The effects of arts and culture programmes on youth crime: A rapid review

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The review was developed and produced according to the author's hypotheses and methods. Any primary research, subsequent findings or recommendations do not represent UK Government views or policy.

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Abstract

Are arts and culture-based interventions effective in reducing serious youth violence?

In recent years, the issues of serious youth violence and knife-carrying have escalated to become pressing societal challenges, with knife crime increasing by 27% in the ten years to 2023/24 (Ministry of Justice, 2025). Interventions aiming to reduce serious youth violence have taken various approaches, with some focussing on arts and culture as a way to engage, support and impact the behaviour of young people.

This review maps the current landscape of these programmes and reviews the evidence on how effective they are in reducing youth violence, highlighting considerable gaps in our understanding of the impact of these interventions.

Findings are based on a systematic mapping exercise of programmes currently being delivered in England and a review of evaluations of arts/culture-based programmes since 2010, as well as interviews with professional stakeholders (decision-makers, practitioners and academics within the field) and data from justice-involved children and young people participating in arts/culture programmes.

The current landscape of programmes:

The map of current arts/culture-based programmes addressing youth violence reveals a diverse range of initiatives, led by dedicated practitioners in community, secure and Youth Justice settings. However, many of these *programmes are limited by a lack of cohesive, structured delivery and inconsistent funding*. Programmes are often funded on an ad-hoc and short-term basis leading to fragmented and uncoordinated delivery and resulting in uneven implementation and inequality of access. Stakeholders – including decision-makers, practitioners and academics – express concern that the short-term nature of funding undermines the stability necessary for meaningful engagement with children and young people involved with (or at risk of entering) the YJS, and in so doing, reduces the reach and impact of programmes.

Are programmes effective in reducing youth violence?

The evidence on the effectiveness of arts and culture programmes is limited and inconclusive. This doesn't mean they aren't effective, but rather, that *we lack sufficient evidence to confirm their impact.* Many of the evaluations lack robust controls, adequate sample sizes, or validated measures, making it hard to determine effectiveness. However, a few studies do show statistically significant positive results, such as improved compliance with Youth Justice orders, and self-reported improvements in wellbeing, attitudes towards offending, and engagement with Education, Training and Employment, and reduced likelihood of carrying a knife.

In addition, the research consistently provides qualitative, small-scale evidence (from discussions with practitioners and young people) of positive effects on well-being, engagement and behaviour. These changes are linked with our wider knowledge of factors that support the desistance process.

There is a lack of long-term follow-up data assessing whether the changes reported post-programme were sustained. Whilst a small number of studies report follow-up data indicating some degree of sustained improvements in the weeks and months following programmes, it is not possible to determine whether these changes occurred *as a result of the programme.*

Recommendations for policy

An opportunity presents itself for researchers, policymakers, practitioners and young people, to reimagine how programmes are offered, delivered and evaluated to ensure that children and young people benefit fully and their impact can be effectively demonstrated. Next steps:

- Develop a robust infrastructure for the funding, development and delivery of long-term, programmes based on the General Theory of Change.
- Develop a collaborative research agenda between policymakers, researchers, academics and organisations delivering arts/culture programmes to 'at risk' / justice-involved children and young people.

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Executive summary

Purpose

Youth violence and knife-carrying pose increasingly serious societal, legal and public health problems. In 2023/24, 3,951 knife and offensive weapons offences by 10–17-year-olds were dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) - an increase of 27% compared to ten years ago (Ministry of Justice, 2025). It is therefore essential that evidence on current intervention efforts is reviewed, and gaps responded to accordingly in order meet the aims of reducing serious harm and increasing confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) outlined in the government's Safer Streets mission.

Research Questions

- What arts, museums, heritage and library activities and programmes are currently being delivered that can potentially help prevent crime?
- Can arts and cultural organisations be valuable partners to the police and youth services, offering activities, expertise and venues?
- What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these programmes?
- What is the quality of evidence to demonstrate the impact of arts and culture to engage young people and reduce their risk of committing crime?
- What evidence exists of the effects of arts on crime at a wider community level, rather than on an individual level (e.g. making communities feel safer)?

The breadth and scope of programmes using arts and culture to prevent and address offending amongst children and young people is unclear. This report addresses the following research questions devised by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and provides a general Theory of Change (ToC) outlining how arts/culture interventions are proposed to engage children and young people and reduce the risk of their involvement in crime.

Methodology

The findings, ToC and recommendations are based on a systematic mapping exercise of programmes currently being delivered in England, a rapid evidence review, three case studies, data from justice-involved children and young people participating in arts/culture programmes, and interviews with professional stakeholders (decision-makers, practitioners and academics within the field).

Key insights

Current landscape of the sector

- A diverse range of arts/culture programmes for children and young people are operating within community settings, within Youth Justice Services (YJS) and within secure settings. Programmes span a range of artforms, and there are a number of commonly occurring core components and intended outcomes across programmes.
- However, provision often relies on passionate individuals rather than a structured directive, indicating a lack of infrastructure to support these initiatives. Where funding is available, it is often short-term. Delivery is therefore fragmented and uncoordinated, resulting in uneven implementation of practice and therefore inequality of access.
- Lack of affordability, transportation and safe spaces present barriers to participation across the arts/culture offer, particularly for children from marginalised groups.
- There is consensus amongst decision-makers, practitioners and academics that:
  (1) The short-term nature of programmes may not provide the stability that is needed by children and young people involved with (or at risk of entering) the YJS
  (2) The limited funding available reflects a wider underappreciation of the value of arts/culture within the criminal justice system which is set against a backdrop of the undervaluing of arts within the education system. This feeds into a lack of funding for rigorous research, resulting in poor understanding of the role of arts/culture in crime reduction outside of the sector.
- There are numerous examples of arts/culture organisations acting as valuable partners to the police and youth services. However, meaningful engagement requires consistently strong partnerships between arts/culture organisations and the criminal justice sector. In some cases, demand for services from arts organisations exceeds available resources; whilst in other cases arts programmes

struggle to engage children and young people due to barriers imposed by gatekeepers within educational or youth justice settings. Mutual understanding across sectors and motivated gatekeepers lay the foundation for programmes' success across settings.

- The skills of the artist facilitating programmes and the quality of their relationship with the children and young people is viewed as central to the success (or failure) of programmes. There are very many examples of committed artist-facilitators who can adapt to group dynamics, create supportive relationships and environments, and respond effectively and flexibly to children and young people's often complex needs. However, some programmes rely on these passionate professionals rather than a solid framework and there are gaps in provision of training.

Evidence of effectiveness

- Most studies focus on evaluation of "softer outcomes" rather than on reducing risk/the offence itself, in line with asset-based/child-first approaches.
- Rigorous evidence that arts/culture programmes engage children and young people, reducing their risk of crime, is severely limited. The evidence that is available lacks robust controls or adequate sample sizes, leaving the binary question of effectiveness unanswered.
- There are a handful of quasi-experimental studies demonstrating statistically significant positive outcomes for children and young people receiving arts/culture programmes, including: improvements in compliance Youth Justice orders; self-reported improvements in attitudes towards offending, engagement with Education, Training and Employment (ETE) and well-being post-programme; reduced self-reported likelihood of carrying a knife post-programme; and reduced Asset Score risk classification.
- A small number of other studies report positive outcomes based on quantitative data, but the data has not been subject to significance testing, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn.
- Research in this area is predominantly qualitative, aiming to evaluate projects by understanding the value of arts/culture programmes from the perspectives of children and young people and practitioners. These studies report a vast range of mechanisms through which arts/culture programmes engage children and young people and consistently describes outcomes (based on the reporting of children and young people and professionals) that are linked with the desistance process.
- There is a dearth of longer-term follow-up data assessing whether the changes reported post-programme were sustained. Whilst a small number of studies report follow-up data indicating some degree of sustained improvements in the weeks and months following programmes, it is not possible to ascertain whether the changes occurred *as a result of the programme.*

Community impact

- There is some qualitative evidence relating to the positive impact of programmes on children and young people's relationships with peers, family members, teachers, YJS staff and the wider community.
- These studies report numerous examples of the ways in which art/culture can make a difference to the connection between children and young people and their wider communities, by building social connections and redefining relationships with the police and other authority figures.
- Our interviews with stakeholders echoed these qualitative findings. Decision-makers and practitioners were clear that programmes benefit the community in various ways and encourage a more cohesive environment. For example, some reported programmes bring together individuals who might not otherwise interact, facilitating a better understanding of the community from the perspective of children and young people. Some noted the potential for influencing community perceptions of children and young people, which contributes to a sense of safety within the community and even has the potential to influence other children and young people at risk of crime. It was also reported that showcasing children and young people's work in a shared community forum can help to improve confidence in CJS, and enables other agencies to recognise the value of arts/culture-based work with children and young people.

Policy recommendations

Early intervention:

Enhance support outside the CJS to increase access to the universal arts/culture offer amongst marginalised children and young people. This could include an increase in subsidised activities, provision of more safe venues for creative activities, and provision of safe transport where possible.

Infrastructure for the sector:

Develop a more robust infrastructure for arts/culture programmes seeking to engage children and young people and reduce their risk of committing crime. This could include:

- An evidence-based curriculum or framework for programmes
- A cohesive programme delivery strategy that responds to contextual differences and accounts for the length of time required to see results
- A training and skills development programme for artists working with children and young people with complex vulnerabilities in youth justice settings
- Longer-term funding investment in programmes to ensure continued provision and stability for children and young people at risk of entering (or who have already entered) the Youth Justice System

Such an infrastructure would enable more consistent delivery of programmes, contributing to a reduction in the inequality of access and allowing for more robust and meaningful evaluation of programmes, including opportunities to measure the sustainability of change over time.

Understanding between sectors:

Consider developing a strategy to promote understanding between arts practitioners and criminal justice providers regarding the value of arts/culture programmes for children and young people facing justice. Such a strategy should aim to increase collaboration across sectors, enabling smoother delivery of programmes, more effective use of funds, and therefore more positive outcomes for children and young people.

Practice recommendations:

- Ensure programmes encompass accessible and inclusive approaches that use language and methods which resonate with children and young people, as many children and young people lack prior engagement with arts/culture.
- Ensure programmes are informed by diverse the contexts of trauma, disadvantage and social inequality which may hinder participation.
- Adapt approaches to individual needs where appropriate to encourage continued engagement
- Work on children and young people's 'readiness to change', as they need to be ready and open to change to benefit from these programmes.
- Provide a range of opportunities for participation, recognising that not all artforms suit every child or young person.
- Support programmes with adequate resources and committed staff.
- Offer opportunities for children and young people to showcase their work to the wider community.
- Connect children and young people with community resources to sustain engagement post-programme

Research recommendations:

A research agenda should be developed collaboratively between policymakers, researchers, academics and organisations delivering arts/culture programmes to 'at risk' / justice-involved children and young people that addresses: (1) The research questions that need to be asked; (2) The outcomes that should be focused on; (3) The types of evidence that are considered valuable; (4) The research methods that would provide meaningful data but are also practicable, ethical and cost-effective, and would account for the context and complexity of the population and the variety of mediators of success/failure that are not easily controlled.

An opportunity presents itself for researchers and academics, along with practitioners and other stakeholders, to rethink the ways that programmes can be evaluated, and the impact that can be demonstrated. This may include a simplification of the rigorous conditions required for a randomised control trial to suit the unique practical and ethical context of this research. This will require significant investment and excellent collaboration between youth justice professionals, arts practitioners and (where possible) children and young people to co-produce. Suggested considerations for this research agenda can be found in section **7.3**.

Theory of Change (ToC)

We provide a General Theory of Change (ToC) which demonstrates a structural approach to understanding how arts/culture programmes are **proposed** to lead to desired outcomes for children and young people in both secure and community settings, based on the findings of this report.

It offers a blueprint for planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes that can be adapted to respond to specific activities, outcomes and impacts to understand how activities lead to outcomes and impacts across various arts/culture programmes. The model may require adaptation to reflect future research on this topic.

The model emphasises a flexible and tailored trauma-informed approach that provides opportunities (as far as possible) for emotional and individual development, improved relationships and community engagement. In addition, the model highlights the value of collaboration between young people and their families, those working to support them, and the wider community.

Figure 1 - General theory of change model for how arts/culture-based programmes with young people engaging in serious or violent crime are proposed to work

Context and statement of problem
Problem: Children and young people's engagement in knife crime & serious violence is linked to factors such as systemic inequalities, lack of education, trauma, limited positive role models, economic inequality, disadvantage and poverty **Overall aim:** Reduce knife crime and serious youth violence by supporting young people through arts/culture programmes that promote self-expression, emotional regulation, community-building, and social (re)integration

Inputs	Activities	Short & medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Financial resources to implement and sustain the activities, including staffing, training, materials, and any outreach activities (including safe venues) Experienced facilitators/artists with expertise in working with children and young people with complex vulnerabilities Access to art supplies, digital tools & dedicated safe spaces for creative activities Collaboration with local community organizations, social services, youth workers, and law enforcement agencies to provide holistic support Development of an evidence-based, well-defined curriculum or framework for the programme	May involve some of the following: ● A range of arts/culture activities (workshops & creative sessions) including visual arts, music, theatre, poetry, and digital arts ● One-to-one mentoring and/or support in group settings where young people can develop relationships and receive support from peers and positive role models ● Opportunities for Awards and/or accreditation ● Opportunities for children and young people to celebrate & showcase their work to family, friends, practitioners and in public forums where appropriate Activities should be: ● Accessible & culturally relevant to the children and young people participating ● Flexible and tailored to children and young people's specific interests with an understanding of the trauma many children and young people have experienced ● Voluntary wherever possible, always provide a level of choice for children and young people, and maximise opportunities for their creative autonomy and decision-making ● Designed to provide opportunities (where possible) for children and young people to develop key life skills, for example communication, problem solving, resilience, conflict resolution, teamwork, and emotional regulation	**Individual** ● Opportunities for engagement in creative activities and self-expression ● Enjoyment of creative activities & increased appreciation of the value of arts/culture ● Motivation to participate ● Sense of belonging, validation and achievement ● Feeling listened to and heard ● Raised self-esteem and aspirations ● Increased confidence and social skills ● Increased feelings of emotional and physical safety ● Improved well-being, communication, teamwork and emotional regulation ● Increased understanding of previous and current behaviours ● Improved resilience and coping mechanisms to manage anger, frustration, and trauma ● Reduction in risky behaviours associated with crime, including substance use, truancy, and anti-social behaviour **Relationship** ● Improved relationships with practitioners, peers and family members **Community** ● Positive engagement with the wider community **For staff** ● Increased insight into the benefits of creative engagement for children and young people	● Short and medium-term outcomes sustained beyond the programme ● Ongoing access to safe spaces ● (Re)engagement in education, training and/or employment ● Greater involvement in, and motivation for, additional creative and learning activities as part of a more robust culture of creativity ● Greater involvement in wider community activities ● Increased community cohesion ● Reduction in difficult or challenging behaviours ● Reduction in in anti-social behaviour, knife-carrying and violent crime

Assumptions underlying programmes
Art and creative activities can serve as a powerful tool for expression and emotional development, particularly for those who have experienced trauma. The programme will be sustained and adequately funded to provide long-term impact. The wider community and key stakeholders (e.g., families, schools, criminal justice agencies) are invested in the success of the programme and its long-term goals. Reducing stigma and ensuring supportive social systems (mental health, housing, education) are crucial to reinforcing the positive changes made through the arts/culture programme. The programme will be most successful if broader social issues (e.g. poverty, lack of opportunities) are also addressed.

