these things important to you, what do they give you?

Felix: They give me hope for the future

Table 13
Aaron’s super-ordinate and emergent themes

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<th>Perception</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of YOSs</td>
<td>Zoe: what makes you think of detention?</td>
<td>Aaron: Erm because, the whole point is like to see if you’re OK and that, if there’s anything that’s going on that concerns you. Well it helps me understand like if you’re like, if you could get arrested like after, it makes me understand like the type of stuff that you get arrested for if that makes sense? Like they just talk to me, after like they give me like a worksheet. Where would you rate your experience at YOT at the moment? P: Like a 8</td>
<td>79 92-94 125</td>
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### Perception of current situation

Yeah but me personally I don’t have any problems but if I do, like I can just talk to them or whatever

because I’m slowly getting there, I just need to, there’s a few more steps I have to take to reach there… go college, go uni, get an apprenticeship

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<tr>
<th>Perception of current situation</th>
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<th>179-180</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>367-368</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>304-306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Role of others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Line number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of relationships with YOT staff</td>
<td>I dunno ‘cause I, me personally like, I like speaking to them, I actually enjoy it.</td>
<td>133-134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having people to talk to like, there’s people to talk to about your problems</td>
<td>174-175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the support network</td>
<td>erm I don’t really like to do anything, I just like to go out with my friends</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have to still rely on people and don’t just rely on yourself.</td>
<td>412-413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah just be independent</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Line number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To reach future aspirations</td>
<td>I just think like, because it’s easy like, I think it’s important, I would be like, I just want to be successful</td>
<td>325-326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah. I would help out my family and all of that</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoe: Have you had any experience in architecture?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aaron: No but I would love to though</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Potential motivational obstacles

At first I thought like the meetings were long like, they asked me the same questions all over again so I just started to get a bit fed up because they keep asking me like why did you do this? Erm did you feel safe when you done it? Like they give you the same questions like all over again

Table 14
Mike’s super-ordinate and emergent themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of YOSs</th>
<th>They, they call me, and what’s it called they, what’s it called? They tell, they tell me about knife crime and stuff like that. And they tell me scenarios and what I would do and stuff like that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quotes</td>
<td>Zoe: Where would you rate your experience at the YOT at the moment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike: erm at the moment I would say a 7 or an 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line number</td>
<td>89-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of relationships with YOS staff</td>
<td>The, er, they’re nice people, they speak to you in a good manner… erm just the way they speak to me in general, basically, I don't really know how to explain it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like when it, did, like, they know what I mean when I tried to tell them stuff and yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line number</td>
<td>124-125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View on current situation</td>
<td>Because, um, because they’ve always wanted a better house. They’re not in the best house right now really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoe: So on this scale. So 10 is the miracle that you've just told me about. And then one is the complete opposite. So where would you say you are on this scale now at the moment of reaching your goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike: Erm because I'm still young and everything I would probably say a 4… Nah I think I would say a three. Because I’m still young and not close anything like that just yet…Because, as I said, I'm not close to it yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line number</td>
<td>283-284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme</td>
<td>Quotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Escapism from long-term consequences</td>
<td>Erm cause they, what’s it called, my caseworker, instead of me going to court with what I done, he what’s it called? What’s it called? Instead like he put it as youth conditional service thing. And, Yeah, erm so I didn’t get a criminal record or anything like that. Because erm they’re making me get out of the situation that I’m in, and so I don’t go to court and get a criminal record. And yeah, instead of that they’re just doing a youth conditional thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of self</td>
<td>because that’s what I want to achieve in life really erm if I could tell me younger self, stay out of trouble and don’t get in involved with like the police and stuff like that, what else? Because the thing that I done the, the thing that I done got my excluded and everything like that, I got into a lot of trouble this way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Role of environment in reaching aspirations | Zoe: And in this 10 year dream, what would you be doing differently compared to now?  
Mike: erm what would I be doing different? Erm I might live in a different country  
erm I would just be living differently in general… different house, erm different, different surroundings and stuff like that. | 313-314, 322-323 |
| Potential barriers in the future | Mike: Because in the future I want to do something to do business, and yeah  
Zoe: Brilliant, what kind of got you interested into that?  
Mike: Erm I'm not really sure it just like it, just, it just is what it is really, I don't know how. | 289-290, 294-295 |
| Developmental areas in YOS | yeah, what’s it called, when they call me and like erm be like tell me they’re going to call me again and yeah more punctual calls and like let me know when stuff out, basically
If I were to go there they said I was going to be doing activities and stuff like that. | 204-206
227-228 |