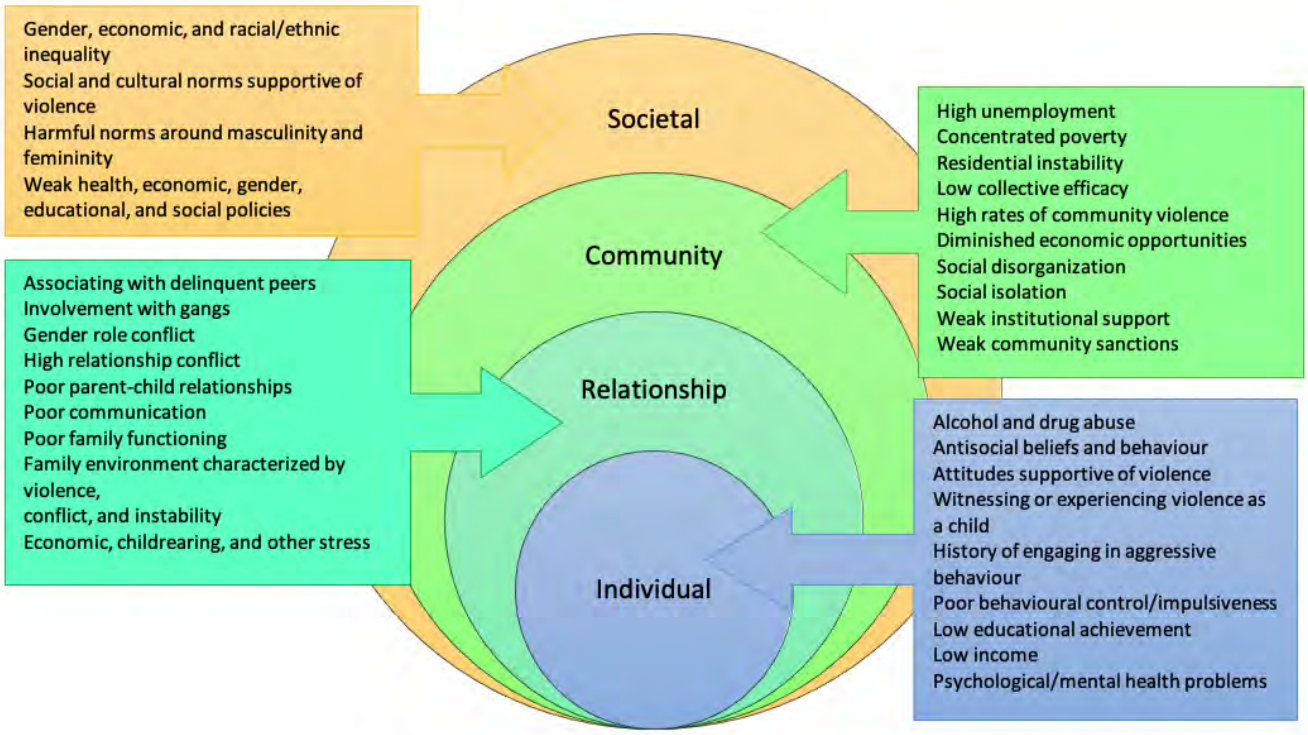
1. Introduction

1.1. Context

Knife crime and youth violence are increasingly serious societal, legal and public health problems. In 2023/24, 3,951 knife and offensive weapons offences by 10–17-year-olds were dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) - an increase of 27% compared to ten years prior (Ministry of justice, 2025). Police-recorded and NHS data (Office for National Statistics, 2025a, 2025b) and epidemiological studies examining adolescent trauma data in England and Wales (Lam et al., 2019; Low et al., 2022; Reilly et al., 2023) suggest males under 25 are also disproportionately affected as victims of violence involving sharp objects. Intervening in adolescence is therefore crucial for the prevention of knife crime and serious youth violence amongst those at greatest risk of involvement.

Common risk factors reported across studies regarding knife crime and serious youth violence have included, amongst other things, substance misuse, mental health issues, previous criminality, previous victimisation, peer delinquency and domestic abuse between parents (Brennan, 2019, 2023; Coid et al., 2021; McVie, 2010; Smith & Wynne-McHardy, 2019; Villadsen & Fitzsimons, 2023). Additionally, in relation to knife crime, Brennan (2023) found that experience of violence, distrust of police and previous criminality are all risk factors for weapon-carrying. Analysis of risk factors can be useful, but most do not allow for the examination of the structural relations between different risk factors (and protective factors) or their roles within the complex system of variables which produce certain behaviours (Bringmann et al., 2013; Hevey, 2018). These tend to be used in deficit-based approaches to preventing offending focussing on weaknesses and perceived problems related to risk. Unlike these deficit-models, the public health approach (described below) involves identifying both risk and protective factors at all levels of the socio-ecological model (**Figure 2**), determining how they work, and designing interventions with multi-disciplinary input across sectors (Krug et al., 2002).

Figure 2 - Socio-ecological model of risk factors for youth violence



Adapted from WHO (2022) *World Health Organization violence prevention unit: approach, objectives and activities, 2022-2026*

Public health approach: Following the declaration of violence as a worldwide public health problem by the WHO in 1996 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023), there was slow movement towards collaboration between criminal justice agencies and other sectors such as health and education firstly in the US (Gebo, 2022), and then in Scotland (Astrup, 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Public health interventions are designed with a view to meeting the needs of children and young people, rather than responding to concerns about public disorder (Ullman et al., 2024). Whilst the correlation between exposure to multiple risk factors and involvement in violence is acknowledged by public health perspectives, risk is not viewed as cumulative (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). Rather, the likelihood of violence is viewed as driven by the complex interactions between risk and protective factors at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels (WHO, 2010).

Only relatively recently has knife crime policy in England and Wales begun to incorporate a public health perspective. In their 2018 Serious Violence Strategy, the government stated they were supporting a "new balance between effective prevention and law enforcement" which would involve a "multiple strand approach involving a range of partners across different sectors" (HM Government, 2018a, p. 9):

- The government's 2018 'Serious Violence Duty' specified that authorities should collaborate through partnership structures and encouraged the adoption of a public health approach to violence reduction and prevention (Home Office, 2022). As part of the 'working together to safeguard children' guidance, the government acknowledged the need for place-based interventions that look to address the social determinants and environmental conditions driving offending (HM Government, 2018b).
- The government invested over £100 million in 20 multi-agency Violence Reduction Units to address the underlying causes of violence in the localities it is most prevalent, and £200 million in the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to fund early intervention projects and establish 'what works' to prevent children and young people becoming involved in crime and violence (Public Health England, 2019; Ryan & Holland, 2021).

Child first: A review of the YJS in England and Wales published by the Ministry of Justice in 2016 stated that children should be seen as children first and offenders second, and therefore government focus should be on improving their welfare, health and education rather than simply responding with punishment (Taylor, 2016). In contrast to 'neoliberal responsibilisation' of young people (Case & Haines, 2015), the 'child first' philosophy takes the view that risk-taking behaviours are a normal part of adolescent development, and children require someone to be responsible for addressing their welfare needs which can be understood through knowledge of children's lived experiences (Alexander, 2023; Case & Haines, 2015; Thompson, 2019)

The 2016 review of the YJS (Taylor, 2016) and the launch of the Serious Violence Duty in 2018 (Home Office, 2022) appear to have been key influencing factors in the increasing recognition of the importance of and responding to children and young people's vulnerability rather than simply as a risk to be managed. The establishment of VRUs in 2019 has led to a much wider range of interventions which have sought to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors in a less stigmatising manner. Alongside this, interest has been increasing in the role that arts can play in reducing serious violence, either as part of a programme or as the entirety of a programme.

1.2. Purpose

The breadth and scope of programmes using arts and culture to prevent and address offending amongst children and young people is unclear. A recent systematic review of international literature on the effects of arts interventions for children and young people found insufficient evidence to support or refute their effectiveness on preventing or reducing offending (Mansfield et al., 2024). Therefore, this review aimed to (1) map existing activity in the arts sector, and (2) better understand the evidence behind programmes that use arts and culture to engage children and young people and reduce their risk of committing crime. The key objectives were to conduct primary and secondary research to map the current landscape of activity in the arts sector to:

1) Understand the current evidence base
2) Identify evidence that can be further analysed for informing policy and/or
3) Identify areas to undertake primary research

Research questions

- What arts, museums, heritage and library activities and programmes are currently being delivered that can potentially help prevent crime?
- Can arts and cultural organisations be valuable partners to the police and youth services, offering activities, expertise and venues?
- What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these programmes?
- What is the quality of evidence to demonstrate the impact of arts and culture to engage young people and reduce their risk of committing crime?
- What evidence exists of the effects of arts on crime at a wider community level, rather than on

The purpose of this report is to interpret and consolidate the key findings, learnings and considerations from the analysis for DCMS and the wider sector, ensuring their maximum impact in the future. Through setting out the policy implications and identifying areas for further research, the report contributes to the building of DCMS' evidence base and is intended to inform the wider DCMS policy context in addressing the Government's evolving priorities such as the Safer Streets mission.

1.3. Scope

This review investigated the role of arts/culture programmes in engaging children and young people and reducing their risk of (re)offending. The primary focus is programmes delivered to children and young people aged 10-21 who have been engaged in serious youth violence, such as knife crime, however, the review also includes programmes that address youth offending more broadly.

In defining 'arts/culture' for the purposes of this review, we drew upon Arts Council England's use of term 'culture' to refer areas of activity associated with the artforms and organisations in which they invest: collections, combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre and the visual arts (Arts Council England, n.d.-b). We used Arts Council England's description of Combined Arts as including "festivals, carnivals, arts centres and presenting venues, rural touring networks and agencies" and Literature as including "poetry, fiction, life writing, spoken word, writing for children, literary translation and other forms of creative writing" (Arts Council England, n.d.-c). For this review, Visual Arts was defined as art which can be appreciated by sight, such as painting, sculpture and film. Although not explicitly described in the Arts Council England definition above, we also included Digital Arts, defined by the Tate as "art that is made or presented using digital technology" (Tate, 2025), as well as the creation of audio content such as radio or podcasting, and interventions using Interactive Virtual Reality (VR).

For the mapping exercise, we have included programmes currently delivered in England (within the criteria in section 5.1).

For the evidence review, we had intended to divide our analysis into two distinct timeframes: (1) programmes running since August 2020 (post-Covid) and (2) programmes running from 2010 until March 2020 (pre-Covid). Covid has had a significant impact on delivery of services as well as young people's specific needs and vulnerabilities therefore a distinction between programmes delivered pre- and post-Covid is useful for a context-specific understanding of outcomes. However, the majority of data evaluated by the studies was collected pre-Covid (see overview of studies in **Table 4** for the dates of data collection for each study), so the analysis was not divided in this way. Our time frame extends back as far as 2010 to ensure that learning from older programmes can be incorporated. We are mindful of changes in approaches to children and young people in recent years (with moves towards child-first) as well as developments in understanding motivations for violent crime (e.g. a greater emphasis on Adverse Childhood Experiences and vulnerabilities), therefore our synthesis of existing literature is grounded in this situational context.

We aimed to pull together evidence that linked changes in children and young people's attitudes and behaviour to arts/culture programmes, as well as identifying any tangible measures of reducing (re)offending. As individual benefits alone are not enough to achieve positive outcomes or shift change at other levels, an essential part of the review was to consider outcomes at all levels of risk (individual, relationship, community and societal).

Given the time constraints of this piece of work, it was not possible to include an exhaustive list of all arts/culture programmes currently being delivered, or to detail every feature of all programmes fitting the criteria. This report goes someway to answering the research questions set out above and provides recommendations for future research that will add to our knowledge in this area

2. Methodology

2.1. Phase 1 – Mapping exercise

To provide a detailed overview of existing programmes using arts/culture to prevent and/or reduce offending amongst children and young people in England, a range of sources were searched for programmes meeting the following inclusion criteria:

(1) Universal, secondary and or tertiary programmes;
(2) Currently being delivered in community and/or secure settings in England;
(3) Use arts/culture wholly or in part; and
(4) Aimed at children and young people seeking to prevent and or reduce knife crime, youth violence and/or offending

2.1.1. Programmes in community and secure settings

Systematic search

360Giving

A search of the GrantNav database (https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/) was conducted to find organisations currently delivering grant-funded programmes meeting the inclusion criteria. The GrantNav database is operated by 360Giving, a Charity developed to enable funders to share grants data which can be analysed easily alongside data from other organisations (360 Giving, n.d.-a). The database includes grant information from 317 funders including lottery distributors, community foundations and local authorities (360 Giving, n.d.-b, n.d.-c), easily searchable by date, location and theme. Full details of the GrantNav search conducted for this review can be found in Appendix 1.

Inspiring Futures

A manual online search of the eight organisations involved in the Inspiring Futures project was conducted to determine whether those organisations were delivering programmes with children and young people. The Inspiring Futures project, conducted over a three-year period, aimed to address why arts interventions impact adults involved with the Criminal Justice System (of all ages) and how to optimise the effect (Lanskey et al., 2024). A manual online search of the eight organisations involved in the project was conducted to determine whether those organisations were currently also delivering programmes with children and young people.

Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)

As limited information about library-based projects meeting the criteria in the other searches, a manual online search was conducted of websites corresponding to programmes categorised under 'Libraries' (N = 18) and 'Literature' (N = 59) in the database of current Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) (N = 986) (Arts Council England, n.d.-a). Arts Council England is a national development agency investing in artists and organisations that make and deliver work in communities (https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/). NPOs receive regular funding from Arts Council England.

Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)

A search was conducted of the Youth Endowment Fund's (YEF) database of funded projects (Youth Endowment Fund, n.d.-b). The YEF funds and evaluates programmes in England and Wales that aim to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence.

Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

We screened the websites of all twenty Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) websites in England, and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) websites for each police district with a VRU.

Programmes funded by VRU or PCC funding were included if they met criteria (1), (2) and (3) as above. By the nature of the funds' aims, inclusion criterion (4) was assumed to be implicit.

Call out

An email was sent to every VRU (N = 20) and every Youth Justice Service (YJS) in England (N = 140). The National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (https://artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/) emailed their network of members requesting details of current programmes matching the inclusion criteria below.

Details of programmes received in response to the call out were assumed to meet the inclusion criteria. It is important to note that this was not an exhaustive search, and it is likely there are more arts/culture programmes that meet the inclusion criteria that were not uncovered by the mapping exercise. Therefore, any numbers given should not be relied upon as indicative of the total number of programmes for any given location or artform.

Overview and review process for inclusion

One-hundred and thirty programmes are mapped in total. One hundred and twenty-one of these were taking place in community settings, and nine programmes were being delivered either in secure settings or in a combination of secure and community settings. Brief descriptions of programmes were extracted from the original source of information about that programme. However, where there was insufficient information to ascertain whether a programme met our inclusion criteria, supplementary information was sought from the website of the organisation delivering the programme.

The number of programmes mapped by source is outlined in Appendix 2.

2.1.2. Youth Justice Services (YJS)

To gain an overview of arts activity within the Youth Justice Services (YJS), the HM Inspectorate of Probations website (to go to HM Inspectorate of Probations website click here) was searched for their most recently published inspection report for each YJS in England. Reports were sourced for 129 YJS, which were then screened for reference to arts/culture-based activities. Thirty-five reports (listed in Appendix 3) referred to art/culture-based activities. In some cases where reports referred to arts/culture-based activities, the most recent YJS Plans for those areas were sourced for supplementary information.

It should be noted that, in contrast to the community and custodial programmes presented in this report, whether the arts/culture-based activities described by the YJS inspection reports are running currently has not been verified. The publication years of the YJS inspections referring to arts/culture-based activities ranged from 2018-2025. It is possible that some activities are no longer operating or that the inspection reports reviewed do not provide the most up-to-date information about those activities. Equally, it is possible that other YJS are currently using arts/culture-based approaches that were not uncovered by this systematic search. Indeed, our literature review and empirical work revealed several other YJS taking arts/culture-based approaches. As such, the findings presented from the systematic search should be interpreted as examples of arts/culture-based approaches taken by YJS over the last seven years.

2.1.3. Case studies

Three programmes spanning different geographical locations and artforms were chosen as exemplars of well-established collaborations between arts/culture organisations and Youth Justice Services, with strong links into local communities. The organisations delivering these programmes kindly agreed to feature as case studies in this report and provided all the necessary information.

2.2. Phase 2 – Evidence Review

2.2.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

We included studies published in peer reviewed journals and grey literature. Peer review involves assessment of study design, data analysis, interpretation and strengths and weaknesses by other academic researchers. The process is designed to ensure the information published is as truthful, valid and accurate as possible (Steer & Ernst, 2021). Grey literature consists of other work that is not published in commercial publications, and can include academic papers such as PhD theses, reports, evaluations and ongoing

research. Grey literature can make an important contribution to evidence reviews, as it often provides data that may not be reported in commercially published literature. Its inclusion ensures that our review provides a balanced and nuanced account of the totality of evidence available (Paez, 2017).

The full inclusion and exclusion criteria for the evidence review can be found in **Table 1.**

Table 1 - Evidence review inclusion and exclusion criteria

	INCLUDED	EXCLUDED
Participants	Studies in which participants are children and young people, professionals and/or family/peers of children and young people, provided the programme evaluated is aimed at children and young people aged 10-21yrs.	Studies evaluating programmes in non-UK settings
Study design	Evaluations using any study design	Systematic reviews
Intervention/ approach	**Definition of 'programme'** Evaluations of approaches are included as well as specific interventions (referred to collectively as 'programmes' in this review). **Programme target groups/settings** Evaluations of programmes that are aimed at preventing, addressing or reducing crime amongst children and young people aged 10-21 and take place in any setting (secure or community). Programmes aimed at preventing or reducing crime amongst any combination of: ● children and young people currently or previously involved in the YJS (tertiary) ● children and young people 'at risk' of criminality (secondary) ● Whole population of 10-21 year-olds (universal) UK settings only. **Arts/culture** For inclusion, evaluated programmes must: ● Uses arts/culture wholly or in part ● Involve children and young people as creators of art and/or children and young people interact with the art in some way	Evaluations of programmes in which children and young people are passive observers of art Evaluations in which the evaluation site is the adult prison estate, unless the programme is specifically targeted at the 18-21 age group.
Outcomes	Evaluations where at least one of the following applies: ● A stated aim of the programme is the prevention or reduction of weapon-related crime and/or youth violence OR ● An unintended outcome is the prevention or reduction of weapon-related crime and/or youth violence ● The programme is being delivered within youth justice settings (community and/or custodial) ● The programme is being delivered to children and young people who have previously been involved in the criminal justice system	Evaluations of programmes designed specifically to prevent/address: ● Sexual violence ● Intimate partner violence ● Ideological violence ● Gender-based violence Evaluations of programmes which aim to address what are well-evidenced risk factors for involvement in youth crime (e.g. school exclusion, marginalisation) but don't meet any of our outcomes criteria Studies using art purely as a research tool rather an intervention
Date	Some or all evaluation data collected between 2010 - current	

2.2.2. Search strategy

Database searches

We conducted searches of several relevant academic databases, which are detailed below. Mansfield et al. (2024) previously conducted a comprehensive search of literature up until 2023 for a systematic review which had similar inclusion criteria to this review. Therefore, to make the best use of time and resources for this rapid review, we conducted a relatively narrow search of papers up until 2023 (search 1) and a much broader search of papers published between 2023-2025 (search 2).

Search 1

Databases: Web of Science, EBSCOhost, Scopus, Ovid, Applied Social Science Abstracts

Date of search: 28/01/25

Search terms:

Title	youth OR young OR child OR adolescent OR juvenile OR offender OR risk OR vulnerable	AND
Title	arts OR collections OR dance OR drama OR heritage OR libraries OR literacy OR museums OR music OR theatre OR creative	AND
Title	crime OR violence OR offending OR criminality OR criminal OR knife OR knives OR weapon OR sharp OR anti-social	
Limiters	**Published 2010 - current**	

Results: Web of Science (N = 86), EBSCOhost (N = 119), Scopus (N = 89), Ovid (N = 54), Applied Social Science Abstracts (N = 6)

Search 2

Databases: Web of Science, EBSCOhost, Scopus

Date of search: 29/01/25

Search terms:

Title	youth OR young OR child OR adolescen* OR juvenile OR offend* OR risk* OR vulnerable OR teen* OR delinquen* OR inmate OR prison* OR community OR yoi OR exclu* OR forensic OR disadvantage OR unequal OR problem*	AND
Title	art* OR collections OR danc* OR drama* OR heritage OR librar* OR liter* OR museums OR music OR theatre* OR creativ* OR perform* OR visual OR digital OR cultur* OR sing* OR rap* OR grime OR "hip hop" OR poet* OR podcast* OR photog* OR paint* OR graffiti* OR story* OR film* OR video OR sculpture OR craft* OR mural OR zine OR media	AND
Title	crim* OR violen* OR offend* OR knife OR knives OR weapon OR sharp OR anti-social OR "anti social" OR antisocial OR behave* OR disorder	
Limiters	**Published 2023 - current**	

Results: EBSCOhost (N = 958), Scopus (N = 906), Ovid (N = 816)

<u>Manual search</u>

All papers subject to full screening in Mansfield et al. (2024) systematic review (both included and excluded) were included in our title/abstract screening process regardless of whether they were identified by our database searches. We manually searched the reference lists of relevant academic article articles, and also searched the following sources of grey literature for relevant evaluations:

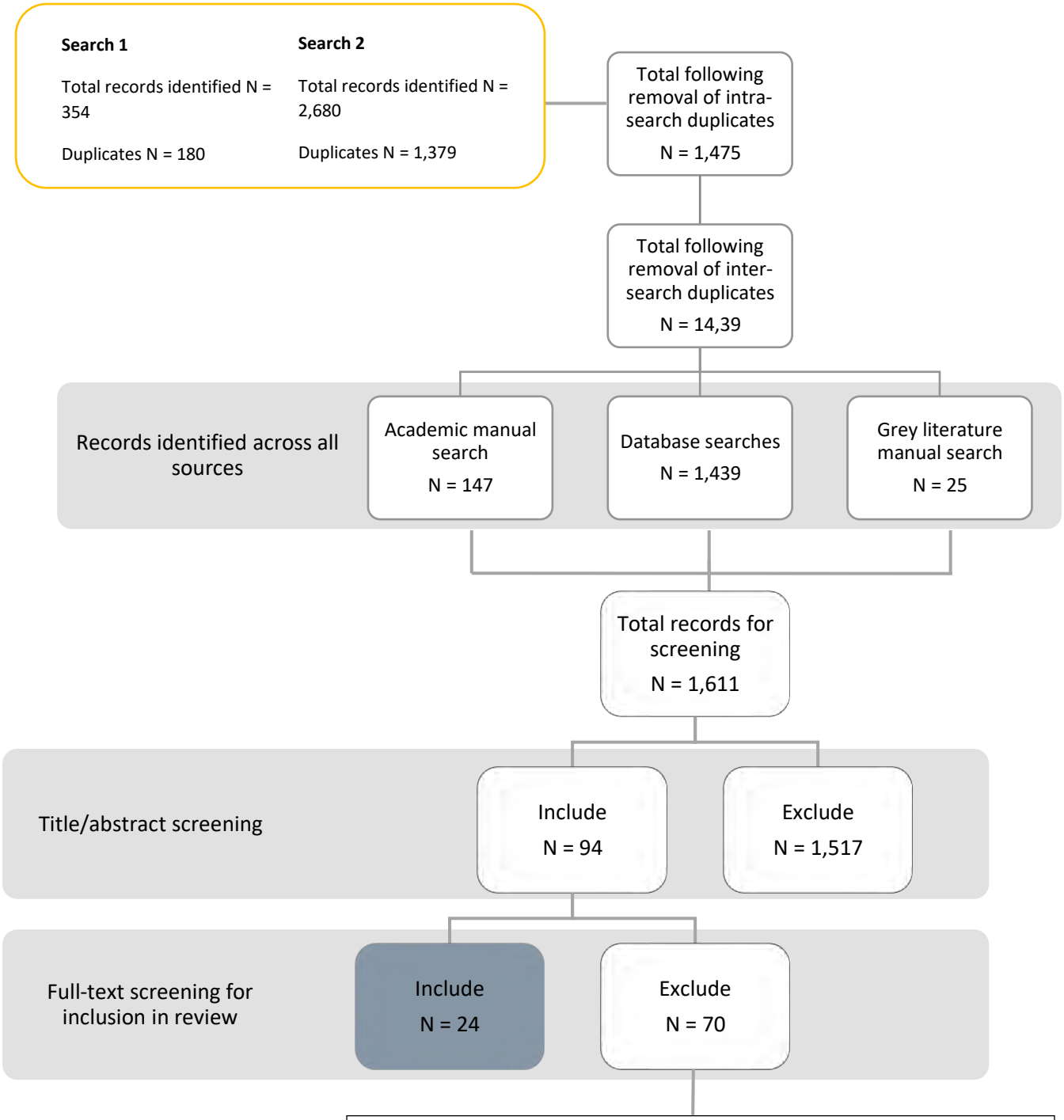
- Youth Justice Board Resource Hub (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, n.d.)
- NCJAA Evidence library (National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, n.d.)
- YEF database (Youth Endowment Fund, n.d.-b)
- VRU websites (N = 20)
- Websites of current and previous programmes identified in our mapping exercise that use arts/culture to address and prevent crime amongst children and young people

2.2.3. Screening, data extraction and quality appraisal

Our combined searches resulted in a total of 1,611 records for screening. Of these records, 94 were regarded as potentially meeting the inclusion criteria at the title/abstract screening stage. Twenty-four of these met the inclusion criteria at the full-screening stage. A flowchart detailing the evidence search and screening process is illustrated in **Figure 3.** To assess the quality of the available evidence, we designed and applied a bespoke quality appraisal form to each study. The form drew upon CASP's critical appraisal checklists (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, n.d.-a), and was designed with our specific research questions and the time constraints of the rapid evidence review in mind.

Details of where each of the twenty-four included studies was sourced can be found in Appendix 4.

Figure 3 - Evidence search flowchart



Reasons for exclusion			
	N		N
Wrong location (outside of UK)	33	In-house evaluation	2
Wrong age	12	Wrong population	2
Wrong outcomes	11	Not children and young people-specific	1
Outside of date range	6	Insufficient depth/rigour	1
Wrong article type	2		

2.3. Phase 3 – Empirical work

2.3.1. The voices of children and young people

The voices of children and young people participating in arts/culture-based change programmes is central to an understanding of how programmes can promote change, for whom and in what context. However, due to the time constraints of this review we were unable to seek ethical approval to interview children and young people, instead we accessed data collected by our research team for other projects. This provided a snapshot of the opinions of 35 children and young people participating in current or recent programmes (in the last 3 years) and included children and young people in YOIs participating in the New Chapters evaluation and those participating in three TiPP creative arts-based activities as part of the community-based Summer Arts College. These programmes all focussed on elements of music creation, drawing, creative writing (of song lyrics and short stories) and recording with some elements of drama/theatre involved. This analysis, while only partial, offers some insight into how children and young people engage with programmes as well as their views on the benefits and challenges of arts/culture-based programmes.

2.3.2. Semi-structured interviews with decision-makers and practitioners

Overview

In order to understand the value of arts and culture in preventing and reducing crime amongst children and young people, we conducted semi-structured interviews with decision-makers and practitioners in the arts/culture and youth justice sectors, and academics conducting research in this area. We conducted a total of 22 interviews with 25 participants. One academic responded to our questions in writing.

Participants

- Youth Justice Services (YJS): Decision-makers (N = 2)
- Violence Reduction Units (VRUs): Decision-makers (N = 2), Senior staff (N = 1), Researchers (N = 1)
- Local authority: Partnership manager (N = 1)
- National youth organisations: Researcher (N = 1)
- National arts organisations: Decision-makers (N = 1)
- Organisations delivering programmes using arts/culture*: CEOs (N = 7), Senior practitioners (N = 5)
- Academics (N = 4):

Professor Laura Caulfield, Chair of the Institute for Community Research and Development, University of Wolverhampton

Professor Norma Daykin, Professor Emerita, University of West England

Dr Frances Howard, Senior Lecturer, Youth Work (Social Work, Care and Community) at Nottingham Trent University

Professor Louise Mansfield, Professor of Sport, Health and Social Sciences at Brunel University

*All organisations were working within youth justice settings (community and/or secure) or were working in partnership with the youth justice sector.

Ethics

The research was deemed exempt from full ethical review by the University of Manchester Ethics Committee (Ref: 2025-22189-39105). University of Manchester data protection policies and procedures were followed.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a variety of methods:

- A request for information about current programmes and participation in interviews was sent to all VRUs (N = 20) and YJS (N = 140) in England. A request for information about current programmes

was sent to members of the National Criminal Justice in Arts Award Alliance. Eleven individuals responding to these call outs (collectively) were interviewed.

- We selected twenty-four organisations from our mapping exercise which covered a range of artforms, delivery settings and geographical areas and emailed them to ask if they would like to participate. The research team had no prior relationship with any of the organisations contacted. Of the eight organisations to respond, seven individuals were interviewed (from five organisations). Interviews were not conducted with the other organisations for the following reasons: one did not attend, one was unable to offer a suitable date within the timescales of the review, and one responded once we had reached capacity.
- Four relevant, national organisations funding arts/culture-based projects in the youth sector were contacted directly, three of whom responded and took part.
- We identified seven academics with relevant published research all of whom were contacted directly. Five responded, three of whom participated in an interview, one of whom responded to questions in writing and one of whom was not available on a date within the timescales of the review.

Procedure

Participants were given a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) outlining the purpose of the research and what taking part would involve. Once they had decided to take part, participants provided informed consent prior to the commencement of their interview. All interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams and transcribed verbatim. Interviews typically lasted between 30-60 minutes. Interviews with decision-makers and practitioners focussed on understanding the aims and impacts of current programmes, the contexts in which they are delivered, the barriers and facilitators affecting programme success, gaps in knowledge and areas for further investigation. Interviews with academics were primarily focused on the research landscape surrounding arts participation in youth justice.

Analysis

The interview data was analysed using Framework Analysis, which offers a transparent, systematic approach to identifying, describing and interpreting patterns and variations within and across cases (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Framework analysis is particularly suited to applied qualitative research which seeks to answer questions about specific populations and produce findings which are accessible to a variety of audiences, ultimately increasing ease of application to policy and practice (Goldsmith, 2021). The analytic process followed the five steps outlined by Ritchie and Spencer (1994): 1) Data familiarisation; 2) Identifying a thematic framework; 3) Indexing; 4) Charting; 5) Mapping and interpreting. The framework was generated from inductively and deductively derived themes. Inductively derived themes were generated from the literature, whilst deductively derived themes were generated from the interview data itself.

3. Phase 1 Results: Mapping current programmes

3.1. Current and previous programmes

3.1.1. Community projects

We identified 121 programmes meeting our inclusion criteria for mapped programmes, which were:

(1) Universal, secondary and or tertiary programmes;
(2) Currently being delivered in community and/or secure settings;
(3) Uses arts/culture wholly or in part; and
(4) Aimed at children and young people seeking to prevent and or reduce knife crime, youth violence and/or offending.

It should be reiterated that the mapping exercise was not an exhaustive search, and it is likely there are other community activities that meet the criteria which were not identified in this exercise.

Some projects were universally available, particularly those held within youth and community centres with a diversionary focus, whilst others were specifically targeted at children and young people deemed 'at risk' of entering the YJS or who were already involved with the YJS. Whilst we initially sought to group programmes by age group (10-17 and 18-21), many programmes did not specify the age groups that were eligible for the programme but simply referred to the programme as being for children and/or young people.

Artforms were varied, with music being the most common, followed by theatre/drama. Several projects used more than one artform. We did not identify any activities taking place within libraries that met the criteria. However, the potential of libraries in the context of reducing crime amongst children and young people was highlighted in the interviews:

> *"Libraries are everywhere and have access to a very wide demographic, they're safe and trusted places. And they're free to access and they're warm and people can go there" (Participant 5, Decision-maker, Arts sector).*

We identified two museum-led projects meeting the criteria:

1) The National Justice Museum's Choices and Consequences exhibition. The Choices and Consequences exhibition has been hosted in collaboration with the Ben Kinsella Trust since 2019. It tells the story of Ben Kinsella, who was tragically killed in 2008, and aims to educate local young people about the consequences of carrying a knife and the choices they can make to avoid becoming impacted by violence (Nottingham VRP, n.d.).
2) Wiltshire Museum's Street Art Graffiti project. This project is detailed in Case Study 1, alongside their thoughts on the potential of museums in preventing and addressing crime amongst children and young people.

Additionally, although Hampshire Cultural Trust are not currently running any programmes that meet our inclusion criteria, they have previously delivered a number of art/culture projects aimed at preventing and reducing crime amongst children and young people (Hampshire Cultural Trust, n.d.). The Trust manages and supports visitor attractions, museums, art galleries and art centres across Hampshire. In 2019 they worked in partnership with Hampshire YJS to provide high quality arts activity, including two cultural trips through a summer arts college. This culminated at an exhibition in Winchester Discovery Centre, and the participating children and young people achieved Explore and Bronze Arts Awards. In 2020 they led the Create and Connect project, investigating the benefits of remotely delivered arts programmes in reducing risk factors children and young people being involved in violence crime. Hampshire Cultural Trust is currently running the Stepping Stones project, which is focused on improving young people's mental health.

We asked the Hampshire Cultural Trust about the potential of museums in preventing and reducing crime amongst children and young people:

> *"For us it's all about being able to provide access for a young person at any stage of their life. We want to move away from always running time limited targeted provision and look at how*

the work we have done up until now can be embedded in what our venues deliver on a regular basis. We want to provide opportunities for a young person to engage, at any point of their development. So as a family, they can come in together, they can come on a school visit, sign up to a school holiday programme, attend a music gig as a 16-year-old and eventually be supported into volunteering and even employment. Within that lifespan of working with young people, there are opportunities for partners to plug into that. So, working with schools, working with CAMHs, working with the youth offending team, etc. So that young people always feel there's always something across the county in a venue or a programme that they can be part of rather than it feel like we have to do a three-year project here, two-year project there and then when the funding ends, their engagement with us ends. We need to find a way of meeting their needs at whatever stage of life they are at." (Director for Community and Impact, Hampshire Cultural Trust).

A full list of mapped community organisations and programmes including artforms and locations is provided in Appendix 5.

Core components themes and intended outcomes

Our review of programme descriptions revealed several commonly occurring core components and intended outcomes. It should be noted that programme descriptions were extracted from the source at which we originally identified the programme (see Appendix 2), although in some cases supplementary information was sought from the website of the organisation delivering the programme. In most cases, programme descriptions were brief, and it was beyond the scope of this exercise to exhaustively review all components and intended outcomes of mapped programmes. As such, presenting any detailed quantification of how frequently each component or intended outcome occurred across descriptions would not be meaningful. However, those which appeared more than six times across the programme descriptions gathered are listed here:

Core Components:

- Arts participation as therapeutic
- Arts as a means of expression/communication
- Arts as a positive, diversionary activity
- Arts alongside or integrated within mentoring
- Provision of safe spaces (physical & emotional)
- Celebrating & showcasing artwork

Intended outcomes

- Improvement in mental health/wellbeing
- Raised aspirations, resilience, confidence & self-esteem
- Skills development
- Awards/accreditation
- Qualifications & pathways to employment, education & training
- Peer support & development of friendships
- Strengthening family relationships & support
- Community cohesion
- Keeping children safe from exploitation, violence and other harms
- Preventing and/or reducing involvement in anti-social behaviour, offending, knife crime and gangs

Examples of mapped projects alongside core components and intended outcomes are illustrated in **Figure 4** and **5**. It should be reiterated that our search was not exhausted, and these programme descriptions were extracted from our mapping exercise as illustrative examples of programme descriptions encompassing the core components and intended outcomes listed above.

3.1.2. Secure settings

We identified nine organisations delivering programmes in secure settings that met the inclusion criteria for the mapping exercise. An overview of the identified programmes is presented in **Table 2**.

3.1.3. Youth Justice Services (YJS)

We identified 35 YJS delivering programmes that met the inclusion criteria. An overview of activities and locations is presented in Table 3. As outlined in the methodology, it should be noted that the information provided does not necessarily reflect current activity within YJS, but rather details relevant activities uncovered by a systematic search of YJS inspection reports that have taken place within YJS at various points since 2018.

The literature review and empirical work undertaken for this review revealed further examples of the use of arts/culture in YJS that were not identified in the inspections search. Caulfield et al. (2019) and Caulfield et al. (2021) evaluate arts/culture approaches within Sandwell YJS. Case Study 1 outlines Wiltshire Museum's Street Art Graffiti project delivered in partnership with Wiltshire YJS; Case Study 2 describes a variety of arts-based approaches in Manchester YJS; and Case Study 3 focuses on the collaboration between Isle of Wight YJS and Artswork to deliver activities and reparation projects.

Table 2 - Current arts/culture-based programmes in secure settings

ORGANISATION & ARTFORM	DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME/ACTIVITY
Blue Cabin CIO Visual arts, literature	**Creative Aid:** A co-creation project with care-experienced young men in Deerbolt Prison, supporting the young men to be recognised as artists. The project includes artist-led workshops and support for participants, who are aged between 16 and 25, to achieve an Arts Award accreditation. The programme aims to help participants explore their life stories and develop their relationships with others, including family members and peers in Deerbolt. In the first year, participants explored artforms including poetry, scriptwriting, typography, graphic design and portraits with visiting artists (Blue Cabin CIO, n.d.)
Geese Theatre Company Theatre, filmmaking	Creative filmmaking projects for young people in secure and community settings, usually funded by BBC Children in Need. Projects have been ongoing for approximately ten years, often with different host organisations. Projects usually work with groups of up to 10 young people aged 14-18 over a period of 5 days, and commence with an interactive performance, Hectic, delivered by the Geese team. Hectic provides a safe, one-step removed way of exploring some of the themes, issues and challenges many of the young people we work with might face. This is followed by a creative group work process using creative, experiential activity to explore relevant themes, including offending, personal relationships, the impact of behaviours on self and others, managing high risk situations, goal setting, self-efficacy and self-esteem and identity. Through this exploration, participants are encouraged to begin the process of devising a film narrative. Working alongside a filmmaker and Geese practitioners, participants can experiment with both on and off camera roles, including directing, sound recording, and camera operator, in addition to performing. This process culminates in a premiere of the film. (Information received directly from organisation)
HDMT Music Music, other creative approaches	The One Spirit project focuses on 3 main activities: 1) In custody residences (including YOIs) – short intensive group projects delivering personal development training through a framework of music, creative arts and music business study; 2) 1:1 mentoring in custody - having built up trust in residencies facilitators hold 1:1 sessions using music-making as above, to continue developing life-skills and build up personal and social outcomes; 3) 1:1 resettlement support "through the gate" - once released, participants will continue working with their coach with regular 1:1 meetings, progressing their personal goals, improving technical skills in a chosen musical area (composition, tech, lyrics, business) and receiving life-skills guidance towards education and employment opportunities or simply more pastoral, resettlement support. The core aims are to help participants improve their self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy and mental health; engagement with learning and behaviour; and to desist from re-offending. (HDMT Music, n.d)
Irene Taylor Trust Music	**Music in Prisons:** The aim of each project is to support a group of young people in prison, who rarely get the chance to engage in the arts, to create their own original and innovative music. The music is professionally recorded, and copies of the CD are sent to the participants and their families, creating a lasting sense of achievement for all. The projects are current running in YOIs across the country. (Information received directly from organisation).
It's not your birthday, but… Visual Arts	Creative arts programmes with young adults at HMPYOI Feltham and in the community. Many participants the organisation works with have been involved in violence and knife crime. The offer does not explicitly tackle this but works on building connection, personal growth and positive relationships, which in turn enables people to view themselves differently and build new pathways away from crime. (Information received directly from organisation)
Koestler Arts Not discipline-specific	Koestler partners with other organisations such as arts venues, museums and galleries and other organisations encouraging arts and education in secure settings including YOIs and secure children's homes across the UK to develop ambitious, innovative programmes that maximise resources and expertise. Koestler Arts also run the Koestler Awards for Arts in criminal justice for people in secure settings and in the community, and have an Awards programme tailored for those aged 18 and under. (Koestler Arts, n.d.)
National Literacy Trust Literature, music	"This 12-week programme uses creative writing to raise aspirations, help young people find their voice and empower them to tell their stories. Sessions cover a broad range of genres and themes – from lyric writing to memoir – and authors with relatable lived experience will facilitate guest sessions" (Youth Endowment Fund, n.d.-a)
Only Connect Music	Only Connect deliver innovative rehabilitation projects in prisons, across youth justice and through their Membership centre in Kings Cross. Throughout the year, music course participants create and develop their music, which is then released through Only Connect's channels, helping them to build confidence and form a strong foundation for their goals to progress in the community. Outcomes are based on the resettlement pathways and consist of: accommodation; living skills & self-care; mental health & well-being; friends & community; relationships & family; parenting & care; drugs & alcohol; positive use of time; managing strong feelings; a crime-free life. (Only Connect, n.d.)
Unlock Drama CIC Applied theatre	Unlock Drama delivers drama projects to unlock life skills that can be transferable in day-to-day life and can be applied in social situations, training or employment. The organisation uses sustainable approaches by sharing performances acted by participants with targeted audiences, staff and the wider community. Peer-led performances showcase realistic, hard-hitting, memorable and engaging theatre. Audiences are selected to watch the final product; further spreading awareness of the detrimental effects of the topic in hand; provoking empathy, self-awareness and a view of how actions affect others. (Unlock Drama CIC, n.d.)

Table 3 - Examples of current and previous arts/culture-based activities in Youth Justice Services (YJS)

INTEVENTION/ACTIVITY	LOCATIONS & EXAMPLES
Facilities within YJS	**Nottingham City:** Music/dance studio; **Bedfordshire:** Activity room & music studio; **Ealing:** Arts room & music studio; **Wiltshire:** Hub with music room
Showcasing art created by children and young people	**South Tees:** Display of artwork created by children and young people within YJS meeting rooms where meetings with children and young people take place; **Ealing:** Several rooms within YJS have facilities have been designed and decorated by the children and young people
Access to external music projects/facilities	**Solihull, Ealing, Hackney, Merton, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Swindon, Oxfordshire, Birmingham, Brighton & Hove, Croydon:** Music projects **Croydon:** Arranges range of diversion activities include a music studio tour; **Enfield:** Five new youth facilities, which create safe spaces for children to meet and all YJS children are introduced to these – including music production facilities)
Access to other external projects, resources and services	**Solihull:** weapons programme that is delivered creatively through VR headsets; **Wolverhampton:** 'gazebo theatre' drama and art; resources for creating music and music videos; **West Mercia:** Woodwork workshop art group work; **Bromley:** positive activity programmes, including arts and photography projects; **Wirral:** art centre **Hampshire:** dance academy; **West Berkshire:** photography project; **Calderdale:** multi-purpose youth facility providing access to services and activities including dance and theatre; **Stockport**: Children also had access to a mentor who engaged children based on their interests, e.g. music recording studio sessions
Collaborative projects with external organisations	**Solihull:** Diversionary music programme; **Wolverhampton:** Children and young people designed the YJS symbol in collaboration with Wolverhampton Art Gallery
Reparation	**Wolverhampton:** 'Bladed Angel of Change' – creative arts project that deals with the dangers of knife crime; photography; making cards and jewellery) **West Mercia:** Woodwork workshop **Camden:** Access to a range of reparation activities including helping at music venues, carpentry, gardening, and creating mosaic tiles **Hillingdon:** Home reparation packs produced during lockdown, including creative writing, crime prevention poster design, recipes & working around the house **Wirral:** Workshop named by children as 'The Shed', where products including bird boxes and hedgehog houses are made and then donated to animal rescue charities; and an art project making crime reduction posters. **Birmingham:** Children created an art installation which was erected at a local cathedral ahead of a vigil to remember those lost to road traffic accidents. **East Riding:** Reparation tailored to meet the young person's enjoyment of art (graffiti project). **Lancashire:** A young person with a keen interest in crime music encouraged to write a "reparation rap" to increase awareness of his offending on the victim.
Use of arts within YJS trauma-informed framework	**Wolverhampton:** Theatre/creative arts
Art therapy	**Kensington & Chelsea:** Art therapy; **Lewisham:** Drama therapy; **Waltham Forest:** Drama therapy with girls who offend – commissioned; **Wakefield:** Music therapy; **Enfield:** Commissioning Everybody Loves Music (ELM), a therapeutic group programme delivered to through music to address knife crime & robbery

Activities & approaches led by YJS Practitioners	**Sutton:** Prosocial activities such as art and craft **Waltham Forest:** Residential music and visual art project **Wiltshire:** Adaptations in service delivery and use of a range of techniques to engage children and young people, such as fidget toys, picture cards, and YouTube clips. **Hampshire:** Art resources and baking boxes provided to support activities at home. **Doncaster:** Individualised plans co-produced with children, taking account of their views, interests, and aspirations. In one case where a child had an interest and talent in music, this was identified in the plan and funding pursued to explore this. **Bolton:** Case managers capitalised on children and young people's interests by encouraging them to take part in music programmes or involving sporting activities to promote self-esteem.
Summer Arts School	**North Tyneside**: Children work with artists, literacy and numeracy practitioners and YJS staff and achieve a range of qualifications. Board members attend the Summer Arts School award presentation, providing opportunities to talk to the children and their families about the activities they have completed successfully.

Information sourced from HM Inspectorate of Probation reports (listed in Appendix 3)

Figure 4 - Illustration of core components and identified in current programmes (1)

Therapeutic benefits

Re-establish

"Group, drop-in and **mentoring** sessions in a **creative art** & **wellbeing** space for young people surrounded by drugs, crime, violence and loss. This will provide a **safe space**, **build healthy relationships** and **a strong sense of self-belief**. The project will run weekly session for young people by **mentoring** to enhance creative arts, **life skills** and **relationship** development, combined with sport. **The project makes the community safer by providing consistent positive relationships/role-models**, developmental activities, with **a safe place** to belong for kids surrounded by challenge and violence. The team will train up young leaders and local volunteers, to develop teenagers through the youth committee, tailored sessions around weapons awareness, instilling **healthy boundaries and respect**, raising life **aspirations** and expectations"

Resilience

Relationships with family

About the Town CIC

Sessions for young people in years 5 to 7 will "incorporate **mindfulness practices using art as a therapeutic tool**. The young people will be encouraged to express their emotions and learn **communication skills** through **artistic activities**. They will also include recreational activities and an opportunity for young people to **build relationships with the local policing teams**. Sessions for young people aged 13 and above "will focus more on **advanced forms of art**. The sessions are designed to foster **self-confidence, self-worth** and **artistic expression**, **providing an alternative to crime and/or ASB**"

Community cohesion

Self-esteem

Fifth Word

"Weekly sessions will run at MyPlace@Westfield Folkhouse youth centre and Mansfield Palace Theatre; for young people aged 14-19 (or up to 25 if they identify as disabled). Sessions will create a **safe space** for young people to discuss issues that affect them; and to work together to **create their own stories**. Sessions will culminate in a **digital showcase** of their stories, as part of Mansfield Town Film Festival at Mansfield Palace in Summer 2024. These **original short films** will work to raise awareness in **the wider community of issues affecting some of the most disadvantaged young people in Mansfield"**

West Yorkshire Playhouse

"West Yorkshire Playhouse is a major producing theatre whose **dual aims are social and artistic**. They work with around 3,000 people each year of all ages, backgrounds and abilities; using **the arts** as a tool for **self-discovery**, empowerment and **community cohesion**. This funding will allow them to deliver **arts outreach** sessions **(drama/hip hop music)** to young people aged 11-19yrs in a community venue and in schools in the four Leeds wards. Integral to the project will be creating a cohort of young people aged 17-19 specially trained as advanced **Peer Mentors**; they will help plan and deliver the outreach sessions, support young people to engage and carry out consultation with them on further activities. The project aims to **divert** young people who may be at risk of offending into **positive activity**, firstly in their own community and then at a mainstream city centre venue"

Diversionary activity

Street Fusion Community Group

"support and diversionary services for young people in Brent and surrounding areas using music as a medium to assist in reducing knife and gang crime in the area.

Aim: break down rivalries build relationships and improve community cohesion"

Skills

Figure 5 - Illustration of core components and intended outcomes identified in current programmes (2)

3.1.4. Case studies

CASE STUDY 1: STREET ART PROJECT AT WILTSHIRE MUSEUM

The project is a partnership between Wiltshire Museum and Wiltshire's Youth Justice Service (YJS). It ran for eight weeks in 2023 and 2024, and plans for the 2025 project are currently underway. The project stems from knowledge of the young people's interest in art, particularly graffiti art. Graffiti's fascinating history is explored via the museum's collections. In 2025 the project will offer a placement to previous participants who are nearing the end of their education, which will prepare them for the workforce

Project aims

- prevent the young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour
- provide a safe place with constructive, creative & reflective activities to engage in, contributing to positive mental health
- enable the young people to enjoy being creative and curious about the world doing, which may help them focus on school work and inspire them to explore future work aspirations and wellness hobbies
- help them to express themselves more confidently: through talking with peers and adults involved in the project their communication, teamwork and empathy may improve
- provide a creative & informal platform through which YJS workers can identify areas where further support may be needed
- enable the young people to achieve a high standard of art with the help of the artist-facilitator and see their work exhibited publicly, increasing their confidence

Artwork in the community

"The artwork produced by the young people has been displayed in the museum, and some of it at a site on the other side of town which is being renovated for us to move into. It's in a really prominent busy area of our town. They decorated a burger van in the local area" (Wiltshire Museum)

The potential of museums in reducing crime amongst children & young people

"Museums bare neutral, safe, and community spaces, encouraging lifelong learning but very often facilitating people to explore their own interests in 'their way'. We foster valuable non-curriculum skills and knowledge - for life, including using history education to tackle hate. Heritage is recognised by UNESCO to be vital for improving wellbeing. The provision for helping young people get into the workplace is poor, even more so for those who have been through the criminal justice system, hindering their chances of reform and adopting positive behaviours"

"We're in a rural area, a lot of young people don't have anything to do. The local councils try putting on various sporting things for different young people, but not everyone's sporty. So, we're working on putting things on that aren't sporty, but obviously it we either have to charge for it or we have to find funding for it to make it accessible to everyone".

We do a project with children and for families in local areas of high deprivation. We give them something to eat and they do museum activities with us. In some of the areas there's a lot of anti-social behaviour, and sometimes I worry about the young people going down a bad route. This is why we need to keep them engaged in something like museums because it gives them something to do. They can see another side of life that isn't necessarily engaging in those kind of behaviours. They've only got a few years to go before they get into that age bracket, so I think its really important from that point of view, stopping it before it happens".

(Wiltshire Museum)

CASE STUDY 2: MANCHESTER YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE (YJS)

"The children who present in the Youth Justice Service are often the most underserved, and they've suffered significant trauma, adverse childhood experiences, abuse and neglect, and harm outside the homes: so violence in communities, exploitation, things like that. These things impact upon oneself, sense of identity and self-efficacy.

We asked the children, 'If you had the power to change Youth Justice, what would you do? One of the things they said is we want to do arts and music and get qualifications.

In the years after lockdown I said to TiPP: I want to make youth justice an arts-based service where arts and qualifications and aspiration and identity and efficacy are central to everything we do".

Head of Service, Manchester YJS

Musicians in residence offer support and engaging creative activities through five weekly sessions across three sites. The musicians are regular, reliable figures who are there week in week out to offer support and work with the children and young people (children and young people) in developing their creativity. They also bring in a range of other artists to work alongside them to expand and enrich the offer including visual artist, digital creatives, photographers, creative writers and poets and drama practitioners. All sessions are underpinned by the Arts Award, awarded by Trinity College London.

The children and young people have co-created the spaces, making them feel more welcoming, relaxing and creative. Murals on the walls include inspirational quotes, the Manchester bee, music notation and one on the theme of 'bringing the outside in' which was chosen by the children and young people. Spaces have high quality music equipment in them.

"There's a Morning Coming": Image of the children and young people's artwork which is displayed at a local youth centre

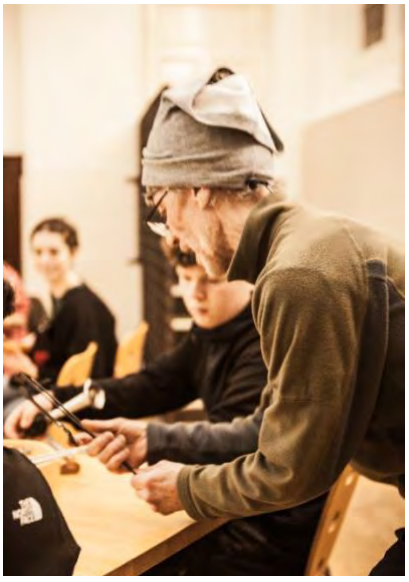


Photo credit: Sangita Mistry for TiPP

Highlights to date

Since 2021, six children and young people have achieved Discover Arts Awards, 30 achieved Bronze and five achieved silver.

An exhibition of children and young people's photographs, entitled Moments in Transit, has been displayed permanently at Deansgate Train Station. The work was shortlisted for a Community Rail Award in 2025.

children and young people have presented and performed their music on Unity Radio and at two GM Care Leavers Events. They also hosted a music and arts event to celebrate Black History.

Several children and young people have gone on to attend a course with Brighter Sounds to improve their performance skills and others have progressed in to Further Education.

The Musician in Residence initiative was nominated for a prestigious Manchester Culture Award in 2023 and won a Manchester Culture Award in 2024.

"Children and staff tell us that the Visual Artist and Musician in Residence sessions enable them to express themselves and explore identity and culture in safe creative spaces".

Music in Residence

Accessibility

Relaxed sessions place the needs and interests of the children and young people at their core. Every detail of the project has been planned to make them as accessible as possible to as many as possible.

"We've got children who are at risk of coming into the system coming because we've got a prevention team, we've got children who are coming out of custody and being resettled into the community doing arts and music alongside other stuff as well. But we've got children who have transitioned into the probation service and have become eighteen but still come back to access support from our music because we use real musicians in the industry".

Voluntary participation

"It doesn't matter if you decide you don't want to come the week after, it's your choice to turn up. It's totally consent driven, which is important I think for creativity"

Partnership

TiPP and Manchester YJS have a long-term relationship built over nearly fifteen years of working together to deliver high quality arts interventions for the children and young people of Manchester. This relationship has developed into a strategic partnership that sees TiPP's expertise and knowledge being used to support Manchester Youth Justice in realising their ambition to become an arts-based service.

The work within Manchester YJS over the last 5 years has been funded by Youth Music, Philip Barker Centre, National Lottery and Manchester City Council.

"TiPP is a participatory arts organisation that specialises in working in Criminal Justice settings. Committed to the idea that the arts have the power to transform lives, we seek to support people in developing self-efficacy and self-agency and to improve social and cultural capital through well-designed high-quality arts programmes. Critically we believe that engagement in the arts should be fun and whilst our sessions may explore serious issues, we remember that play and laughter are essential to learning and creative practice"

(Projects Director, TiPP)

"When children see other children 'like them' succeeding in their communities this enables them to perceive their ambitions as being achievable"

"Five children came together and formed a band. These children were writing lyrics. Some were playing guitar. One of the girls in the band had never played an instrument before. She said she wanted to learn guitar. She learned guitar. They kept coming to our weekly session and formed really good friendships"

All quotes in blue are from our interview with the Head of Service at Manchester YJS. Information has also been sourced from the Manchester YJS plan 2024/25 (Manchester Youth Justice Service, 2024) and directly from TiPP staff. Photos credit: Sangita Mistry for TiPP

CASE STUDY 3: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN ISLE OF WIGHT YJS AND ARTSWORK

Artswork, an Arts Council NPO, seeks to empower children and young people up to the age of 25 through creativity. For the last few years, the Charity has been working with Isle of Wight Youth Justice Service (YJS) through their Young Cultural Change Makers programme: "the programme is about empowering young people to make a difference to the places they live, and we're particularly interested in working with hard-to-reach young people" (Artswork)

Isle of Wight YJS adopts a Child First Framework, and uses an approach called Fresh AIR: Activities, Interactions and Roles: "We believe that if the children that we're supervising and supporting can have access to activities that they wouldn't normally have access to, and interactions that they wouldn't normally come across, and roles and responsibilities that they wouldn't usually have the chance to, then we can make a difference and prevent them from offending or from re-offending once they're in the criminal justice system" (Isle of Wight YJS)

Collaborative projects have included a summer photography project and paint pouring reparation.

Photography project: Viewing from a different perspective

"Last year we wanted to be able to offer activities for our children for five days a week for five weeks in the summer holidays, which is quite an undertaking for a small team" (Isle of Wight YJS).

The YJS linked up with organisations to provide activities including sports and cooking, but they wanted an activity with a creative element too: "working with Artswork, we came up with the idea of a photography project" (Isle of Wight YJS)

"We offered it to the children. Children chose whether they wanted to come and engage. For five weeks, they went out and about in the community, taking photos with an artist, learning how to use the camera" (Isle of Wight YJS)

A young person taking photos in the community

Young people's photographs displayed at exhibition

"It was about looking at the community in a different way. A lot of the issues that have emerged when we've talked to young people are around them feeling dislocated from the community and the poor relationships between them and adults, particularly adults in authority. It was around challenging the ways of seeing really and challenging stereotypes" (Artswork)

"The outcome was quite incredible. The children produced a book with all their photos in. We did an open evening at a local arts café, and we had the children there with their family attending. We had various professionals attending. Our board members all attended and saw all the photos that were on display. They had the opportunity to talk to the children themselves about, the photos that they'd taken" (Isle of Wight YJS)

"The children talked to the Director of Children's services and police inspectors about their work. That isn't the sort of interaction they would usually be involved in" (Artswork)

"Recently the children involved have come into County Hall and have been issued certificates for Teamwork and Communication" (Isle of Wight YJS)

Paint pouring reparation project

"Community reparation is very much about giving back to your community, repairing the harm that's been caused and it having a community impact. Some young people want to do something more creative. We work with Artswork to see whether it will be suitable to engage in a creative type of programme" (Isle of Wight YJS)

Paint pouring artwork displayed at a community building used by the third, public & private sectors

"We try as much as possible with all our projects to give the children young people opportunities to lead and make the decisions themselves. The paint pour technique was suggested by one of the participants (Artswork)

The children worked with two artists to develop the piece of work, which had a very strong tie to the initial crime they'd carried out.

"One of the areas we're trying to work in is self-esteem. There's a huge correlation between low self-esteem and the likelihood of committing a criminal offence. The piece remains in the community after the project is completed. That is a really big part of it and the fact that pride and self-esteem continues after the project" (Artswork)

The above projects were funded by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner.

Perspectives on arts-based approaches: Isle of Wight Youth Justice Service

Transferability: the photography project

"It could work anywhere, couldn't it? It's about having the right, the right group of children and the right support from the adults leading it, you know, and a camera. And that's it. You know, the actual resources are limited. What you actually need to get it off the ground is really small"

Arts-based approaches: what really makes the difference?

"I think it's about listening to children and asking them what they would like to do and giving them options. Giving different opportunities. If we just did sports, they'd be missing out. You know a group of other children that wouldn't want to engage in sports. So, I guess it's just about us giving as many opportunities as you possibly can and encouraging the voluntary sector to give as many opportunities. We can't do everything ourselves. So about having a broad voluntary offer."

4. Phase 2 Results: Evidence review

We identified twenty-four studies meeting the criteria set out in **Table 1**. Here, we provide an overview of these studies, discuss the quality of this evidence and then synthesise the findings.

The key characteristics of each study, where available, is presented in **Table 4.**

Note: this analysis is based on descriptions of the evaluation/analysis methods used in the studies and the findings presented in the papers we reviewed, some of which is brief.

Table 4 - Overview of included studies

STUDY		STUDY AIM	PARTICIPANTS	STUDY DESIGN & ANALYSIS	MAIN FINDINGS
Badger et al. (2023)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** Not stated but ethical approval granted in 2022 **Programme/approach:** Virtual decisions KNIVES workshop **Artform:** Interactive Virtual Reality **Evaluation setting:** Primary school **Data:** Primary	Conduct an exploratory evaluation of the intervention on pupils' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about knife crime and conflict resolution	Year 5 and year 6 pupils Pre (N = 91) Post (N = 98 pupils)	*Mixed methods* Exploratory evaluation of pilot programme. Pre- and post- programme survey containing quantitative and qualitative questions. Quantitative data – significance testing	Significant effect of time on participants' self-reported likelihood of carrying a knife (less likely post-workshop) and on participants' self-reported frequency with which they consider others' thoughts & feelings before making a decision (more often post-workshop). Qualitative survey data indicated participants' had a more in-depth knowledge about knife crime post-workshop.
Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2023-2024 **Programme/approach:** United Borders BUS music mentoring programme **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** Community-based settings **Data:** Primary	Conduct a pilot trial of the intervention to test whether it should progress to a full efficacy study	Children and young people aged 10-17yrs referred by agencies. Randomised into intervention groups (N = 83) Interviewed (N = 10) Project staff/mentors (N = 8) Referrers (N = 7)	*Mixed methods.* Randomised controlled pilot trial, police admin data, Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), International Self-reported Delinquency questionnaire (ISRDQ) – descriptive analysis. Interviews with children and young people, focus groups & interviews with referrers/ practitioners - thematic analysis	Key mechanisms by which we might expect B.U.S to have an impact include the creative nature of the programme, the neutral space, and trauma-informed approach. Progressing to a full efficacy study is feasible, randomisation is possible. 352 children would be required for efficacy study. Feasible outcome measures are the SDQ, ISRD & police administrative data.
Caulfield et al. (2019)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** Not stated **Programme/approach:** Increasing the use of arts within Sandwell YJS **Artform:** Not discipline-specific **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N=1) **Data:** Primary/secondary	Understand the impact of Sandwell's work on children and young people's engagement with the YJS, motivations & aspirations & YJS staff's openness to & confidence with using arts/creativity to deliver YJS services. To understand any changes in children and young peoples' relationships outside the YJS & impact on attitudes, behaviour & wellbeing, plus barriers to success.	Interviews: YJS-involved children and young people (N = 9) YJS staff (N = 8) Parents of YJS-involved children (N = 2) Secondary data: YJS children and young people aged 13-18yrs received from YJS	*Mixed methods.* Impact & process evaluation. Interviews with YJS-involved children and young people, staff & parents - Secondary YJS monitoring data – descriptive analysis	Quantitative findings demonstrate: An increase in the percentage of contacts attended by children and young people when taking part in creative arts activities; A reduction in breach of order by children and young people when taking part in creative arts activities Qualitative data demonstrate: improvements in children and young people's engagement, confidence, well-being, and aspirations. Children and young people and staff have developed new skills. Relationships between children and young people and staff have become more open.

Caulfield et al. (2021)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2020-2021 **Programme/approach:** Increasing the use of arts within Sandwell YJS **Artform:** Not discipline specific **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N =1) **Data:** Primary	Present findings from survey & interview data focusing on Sandwell YJS-involved children and young people involved with creative activities on their progress, and responses to previous evaluation recommendations.	Survey: YJS-involved children and young people (N = 13) Interviews: YJS staff (N = 7) Police officer (N = 1)	*Mixed methods* Bespoke survey for children and young people – descriptive analysis only Interviews with professionals - thematic analysis	Children and young people engaged positively with arts-based approaches. Giving children and young people agency and control was crucial to successful engagement; staff reported huge successes in working in a less formal way. Arts helped develop more open relationships between staff & children. Positive impact on children including their confidence, sense of achievement, wellbeing, self-expression and providing an emotional outlet.
Caulfield et al. (2022)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** Not reported **Programme/approach:** Music project run by YJS **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N = 1) **Data:** Primary/ secondary	Investigate improvements in participants' attendance at YOT appointments vs non-participants. Measure self-reported changes in participant's musical ability, well-being & attitudes & behaviour; Foreground voice & experience of YP through in-depth interviews	YJS-involved children and young people aged 13-20 (N = 42)	*Mixed methods* Pre- and post- programme questionnaires. YOT attendance data for participants and a comparison group. - Significance testing Post-programme interviews – thematic analysis	Quantitative findings: Significant improvement in attendance at YOT appointments compared to comparison group, Significantly higher scores for well-being & musical ability post-programme, but non-significant improvement in attitude & behaviour scores. Qualitative findings: Almost all children and young people all had learnt to recognise their own achievements, personal, social, and skills development, and reported feeling calmer and more positive.
Caulfield and Sojka (2023)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** Not reported **Programme/approach:** Music programme run by YJS **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N = 1) **Data:** Primary	Understand impact on participant's self-reported engagement with ETE (Education, Training & Employment), general attitudes & behaviour, musical development & well-being. Investigate participants' experience of the programme.	YJS involved children and young people (N = 5); non-YJS involved children and young people referred from schools/agencies (N = 52). Ages 10-18.	*Mixed methods* Pre- and post- programme questionnaires - significance testing Post-programme interviews – thematic analysis	Quantitative findings: Significantly higher scores on ETE, musical ability & well-being post-programme. Non-significant increase in attitudes & behaviour post-programme. Qualitative findings: Intervention provided a safe space from everyday life and improved confidence and well-being.
Daykin et al. (2017)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** 2010 & 2013 **Programme/approach:** Music programme led by a charity **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** YJS & custodial settings (N = 8) **Data:** Primary	Explore how young people in custodial & community supervision settings responded to a music programme	YJS-involved children and young people aged 18-21 yrs (N = 118); practitioners & musicians	*Mixed methods* Questionnaires at 3 time points – not analysed Participant observation Interviews & focus groups with children and young people, practitioners & musicians – thematic analysis	Music-making led by professional musicians can serve as a personal and collective resource for young people in justice settings. Among its affordances are new experiences, broadened horizons, enjoyment, learning, expression, supportive interactions, pride and achievement.

de Viggiani et al. (2014)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2010-2013 **Programme/approach:** Musical Pathways **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** Variety of community & secure youth justice sites (N = 8) **Data:** Primary	Present a three-year research project which had the objective of piloting conventional validated health, wellbeing & social inclusion questionnaires with this population to establish base-line scores & explore the feasibility of measuring these indicators with a transient & 'hard-to-reach' population.	children and young people aged 13-21: Focus groups (N = 47) Post-programme interviews (N = 32) Post-programme follow-up interviews (N = 5)	*Mixed methods* Questionnaires – but research design changed due to difficulties with quantitative data collection. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups across 15 programmes – constant comparison analysis	Qualitative: Music-making has the potential to engage 'hard to reach' children and young people. Engagement in arts programmes can deliver life-changing benefits for some individuals; programme was valuable in helping most children and young people cope with difficult circumstances including custody & look positively towards the future. Team building, group dynamics and creativity were key factors underlining successful programme delivery and effective engagement of young people.
Froggett et al. (2018)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2016-2017 **Programme/approach:** Odd Arts **Artform:** Theatre **Evaluation setting:** Secure care homes, education/training centres for NEET learners, adult prisons **Data:** Primary	Analyse the specific challenges and opportunities of each setting and: improve design/delivery of session, characterise Odd Arts' distinctive model of practice, identify module outcomes, refine/embed self-evaluation skills amongst staff, enable Odd Arts to better advocate for their work	NEET learners in community, age 16-21 (N = 17); children and young people in secure children's homes aged 13-17 (N = 8); residents aged 30-75 in HMP Wymott (N = 13)	*Qualitative* Evaluation of pilot workshop. Observation of participants at four case study sites – panel analysis	The programme raised participants' self-esteem, developed their awareness of imaginative approaches to life & problem-solving, & enabled participants' voices to be heard through theatre increasing their ability to communicate. It allowed participants to express themselves & provided an opportunity for empowerment, pleasure, freedom of thought & a sense of relief.
Froggett and Ortega Breton (2020)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2019 **Programme/approach:** Odd Arts **Artform:** Dance & drama **Evaluation setting:** Secure settings (N = 3) **Data:** Primary	Identify opportunities for improvement in programme delivery and explain how the programme achieved its effects on participants.	Category C prison: men in their twenties & thirties, & one in his forties (total N not reported). Secure care home: Girls aged 13-16 (N = 3). Secure unit: Three teenagers & one pre-teen (N = 4)	*Qualitative* Evaluation of pilot workshop. Observation of workshops' process. Conversations with facilitators. No specific qualitative analysis method used.	The BROAD programme progressively increases participants' confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. In so doing it directly addresses individual and group modes of thinking and feeling which influence self-harm and violence.
Gowland-Pryde (2017)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2007-2011 (summer programme); 2012-2013 (weekly programme) **Programme/approach:** Arts Award **Artform:** Visual arts **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N = 1) **Data:** Primary & secondary	Examine the impact of a Gallery-supported Arts Award programme on young people who have offended.	Summer programme: children and young people (N = 3), Artist-educators (N = 2), YJS workers (N = 2); Weekly programme: children and young people (N = 3), Artist-educators (N = 3); YJS workers (N = 4)	*Qualitative* PhD thesis. Interviews, evaluation reports, portfolios/photographs, artist-educator reflective logs, session observations – thematic analysis	Arts Award accredited programmes as can improve accessibility of art for children and young people who have offended. They are effective in supporting young people in desistance from crime. Use of contemporary art and galleries as part of these programmes can help support young people's re-engagement with learning, thereby helping to transform 'young offenders' into 'young artists'

Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** Not stated** **Programme/approach:** creation of theatre production based on lives of marginalised children and young people **Artform:** Theatre & drama **Evaluation setting:** Community-based setting **Data:** Primary	Explore participants' experience of long-term involvement in drama & theatre from an idiographic, phenomenological perspective; consider YP's narratives relating to psychological mechanisms identified in researcher's model of disaffection/engagement	children and young people aged 15-21 with experience of school exclusion (N = 4)	*Qualitative* Longitudinal design - interviews at 3 time points. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	Drama and theatre create space & support for the authentic self, provide optimal conditions for promoting growth & resilience through voluntary engagement in a positive activity. Interpersonal relationships & a nurturing environment play a pivotal role in re-engaging young people. For some, drama provides a uniquely engaging and therapeutic way to reflect on, express and explore experiences.
Henley (2012)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2011 **Programme/approach:** Good Vibrations **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** YOI (N = 1) **Data:** Primary/secondary	Evaluate the project from the point of view of music education, identifying individual & social factors generated through musical development that are also attributed to desistance from crime	Young men in YOI (N = 19)	*Qualitative* Participant observation Interviews post-programme (N = 5) & internal evaluation data. Analysis used an activity system derived from Cultural Historical Activity Theory	Participants went through a process of development on an individual level first and gradually became more aware of and able to control their contribution to the ensemble as they progressed musically. It was this that enabled participants to begin to develop the attributes associated with desistence from crime.
Henley (2015)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** 2011-2012 **Programme/approach:** Good Vibrations **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** YOI (N = 1) **Data:** Primary*	Discuss empirical evidence for a positive relationship between musical learning & desistance from crime. Present two stories to illustrate the personal and social developed that can result from the programme.	Young people resident in the YOI aged 18-24 participated in the programme (N = 19), but stories of only two participants are presented	*Qualitative* Participant observation & post-programme semi-structured interviews. Analysis used an activity system derived from Cultural Historical Activity Theory	Musical learning and developing the attributes essential for inspiring desistance from crime arise from the programme's shared learning processes.
Howard (2020)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** Not reported* **Programme/approach:** Arts Award **Artform:** Arts Award **Evaluation setting:** Alternative provision (N = 3). Youth programmes offering informal arts education (N = 2) **Data:** Primary*	Critique the Young People's Arts Award Programme in informal and alternative educational settings	'Dis-engaged' children and young people aged 14-21. *N* not reported. Article presents case studies of two participants only.	*Qualitative* Ethnography including participant observation, one-to-one interviews & video analysis	Young people who were classified as 'dis-engaged' were more likely to receive lower quality programmes, low-level work and over-regulated teaching. Despite changes to the ways that young people access art education, there continues to be unequal opportunities
Howard (2022)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** Not reported*	Draw on research into the Arts Award to highlight the different, and lower quality offer for 'at risk' youth. Interrogate the assumptions	children and young people categorised as 'at risk' by organisations running	*Qualitative* Ethnography including participant observation, one-to-one interviews & video analysis	Often the most disadvantaged young people receive the weakest arts programmes, that are deficit-oriented, mechanistic & instrumentalised.

	Programme/approach: Arts Award **Artform:** Not discipline-specific **Evaluation setting:** Alternative provision (N = 3). Youth programmes offering informal arts education (N = 2) **Data:** Primary*	that arts practitioners & researchers bring to work with at-risk youth.	the programmes (N = 46). Ages unspecified.		Assumptions made about young people's artistic & academic abilities due to their social background reduced the range & quality of the arts offer. Despite potential of arts programmes to be inspiring & engaging, in some cases, they are used as tools of monitoring and control.
Millar et al. (2020)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** 2017-2018 **Programme/approach:** COOL music intervention **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** Educational setting(s) **Data:** Primary	Using the intervention as a case study, explore challenges faced by community-based arts organisations tasked with delivering such interventions, contrasting this small-scale, targeted, community-based approach with prevailing top-down music interventions in Scotland.	children and young people considered to be engaged, socially excluded & furthest from the employment market (N = 32)	*Qualitative* Participant observation, interviews & analysis of documentary footage. No specific method of qualitative analysis specified.	Early findings indicate that COOL music is successful in engaging disempowered children and young people. However, the short-term and transitory nature of such projects may prove problematic for some hard-to-reach groups who require more stability in their lives and may also lead to staff fatigue and burnout
Morgan et al. (2020)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** 2016 **Programme/approach:** Sports, media & arts intervention **Artform:** Performing arts **Evaluation setting:** Community-based **Data:** Secondary	Explore the 'diversionary activity-social capital nexus' in an external evaluation which investigated the operationalisation & impact of the intervention on marginalised youth.	Questionnaires: children and young people aged 13-25 yrs (N = 74). Interviews: 12 of the children and young people who completed questionnaires. *N* practitioners/stakeholders not reported	*Mixed methods* Secondary analysis of participation observation & interview & focus group data with participants, practitioners, partners & stakeholders – Grounded theory approach. Descriptive analysis of questionnaire data	When marginalised children and young people are presented with the opportunity to generate interpersonal relationship built upon trust, recognition & acceptance there is clear potential for community-based activity interventions to act as a form of education to enhance employability and incubate social mobility through the accrual of social capital.
Parker et al. (2018)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** 2013-2014 **Programme/approach:** Music programme **Artform:** Music **Evaluation setting:** Secondary school **Data:** Primary	Explore potential benefits of school-based mentoring intervention for pupils engaged in, or at risk of, delinquency both inside & outside of school environment	Pupils at school aged 13-16 (N = 32), several of whom had previous involvement with the CJS and/or were considered 'at risk' of criminality	*Qualitative* Participant observation, interviews and documentary analysis	The combination of music-making & mentoring was successful in engaging children and young people & facilitated positive change, e.g. improved confidence, communication skills & attitudes towards teachers & peers.
Smithson and Mchugh (2018)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** Not reported **Programme/approach:** Odd Arts Forward programme	Examine the processes & explore the potential impact of the work of Odd Arts applied theatre & related performance arts as	Secure children's home: children and young people who self-selected for interviews	*Qualitative* Interviews with programme participants & staff.	The Forward programme delivered by Odd Arts has significant value to both beneficiaries and supporting staff within host organisations. Key points relating to beneficiaries included:

	Artform: Theatre **Evaluation setting:** Secure children's home & adult supported housing project for ex-offenders **Data:** Primary	interventions within justice services	(N = 9). Ages not reported. Staff (N = 3) <u>Supported housing project:</u> Adult service users (N = 3). Staff (N = 2). Odd Arts staff (N = 1)	Ethnographic observations of the programme within the secure children's home.	- Development of confidence - Increased ability to work in diverse groups - Development of peer support/education/empathy Importance of integrated planning and evaluation with host organisation also highlighted.
Tarling and Adams (2012)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2007-2011 **Programme/approach:** The Summer Arts College **Artform:** Not discipline-specific **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N=76) **Data:** Primary/secondary	Evaluate the impact of the Summer Arts College against its objectives	YJS involved children and young people (N = 1,535) aged 12-19	*Quantitative* Pre- and post- programme literacy & numeracy assessments Descriptive analysis of YOT data on pre- and post- programme ETE & offending rates	The programme consistently met its objectives of reducing offending, increasing educational engagement, improving basic skills, achieving a qualification and raising progression
van Maanen (2010)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2010 **Programme/approach:** Miss Spent **Artform:** Drama **Evaluation setting:** Custodial setting for young women (N = 1) **Data:** Primary	Explore the response of the young women participating in the project, & the perceived impact of project on their lives. Examine whether the aims of the project were achieved.	Young people aged 17 resident in HMP Downview (N = 9), prison staff (N not stated)	*Mixed methods* Pilot project. Qualitative - Informal interviews, participant observation, analysis of participants' written work. Quantitative - pre- & post programme questionnaires – descriptive analysis	All participants engaged positively with the project. More than half of participants self-reported increased confidence, self-esteem, motivation, skills for employment, skills for wellbeing & enjoyment in the programme. Participants identified & developed attitudes & behaviour that will help them desist from re-offending.
Varley (2019)	**Peer review:** × **Data collection year:** 2012-2013 **Programme/approach:** V^2 model, Recre8 **Artform:** Drama **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N =1) **Data:** Primary/secondary	Explore how arts, particularly drama, can positively contribute to the process of reducing re-offending behaviour and reoffending rates with male young offenders serving community sentences.	Males aged 10-18 years serving community orders referred to Recre8 by YJS over period of 18 months (N = 72)	*Mixed methods.* PhD thesis. Quantitative data collected at 3 intervals (pre-, during and post-programme): Self-report questionnaires & YJS Asset Plus profile scores – significance testing Qualitative: interviews with children and young people at 3 month follow up stage (*N* = 10) – thematic analysis	Significant reduction in Asset Plus risk classification 3 months post-programme compared with pre-intervention. Significant self-reported improvement from pre-intervention to 3 month follow up on all 6 measures: general attitude towards offending, anticipation of reoffending, evaluation of crime as worthwhile, perception of current life problems, & Rosenburg self-esteem scale. Interview data indicated programme distinctiveness, going above & beyond, & the process of change were the main elements contributing to successful delivery & attendance and motivation of children and young people.

Wilkinson et al. (2022)	**Peer review:** ✓ **Data collection year:** Not reported, but data relates to lockdowns in 2020 & 2021 **Programme/approach:** Lyric writing as research method **Artform:** Lyric writing **Evaluation setting:** YJS (N=2) **Data:** Primary	Understand the implications of COVID-19 practitioners and YJS-involved young people & to inform the current and future developments of the service using a novel research method	YJS-involved children and young people (N unclear)	*Qualitative* Participatory lyric writing session. Participant observation, analysis of lyrics, field notes & discussion with children and young people	Lyric-writing was a valuable research method: the artist developed rapport with children and young people based on familiarity with & passion for music. The method developed children and young people's social & communication skills which aided the elicitation of in-depth perspectives & meaningful feedback that could contribute to the YJS recovery plan & future.

*The data reported in Howard (2020) and Howard (2022) was collected by the researcher for her PhD between 2013-2017

4.1. Characteristics of studies and evaluated programmes

4.1.1. Study types, methods and design

Of the twenty-four studies included, eleven were published in peer-reviewed journals (Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023; Daykin et al., 2017; Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Henley, 2015; Howard, 2020, 2022; Millar et al., 2020; Morgan et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2022), two were unpublished PhD theses (Gowland-Pryde, 2017; Varley, 2019), and the remaining eleven were grey literature (Badger et al., 2023; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Caulfield et al., 2021; Caulfield et al., 2019; de Viggiani et al., 2014; Froggett et al., 2018; Froggett & Ortega Breton, 2020; Henley, 2012; Smithson & Mchugh, 2018; Tarling & Adams, 2012; van Maanen, 2010).

Studies include the following methods:

- Mixed methods: 11 (Badger et al., 2023; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023; Caulfield et al., 2021; Caulfield et al., 2019; Daykin et al., 2017; de Viggiani et al., 2014; Morgan et al., 2020; van Maanen, 2010; Varley, 2019)
- Quantitative only: 1 (Tarling & Adams, 2012)
- Qualitative only: 12 (Froggett et al., 2018; Froggett & Ortega Breton, 2020; Gowland-Pryde, 2017; Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Henley, 2012, 2015; Howard, 2020, 2022; Millar et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2018; Smithson and Mchugh, 2018, Wilkinson et al., 2022).

Of the studies that collected or reported quantitative data, one was a pilot randomised controlled trial (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024) and one included a quasi-experimental design in which the comparison group was not randomly assigned (Caulfield et al., 2022). With the exception of Morgan et al. (2020) who only examined data collected at one time point and de Viggiani et al (2014) who did not present the quantitative data they collected, the remainder of the quantitative studies used a quasi-experimental pre- and post-intervention design (Badger et al., 2023; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023; Caulfield et al., 2021; Caulfield et al., 2019; Daykin et al., 2017; Tarling & Adams, 2012; van Maanen, 2010; Varley, 2019).

A note on mixed methods designs:

- Mixed methods designs have the potential to add richness and rigour to the research enquiry, resulting in deeper and more meaningful answers to complex research questions (McBride et al., 2019).
- *'Studies that take a 'mixed-methods' approach to investigating the value and contribution of the arts in criminal justice allow an understanding of both if and how the arts can have an impact'* (Caulfield et al., 2021).
- A particular strength of the mixed methods design is that it allows for methodological triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, enhancing the rigour and robustness of the overall findings.

4.1.2. Artforms

- Eight studies evaluated music-based interventions (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023; Daykin et al., 2017; de Viggiani et al., 2014; Henley, 2012, 2015; Millar et al., 2020). Six studies evaluated theatre and/or drama-based interventions (Froggett et al., 2018; Froggett & Ortega Breton, 2020; Parker et al., 2018; Smithson & Mchugh, 2018; van Maanen, 2010; Varley, 2019). One of these programmes involved dance as well as drama (Froggett et al., 2018). One study evaluated a theatre-based project but this was not an intervention per se (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017). One study evaluated a performing arts and sports programme (Morgan et al., 2020). Three studies evaluated use of the Arts Award (Gowland-Pryde, 2017; Howard, 2020; Howard et al., 2021), and one evaluated a Summer Arts College, an element of which was the Arts Award (Tarling & Adams, 2012). Two studies evaluated the introduction of creative and arts/culture approaches within a youth justice service, rather than any specific structured intervention (Caulfield et al., 2021; Caulfield et al., 2019). One study evaluated lyric writing as a research method with justice-involved children and young people. Whilst this was not an intervention the benefits of lyric writing itself on children and young people were documented (Wilkinson et al., 2022). One study evaluated an interactive VR education programme (Badger et al., 2023). **Error!**

Reference source not found. sets out the specific artform that is employed alongside the various settings of the evaluations.

Table 5 - Included studies evaluation settings and arforms

SETTING	*N*	STUDIES	ARTFORM
Community-based	3	Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024)	Music
		Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017)	Drama/theatre
		Morgan et al. (2020)	Performing arts
Primary school	1	Badger et al. (2023)	Interactive VR
Secondary school	1	Parker et al. (2018)	Music
Educational settings	3	Howard (2022), Howard (2020)	Arts Award
		Millar et al. (2020)	Music
YJS community setting	8	Caulfield et al. (2022), Caulfield and Sojka (2023)	Music
		Caulfield et al. (2021); Caulfield et al. (2019)	Arts-based approach in YJS
		Smithson and Mchugh (2018)	Theatre
		Gowland-Pryde (2017)	Arts Award
		Tarling and Adams (2012)	Summer Arts College (incl. Arts Award)
		Wilkinson et al. (2022)	Lyric writing
YJS & secure settings	3	Daykin et al. (2017), de Viggiani et al. (2014)	Music
		Varley (2019)	Drama
Secure settings	5	Henley, (2012); Henley (2015)	Music
		Froggett and Ortega Breton (2020); van Maanen (2010)	Drama &/or theatre
		Froggett et al. (2018)	Dance & drama

4.1.3. Aims and context

Here we provide details of each evaluation within each of these settings, including the study aims and participants, as well as the aims of the programmes evaluated and the specific groups of children and young people they are designed for.

To interpret study findings, it is crucial to understand:

- that the aims of most studies in this area of research are focused on “softer outcomes” rather than on reducing risk/the offence itself, in line with asset-based/child-first approaches;
- the context in which programmes operate, as understanding behaviour in context is crucial for the design of successful interventions (Michie et al., 2011) (and this later becomes important for transferability);
- the variation between participants in different settings; and
- for community/education-based programmes, whether children and young people participating in the community-based programmes were aligned with the stipulated target groups.

<u>Programmes in community/educational settings</u>

Eight studies evaluated programmes in community-based and/or educational settings (outside of the YJS):

Howard (2020) and Howard (2022), both evaluated/presented data collected for Howard’s PhD 2013-2017. The purpose of the articles was to highlight specific findings rather than provide a holistic evaluation. The data were collected from three alternative provision schools and two youth programmes offering informal arts education:

(1) Howard (2020) aimed to critique the Young People’s Arts Award Programme in informal and alternative educational settings. The programme participants were described as ‘dis-engaged’ children and young people aged 14-21, but the article presents only **two case studies** of contrasting experiences of the Arts Award.

(2) Howard (2022) aimed to draw on research into the Arts Award to highlight the different, and lower quality offer for 'at risk' youth, and interrogate the assumptions that arts practitioners & researchers bring to work with at-risk youth. Participants were described as children and young people categorised as 'at risk' by organisations running the programmes (N = 46). Ages were unspecified in this article.

Of the remaining six studies evaluating programmes in community and/or education-based settings, none explicitly aimed to investigate the effects of arts participation on reducing the risk of children and young people's involvement in crime:

(3) Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024) is a pilot study, which aimed to test the feasibility of a larger efficacy study for a music mentoring programme that aims to reduce behavioural problems, improve well-being and self-esteem, enhance personal relationships and reduce involvement in violence and offending in the long-term.
(4) Badger et al. (2023) is an exploratory study of a pilot programme. It is described as an exploratory evaluation of the intervention on pupils' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about knife crime and conflict resolution.

A note on pilot trials: With regards to the above two studies, it should be noted that pilot trials typically aim to identify any potential issues and make necessary adjustments before the main research is undertaken. They are not intended to provide definitive data or outcomes but rather to illuminate the path for smoother execution of the subsequent full-scale investigation (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, n.d.-b). Exploratory studies aim to investigate a phenomenon or issue without aiming for conclusive results and are often used to gather preliminary data or inform a more comprehensive study design (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, n.d.-b). Results from pilot and exploratory studies are often not generalisable due sample size, as they are not powered to detect differences. They also often have different research questions, focussing on attrition/retention/data completeness rather than an assessment of outcomes (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, n.d.-b). Thus, findings from these types of studies need to be interpreted with extreme caution.

The other studies aimed to identify softer outcomes or improving the lives of the participants, aligned with a child-first/asset-based approach. These can be framed as reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors but do not directly aim to reduce recidivism:

(5) Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017) aimed to '*explore participants' long-term involvement in a drama and theatre project which produced a theatre production based on the life experiences of the children & young people, with parts acted by the young people.*

(6) Morgan et al. (2020) focused on the ability of the intervention to engage children and young people and thereafter '*progress them into employment, education or training'.*

(7) Millar et al's study (2020) aimed to '*explore challenges faced by community arts interventions tasked with delivering small scale interventions'.* The aims of the intervention itself are to '*increase confidence, self-esteem and improve social skills'.*

(8) Parker et al's study (2018) aimed to explore *'potential benefits of school-based* music *mentoring intervention for pupils engaged in, or at risk of, delinquency both inside & outside of school environment'.* The aims of the music mentoring programme were to: '*develop pupils' musical ability, creativity and expression; improve their mental health, confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, resilience, skills and engagement; use music to promote positive mental health in a way that was relevant to them and break down the stigma surrounding engagement with mental health professionals'.*

Of the latter six studies, only three evaluated interventions whereby a stated aim of the *intervention* was to reduce the risk of and/or actual involvement in crime (Badger et al., 2023; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Morgan et al., 2020): The programme evaluated by Badger et al could be described as 'universal' (delivered to all children, in this case years 5 and 6 of primary school), whilst the other programmes were targeted at specific groups of children and young people. Bandyopadhyay et al. described a range of key identifiers by

which children and young people (who were referred by police, local authorities, social services, schools and Pupil Referral Units) would be eligible to participate in the programme, for example having been impacted by violence as a victim or perpetrator. Morgan et al. (p. 332) state the intervention was specifically targeted towards children and young people who were "*within the care system or involved (or termed 'at risk' of involvement) in youth and/or violent gang-related crime".* However, although the article itself provides a detailed discussion of the term 'at risk', it is unclear how 'at risk' was defined by the intervention providers or how children and young people were recruited to the programme.

The other three studies were included based on the recipients of the programme the studies were evaluating: the project evaluated by Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017) was being delivered to children and young people who had challenging life circumstances, including involvement with the Criminal Justice System, and the focus of the theatre production itself was the experiences of marginalised children and young people. In Parker et al. (2018)'s study, pupils had been referred to the programme by teachers mainly due to behavioural issues including defiant/disruptive behaviour, angry or aggressive behaviours towards teachers/peers and/or bullying behaviour towards peers. Several were considered 'at risk' because of instances of anti-social behaviour inside and outside of school, gang affiliation and/or prior involvement with the Criminal Justice System. It is also of note that whilst the evaluation setting for Parker et al. (2018)'s study was a mainstream secondary school, the programme was also being delivered in PRUs and custodial settings. The target group for the programme evaluated by Millar et al. (2020) was 'hard-to-reach' young people in Scotland. Some of the participants were based in a secure unit and others were in mainstream schools and were identified by their school's additional support for learning unit as 'hard to reach'. The study referred to the following definition of 'hard-to-reach': '*disempowered persons… for whom the structures of government have failed' and 'students who have removed themselves from the expectations of schools, who find the work associated with school meaningless, alienating, or oppressive' (Allsup, 2013:1).*

Study participants in these six evaluations generally reflected the programmes' target groups as described in the studies, however, Morgan et al. (2020) poses some issues for this research. Demographics are reported for the 74 participants, and this states that of the 74%: *2.8% were living in foster care or a residential children's home. In total, 12.2% of young people taking part in the evaluation self-reported having been excluded or expelled from school. Of these, 35.1% said they had been in trouble with the police and 10.8% had spent time in custody.* Participants had been participating in the programme for varying lengths of time. The demographics of the children and young people who participated in interviews is not clear; thus it is not clear whether they fit the target group or how long they'd been involved with the programme. This lack of context hinders the transferability of findings.

In addition, the study states that 74 participants completed end of programme questionnaires, who were self-selecting, but it doesn't say how many children and young people taking part in the programme chose not to participate in the evaluation. Questionnaire data isn't reported by the study, but interview data from 12 of the participants is supported, but it doesn't say how these 12 were selected.

Youth Justice settings

Community:

Six studies evaluated programmes within YJS community settings:

(9) Gowland-Pryde (2017) set out to examine the impact of an Arts Award programme on YJS-involved children and young people, some of whom participated in the programme over summer (N =3) and some of whom participated in the programme through weekly sessions (N = 3).

(10) Tarling and Adams (2012) set out to evaluate the impact of Summer Arts Colleges using data collected each summer over a five-year period (2007-2011), through which the Arts Award programme was delivered.

It is worth noting here that the target group for programmes delivered to YJS-involved children and young people is a more clearly defined group than those based in non-YJS community settings (in that they have faced criminal proceedings whereas for community-based programmes outside the YJS, the target

group/recipients may be more 'mixed', i.e. some may have been involved with the YJS, some not but deemed 'at risk'). Tarling and Adams (2012) point out that the diversity of YJS-involved children and young people needs to be considered when interpreting results of evaluations, with the example that children and young people with particularly challenging circumstances or higher levels of risk were more likely to drop out of the Summer Arts Programme.

In addition, there was a dropout rate of 21% but data reported is only based on completers, who may (given the descriptions of those who dropped out) may have been 'less risky' to begin with. Although age, gender and ethnicity did not influence whether or not children and young people completed the summer programme, the evaluators reported that:

> *Young people living on their own at the start of the Summer Arts College were significantly less likely to complete, as were those who had ever been in care.*
>
> *The participants who had Special Educational Needs (SEN) identified and those who had not been in education, training or employment (ETE) before the programme were also significantly less likely to complete.*
>
> *Completion was significantly related to prior levels of literacy, with those young people at Level 1 literacy at the start of the Summer Arts College more likely to complete.*
>
> *The extent and seriousness of the person's involvement in crime was highly significantly related to completion. It was found that the higher the rate of offending prior to being placed on Summer Arts College, the less the chance of completing.*
>
> *Similarly, the higher the total Asset score or having previous custodial sentences, the less the chance of completing the programme. Only Asset score remained significantly related to completion across each of the programme lengths.*

The information provided about completers/non-completers is vital contextual information that aids understanding of the groups form whom the programme worked (or not). However: YJS caseloads have shifted towards a smaller number of adolescents presenting higher risks of harm (Phillips et al., 2022) – which is relevant to the potential utility of these findings in 2025. Also: the YJS caseload in Sandwell '*now consists of smaller numbers of young people who have very complex life stories'* (Caulfield et al., 2019).

(11) Caulfield et al. (2019); and

(12) Caulfield et al. (2021) evaluated an arts/culture-based approach within a YJS, rather than a specific intervention. The purpose was quite specific, to evaluate the development and impact of an arts/culture-based approach with a specific YJS to meet the needs set out by the YJS, rather than contribute to a wider body of evidence about the effectiveness of arts participation in risk reduction:

In contrast,

(13) Caulfield et al. (2022); and

(14) Caulfield and Sojka (2023) set out to assess the impact of a specific arts programme on specific measures. Rather than explicitly looking at risk reduction, they focussed the study on 'softer outcomes' (including attendance at YJS appointments) that can be linked to recidivism. '*Although attendance is not an exact proxy for compliance, non-attendance… at appointments has been linked to a high risk of reoffending (Hart, 2011)'* (Caulfield et al., 2022).

(15) Smithson and Mchugh (2018) conducted a qualitative process and impact evaluation considering improvements in confidence, empathy and other outcomes as a result of a theatre programme; similarly

(16) Wilkinson et al's (2022) study considered improvements in social and communication skills as part of a lyric-writing course.

Community and secure

Three studies evaluated programmes which worked across both community and secure settings within the YJS:

(17) Daykin et al's (2017) study explored how YP in custodial & community supervision settings responded to a music programme.

(18) Varley's (2019) study explored how arts, particularly drama, can positively contribute to the process of reducing re-offending behaviour and reoffending rates with male young offenders serving community sentences.

(19) de Viggiani et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study exploring the potential of music-making to engage 'hard to reach' children and young people

Secure

Four studies evaluated programmes within secure YJS settings:

(20) Henley (2012) aimed to identify *'individual & social factors generated through musical development that are also attributed to desistance from crime'.*

(21) Henley (2015) explored the same data in the above study, this time to *'discuss empirical evidence for a positive relationship between musical learning & desistance from crime'.*

(22) Froggett et al's study (2018) aimed to identify challenges and opportunities of delivery settings and areas of improvement for the organisation (not necessarily to contribute to a wider body of literature on risk reduction); similarly

(23) Froggett and Ortega Breton (2020) aimed to *'identify opportunities for improvement in programme delivery and explain how the programme achieved its effects on participants'* (not necessarily to contribute to a wider body of literature on risk reduction).

(24) Van Maanen (2010) set out to explore the response of the young women participating in the drama project and the perceived impact of the project on their lives.

4.1.4. Analysis

Qualitative studies

Twenty-two studies in our sample included 'qualitative' data. Overall, these studies aimed to review or evaluate projects to understand the experiences and attitudes of children and young people and/or practitioners. The objective of qualitative analysis is to explore depth rather than width. Within these studies, a variety of analysis methods were used to understand the value of the specific arts/culture programmes to the young people and sometimes, it's value to communities.

A general thematic analysis was the predominant method used in several studies (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023; Caulfield et al., 2021; Caulfield et al., 2019; Daykin et al., 2017; Varley, 2019). Alternative analytic strategies were used by Morgan et al. (2020) who adopted a grounded theory approach, de Viggiani et al. (2014), who applied the constant comparison method (a technique within grounded theory used to refine themes identified through thematic analysis), Hanrahan and Banerjee's (2017) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and Froggett et al.'s (2018) panel analysis.

An additional analytical approach was adopted by Henley (2012, 2015) who used an activity system based on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). For the remaining studies, we were unable to ascertain a specific analysis method from the information available: Badger et al. (2023); Froggett and Ortega Breton

(2020); Howard (2020, 2022); Millar et al. (2020); Parker et al. (2018); Smithson and Mchugh (2018); (van Maanen, 2010); or Wilkinson et al. (2022).

Quantitative studies

Ten studies collected, or reported having access to, quantitative evaluation data. However, only four of these studies used inferential statistics (also referred to as 'significance testing') in their analysis (Badger et al., 2023; Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023; Varley, 2019). Inferential statistics provide the significance of differences between different groups of people (such as an intervention and a comparison group), differences between timepoints for the same group of people (such as a pre- and post- intervention questionnaire) or relationships between different variables. If the differences between the groups are timepoints and are reported to be significant, it is considered that those differences represent a genuine effect rather than result from chance. Inferential statistics therefore offer an important framework enabling researchers to draw conclusions from a sample to a population (Guetterman, 2019).

Badger et al. (2023) tested the difference in scores between participants' pre- and post- intervention questionnaires, which were designed specifically for the intervention. The researchers reported that despite teachers' best efforts, pre- and post- intervention groups were not composed of all the same pupils. Unfortunately, it is not clear how many complete cases were analysed or how missing data was handled in the analysis. As such the degree to which missing data affected the results is not known. Caulfield et al. (2022) conducted significance testing on a range of quantitative measures. This included data on children and young people's attendance at YJS appointments and interventions supplied by the YJS. Attendance data for children and young people participating in the intervention was compared to data of children and young people who were not participating in the intervention. The researchers also compared children and young people's pre- and post- intervention responses on three different self-report tools provided by Youth Music's 'evaluation builder' The self-report tools were designed to measure children and young people's perceived musical ability, attitudes and behaviour and well-being (respectively). It should be noted whilst designed for use with children and young people, none of these measures have been validated. Validation of outcome measures (the process of ensuring the measure captures what it is intended to capture within a given population), is considered crucial in formulating and critiquing study conclusions (Louie et al., 2019). The same three self-report measures used by Caulfield et al. (2022) were also used by Caulfield and Sojka (2023), with the addition of the Engagement Versus Disaffection with Learning measure (EvsD) (Skinner et al., 2009) to measure engagement with ETE (Education, Training and Employment) which has been validated with children and young people (Ritoša, 2022)

Varley (2019) compared pre-, during- and post- intervention Asset Profile Scores provided by the YOT. The Asset Profile Score was designed to assess YJS-involved children and young people's behaviours, risks and strengths as part of the Asset framework (Youth Justice Board, 2000). It should be noted that the Asset framework was replaced by AssetPlus in 2014 . Varley also acknowledges missing data but it is not explained if/how this is dealt with in the statistical analysis. '*the problem of incomplete data sets was an issue during this piece of research with n = 9 (12.5%) of the Asset risk category of participants missing at baseline and n = 26 (36.1%) missing during the Asset follow-up, (including 7 final warnings – data not included as no Asset form is completed for this category)*'

Varley (2019) also compared pre-, during- and post- intervention scores on two validated self-report measures: The CRIME PICS II questionnaire is considered a reliable measure of detecting changes in offenders' attitudes towards offending in UK justice settings (Chui et al., 2017; Raynor, 1998), whilst the Rosenburg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a widely used measure of self-esteem demonstrating sound validity in a range of settings (Jordan, 2020).

Analysis of quantitative data in the six other studies (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Caulfield et al., 2021; Daykin et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2020; Tarling & Adams, 2012; van Maanen, 2010) was limited to descriptive accounts of the data. Two studies raised the issue of sample size as a barrier to significance testing: (1) Daykin et al. (2017) distributed two questionnaires to measure well-being at three time points (pre- and post-intervention, and at 3-month follow-up). Unfortunately, the number of participants completing post- and three month follow up questionnaires was considerably lower than the number completing pre- intervention

questionnaires, rendering the sample size insufficiently robust for significance testing. (2) Caulfield et al. (2021) stated *the limited amount of* [YJS monitoring data] *quantitative data available for comparison over time means that these quantitative findings should not be relied upon. More data are needed to conduct statistical analysis to test for the significance of any findings.*

Although van Maanen (2010) do not comment on the reasons for lack of significance testing on pre- and post- intervention data in their study, their sample size of nine children and young people would not be sufficient to conduct any meaningful significance testing. Morgan et al. (2020) do not comment on why the quantitative data they had access to was not subject to statistical analysis, however it appears data was only collected from intervention participants at one time point (post-programme) – the lack of data at other time points to compare (or comparison group data) means significance testing is not an option.

Tarling and Adams (2012) collected*: Profile data (such as selected information from Asset), attendance at the Summer Arts College and details of the young people's education, training and employment provision, offending and sentencing, for 13 weeks before, 13 weeks after, and during the College. Pre & post intervention literacy and numeracy levels.* The article touches on the lack of comparison group but doesn't explain why significance testing wasn't carried out to compare pre- and post- measures. It seems there was no missing data in the YOT data, but post-programme questionnaires for literacy and numeracy were based on complete cases only. It should also be noted that there was a dropout rate of 21% but that the data reported is only based on completers, who may (given the descriptions of those who dropped out) may have been 'less risky' to begin with. This raises questions about the outcomes of this study and its transferability to other settings.

Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024) collected data about criminal behaviour as well as strengths and difficulties. Originally using the SRDS (Self-report Delinquency Scale), this was replaced by ISRD (International self-report delinquency scale) alongside SDQ (Strength & Difficulties Questionnaire). This was a pilot study to test the feasibility of a randomised controlled trial. This meant that "No power calculations for the pilot were performed, and the data will not be used for frequentist analyses. Missing data will not be dealt with, as that would require statistical analysis". As this is a pilot, the reported descriptive statistics will only be based on complete cases. The pilot faced some ethical issues around the study design and choice of outcome measures were highlighted including resentment amongst children in the control group who did not receive the intervention and some discontent among staff.

4.2. Study Findings

Here were synthesize the findings of the twenty-four included studies which relate to the value of arts/culture programmes in engaging children and young people and reducing their risk of involvement in crime. Findings should be interpreted with the caveats about the quality of this evidence outlined in section **4.15** in mind.

Findings are divided into key themes that consistently emerged across the studies. Whilst some rapid evidence reviews quantify the number of studies that report particular findings, this was not appropriate in this review for two main reasons:

1. The varied features and nature of the studies: As previously discussed, the aims and types of studies, programmes (artforms and aims far from homogenous), target groups/participants, and settings were wide ranging. Importantly, the outcomes each study sought to explore/measure (and the timepoints at which they were explored/measured) were highly varied. I.e. Most studies did not seek to address the questions 'does arts participant reduce crime amongst children and young people?' or 'does arts participation reduce risk of crime amongst children and young people?' - thus any attempt to rigorously quantify the number of studies reporting the wide range of findings (about outcomes related to welfare and self-development) would not have been meaningful.
2. The partial nature of some of the information reviewed: Not all studies discussed every element, impact or outcome of a programme. Quantifying the number of studies reporting various outcomes might misleadingly suggest that interventions in studies not reporting certain outcomes failed to produce those outcomes. In reality, those outcomes may not have been investigated or simply may not have been highlighted among the other outcomes mentioned.

4.2.1. Observed changes in children and young people:

Here we consider findings within the studies about changes in young people that may be linked with participation in the programme and/or aligns with attitudes and behaviours known to be associated with desistance. Drawing on the public-health situated socio-ecological model of risk and protective factors (**Figure 2**), we consider changes linked to risk and protective factors at individual and wider levels.

Children and young people's attitudes about committing crime (at the time of intervention)

Many of the reviewed studies noted a change in young people's attitudes to committing crime during the programme.

In Badger et al's (2023) quantitative self-report survey, young people report that they are less likely to carry a knife after they had participated in VR workshops in which they discussed decisions around knife crime. While the data do appear to demonstrate this, it should be interpreted with caution as it stems from one exploratory evaluation of a pilot programme at a single primary school and there is no contextual information given about the primary school or the participants other than age/sex.

In Bandyopadhyay et al's (2024) study, '*a number of children and young people said that the… programmes had reduced their chances of getting involved in local gang activity*' (p61). These young people were attending a music and mentoring programme and felt their change in attitudes was linked to the mentoring from those with lived experience suggesting that the music element was not the key determinant.

Varley (2019) found significant positive improvements in six self-report measures related to attitudes towards offending, victim empathy and current life problems amongst children and young people both post-programme and at three months follow up (compared to pre-programme measures).

Other studies (Caulfield et al 2022; Caulfield & Sojka, 2023) also mentioned changes in attitude reported in the qualitative element of these studies (although these had not been found to be significant in the quantitative elements). It should be noted that in terms of changed attitudes, it is a possibility that participants were simply supplying the feedback that was expected of them (Williams & Squires, 2021). In addition, attitudes do not

always correspond with behaviours, so improved attitudes do not necessarily correspond with a reduction in criminal behaviour (Gross & Niman, 1975).

Increased compliance with a Criminal Justice Order

A minority of studies reported a positive impact on children and young people's attendance at YOT appointments. This doesn't mean that these were the only programmes showing this effect, but simply, that they were the only studies to measure and/or report on it. In research conducted by Caulfield et al. (2019), findings indicate an increase in the percentage of YOT appointments attended by children and young people engaged in creative arts activities. Additionally, there was a reduction in breach of order among children and young people participating in these activities. A reduction in breach was also noted by Tarling and Adams (2012) in their evaluation of the Summer Arts College.

A subsequent study by Caulfield et al. (2022) reported significant improvement in attendance at YOT appointments when compared to a control group. These findings suggest that involvement in creative arts may enhance commitment to attending appointments, highlighting the potential benefits of such programmes in supporting children and young people within the youth justice system.

Mental health/wellbeing

Many of the studies found that participation in creative activities offered mental health/wellbeing benefits for children and young people.

In Caulfield et al's study (2021), children and young people reported improvements in their wellbeing and self-expression alongside engaging in arts/culture programmes. Staff noted "huge successes" when working in these less formal environments, which fostered open relationships between them and the children and young people. This shift allowed for greater agency and control among participants, facilitating a more positive engagement with the activities.

The benefits of these creative programmes are evident in both quantitative and qualitative findings. For instance, Caulfield and Sojka (2023) reported significantly higher scores in self-reported well-being and self-esteem indicators after programme participation. Qualitative data further illustrate these changes, showing enhanced engagement, confidence, and aspirations among young people (Caulfield et al., 2019). Similarly, De Viggiani et al. (2014) reported that arts programmes can be life-changing, helping children and young people cope with challenging circumstances, including custody, while encouraging a positive outlook.

A notable aspect of the programmes was their calming and cathartic effect on mental health. Participants in creative activities, such as creating rap music or podcasts, described how these experiences provided a critical emotional outlet. One young person reflected, "Even like when it comes to the studio, you just write lyrics and just say what's on your mind" (young person in a study by Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024). This sentiment was echoed by another participant who stated, "I'm more relaxed, especially after the podcast" (young person in a study by Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024).

The impact on mental health extended to sleep patterns, with Henley (2015) highlighting unexpected improvements in insomnia among participants. This finding aligns with the broader therapeutic benefits of creative engagement, as it allows children and young people to manage stress and emotional turmoil effectively. Staff in one programme observed that it not only enhanced mood but also provided a necessary respite from academic pressures, contributing to a more positive approach to schooling (Parker et al., 2018).

These studies provide some clear evidence that the arts/culture programmes make a contribution to improvements in mental health and emotional regulation among young people, improving confidence, self-expression, and meaningful connections, and can lead to enhanced well-being and resilience in challenging environments.

Other psychological development

Nearly all studies found that young people participating in specific programmes have shown notable improvements in psychological development areas such as resilience, confidence, self-esteem, identity, and self-concept.

The integration of drama and theatre can be seen to be particularly impactful. Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017) noted that these activities create “optimal conditions for promoting growth and resilience through voluntary engagement in a positive activity.” This environment allows participants to be vulnerable, negotiate conflicts, and learn from challenges, which promotes resilience and well-being (Froggett et al., 2018).

Confidence and self-esteem are also observed to be enhanced through these programmes. Froggett and Ortega Breton (2020) noted that the BROAD programme “progressively increases participants’ confidence, self-esteem and communication skills.” Similarly, van Maanen (2010) reported that participants self-reported increases in confidence and self-esteem, indicating positive engagement with the project. This suggests a link between these programmes and the development or enhancement of factors that protect young people from engaging in self-harm and/or violence.

Identity and self-concept development have emerged as important outcomes as well. Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017) found that participants described feeling increasingly distanced from a past self that no longer represented them. This shift suggests a movement towards a more integrated self, aligning with the concept of actual and ideal selves (Higgins, 1987) as well as the rejection of past identities (Maruna and Roy, 2007). The music project highlighted by Daykin et al. (2017) also provided a platform for some participants to explore and affirm their identities, leading to the emergence of a stronger musical identity.

Overall, the benefits of these programmes are evident. They not only support emotional regulation and problem-solving skills but also create an environment where children and young people can express themselves and reclaim their narratives, crucial for their psychological development and overall well-being.

Communication and self-expression

Most studies describe benefits for participants (children and young people) in terms of self-expression and/or communication. In research conducted by Caulfield and Sojka (2023), participants noted that learning music skills enhanced their ability to articulate thoughts. One participant stated, “It’s made me better how I say things or put things into words.”, indicating the programme's impact on self-expression.

Drama has also been identified as a therapeutic tool that supports self-expression. Hanrahan and Banerjee’s (2017) study found that drama provides an engaging way for children and young people to reflect on and explore their experiences. This engagement can deepen their understanding and expression of feelings.

Similarly, lyric writing was noted, in the study by Wilkinson et al. (2022) as particularly valuable in developing social and communication skills, eliciting in-depth perspectives and meaningful feedback. This skill development was seen to enhance children and young people’s ability to interact meaningfully.

In the BROAD programme, Froggett and Ortega Breton (2020) highlighted how it specifically targets improvements in confidence and self-esteem alongside communication skills, addressing both individual and group thought patterns that affect self-harm and violence. These ‘welfare’ outcomes align with known protective factors and can contribute to overall risk reduction, reinforcing the impact of the programme.

Raised aspirations, alongside increased skills and opportunities

Improvements in aspirations, skills, and opportunities for children and young people were observed in more than half of the studies, and linked to the targeted programmes. Qualitative data show that children and young people have experienced increased engagement, confidence, and well-being. Staff noted that relationships with children and young people became more open (Caulfield et al., 2019). This is linked with increased

desire to take part in education and training and to pursue paid employment (sometimes related to creative roles – see section on qualifications below).

Mentorship played a role in reshaping young people's life goals. For instance, one participant reflected, “I’m thinking I have to hop on the road, […] sell this, sell that […] But now that I’m on the bus […] they’ve told me there’s light at the end of the tunnel” (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024). This highlights how guidance can redirect aspirations towards more positive futures.

Staff in Caulfield et al’s study observed that some children and young people “are aspiring to be something lower than what they could achieve,” yet creative arts programmes have raised these aspirations. They provide opportunities to experience new activities, instilling confidence that can lead to changed future paths. One staff member noted, “They’ve tried something they probably haven’t tried before” (Caulfield et al., 2019). This exposure can motivate children and young people to pursue careers they hadn't previously considered; a point also raised in Hanrahan & Banerjee’s study of a drama programme (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017).

Despite some challenges, many of the studies mentioned young people’s plans for future education or training. For example, in the study by van Maanen, 2010, most young people expressed positive aspirations for their futures, and all reported increased awareness of opportunities available post-release illustrating a promising trend in the development of aspirations among children and young people involved in these programmes.

4.2.2. Features/ processes of programmes that are discussed as promoting change

Here we explore specific features of arts and culture-based programmes that were discussed in the studies as features that promote change in the young people attending. Many of these don’t relate solely to art/culture programmes, some may be transferrable to other types of intervention (e.g. sport) but all were highlighted in the studies we reviewed.

Programme design

There is not enough evidence to provide a definitive answer on the most effective session content. However, providing knowledge and education specifically about a relevant feature of crime, risk or safety was mentioned in some studies. Those programmes that specifically attempted to increase knowledge around crime (e.g. knife carrying) was linked with some impactful changes in young people. For instance, in Badger et al’s study (2023), qualitative survey data indicated that, after the workshop, young people had a more in-depth knowledge about knife crime and its consequences.

Other findings of positive improvements in young people’s attitudes and behaviours related to programme design included those that included a mentoring element to the programme, integrating that with the creative content (Parker et al., 2018; Bandyopadhyay et al. 2024).

Activities that distract

Arts programmes, in general, provide distraction activities in community and custodial settings, offering young people constructive ways to engage with their time. This reflects the view, set out in the studies, that art and culture activities can act as a distraction from difficulties, and redirect young people towards constructive pursuits. In community settings, theatre workshops were discussed as a distraction and an escape. Participants reported engaging in drama and theatre activities as “*a positive activity that filled their time*,” highlighting their value in diverting attention from negative influences (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017). One young person noted, “*I started to focus on things that I actually love to do*”.

There is also some anecdotal discussion of reduction in crime. For instance, in Caulfield et al’s study, one of the participants said that taking part in the creative activities kept him from engaging in anti-social and criminal behaviour: *“It makes me feel good, it makes me feel joyful. At least I'm not out on the streets doing badness,*

at least I'm not going out trying to rob a car, or rob somebody, or smacking someone in the face. It keeps me occupied." (Young Person 1) (Caulfield et al., 2021).

In YJS settings, similar trends emerge. Interviewees described programmes as helpful for keeping them occupied and distracted from daily challenges. One participant remarked, "*It helps me keep out of trouble and gives me something good to do,*" emphasising the programme's role in providing a positive outlet (Caulfield & Sojka, 2023). Another stated that before joining the music programme, boredom often led to trouble, but now, "*I'm calmed down*" and returning to school.

In secure settings, arts and culture activities also play a crucial role. Participants expressed that they provided something to do and something to look forward to. "*It was good, because it helped pass the time away*," one individual stated, illustrating how these activities can transform the experience of confinement (Daykin et al., 2017). Another participant reflected, "*This has helped because I've been doing something constructive*," which underscores the importance of engaging in meaningful activities to manage stress levels (Henley, 2015).

Overall, these programmes offer opportunities for children and young people to channel their energy into positive actions, thereby reducing the likelihood of negative behaviours and enhancing their overall well-being.

Arts sessions as safe spaces

The majority of the studies found that providing a safe space for children and young people is important for their development and well-being. In the study conducted by Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024), children and young people appreciated opportunities to connect to others and have discussions in a safe environment, particularly in areas marked by postcode rivalries. Staff here highlighted the importance of managing group interactions to prevent conflicts during these sessions.

Daykin et al. (2017) found that the programme provided respite from stigma and the sense of being controlled, offering participants a break from their daily challenges. This sort of safe space can contribute to improved confidence and well-being, as noted in the study by Caulfield and Sojka (2023). However, questions remain regarding the sustainability of these benefits once the programme concludes. Continued access to such environments may be necessary to maintain positive outcomes for children and young people.

Qualifications, aspirations and pathways to achievement

Programmes that provide accreditation, qualifications and pathways to achievements play a role in promoting positive outcomes. In research conducted by Caulfield et al. (2021), it was noted that Arts Award accredited programmes improve accessibility to art for children and young people who have offended, supporting their desistance from crime. These programmes can transform "young offenders" into "young artists" through engagement with contemporary art and galleries, enhancing their re-engagement with learning (Gowland-Pryde, 2017).

Caulfield et al. (2019) highlight the aim of the Sandwell YJS, where every child and young person involved with the service is expected to leave with an Arts Award accreditation. The various awards offered, such as Discover, Explorer, and Bronze Art, are nationally recognised and create opportunities for young people to gain qualifications. Staff members noted that creativity often inspires new aspirations, changing young people's trajectories. The importance of tangible achievements is further illustrated by the case of Chris, who, after participating in The Summer Arts College, discovered a passion for performing arts. His engagement led to educational support and ultimately a placement at Halesowen College, providing anecdotal evidence of how these programmes can redirect young people's futures (Caulfield et al., 2021).

Other positive changes were identified in a number of other studies: Tarling and Adams (2012) found children and young people taking part in the Summer Arts College not only improved basic skills but also achieved qualifications, highlighting the programme's impact on progression. Morgan et al. (2020) found that

performing-arts activities can be linked to enhanced employability and support social mobility. Caulfield and Sojka (2023) reported significantly higher scores in education, training, and employment (ETE), as well as in musical ability and well-being, after programme participation suggesting a link between programme involvement and improved outcomes.

Increased confidence in future potential also emerged as a notable benefit. Young people in Caulfield et al's study expressed aspirations that extended beyond the programme, such as it "*Encouraged me to do an access and a degree*" and "*I felt more active. I wanted to do more things*", reflecting the broader impact of the programme on their outlook and motivation (Caulfield et al., 2022).

However, Howard's evaluation of Arts Award programmes noted the challenges of accredited programmes for young people and the sometimes heavy focus on performance metrics (Howard, 2020). While the Arts Award is recognised within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, providing measurable outcomes for funding, it often emphasises ability-oriented goals over creative engagement. Howard found that some programmes operated under deficit assumptions about young people's capabilities and use arts engagement as a means of behaviour management rather than fostering genuine artistic exploration, leading to what was described as a lower-quality arts education in which the most disadvantaged young people often receive the weakest arts programmes (Howard, 2020). This tension between creativity and accountability can overshadow the personal engagement that these arts initiatives aim to promote. Despite the positive aspects of arts/culture programmes, the focus on monitoring and control can detract from their creative benefits.

In general, while programmes like the Arts Award can create pathways to achievement, attention must be paid to ensuring that these opportunities are not overshadowed by deficit perspectives or rigid accountability measures. The challenge lies in balancing the need for measurable outcomes with encouraging creativity and self-expression.

4.2.3. Arts and culture: The power of enjoyment to promote engagement and change

Young people express considerable enjoyment in arts and culture programmes. In the study conducted by Caulfield et al. (2021), participants reported overwhelmingly positive experiences with various arts activities offered by the YJS. The combination of music-making and mentoring was particularly effective in engaging children and young people, linking with improvements in confidence, communication skills, and attitudes towards teachers and peers (Parker et al., 2018).

Smithson and McHugh (2018) highlighted that many young people appreciated how the programme inspired them and provided opportunities for experiential learning in a fun setting. Across the studies, young people shared their enjoyment of arts/culture programmes. One remarked, "*I love it, honestly, I love it so much. It's just really helped me in genera*l" (Caulfield & Sojka, 2023), another stated, "*I liked them all… Everything was good and positive*" (Caulfield et al., 2019).

Children and young people also mentioned the emotional benefits of engaging in enjoyable creative activities. One participant noted, "*I always feel happy here and it lasts all day*" (Caulfield et al., 2022). Qualitative data from their study show improvements in engagement, confidence, well-being, and aspirations linked to programme enjoyment (Caulfield et al., 2019). The transformative power of music was evident, with difficult behaviours being channelled into creative outputs, which provided enjoyment for both participants and observers (Daykin et al., 2017).

The enjoyment of arts activities is supported by Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017), who observed that participants appreciated the sense of belonging and engagement in constructive activities. They highlighted that "optimally challenging activities" foster intrinsic enjoyment and personal achievements.

Despite the generally positive feedback, some challenges were raised. Howard (2022) discussing the Arts Award noted that a focus on evidencing progress (as mentioned before) often overshadowed the enjoyment of creative work. Young people expressed that the emphasis on skill over enjoyment created tension within the programme.

Music-making has the potential to engage 'hard to reach' children and young people. Early findings from the evaluation of COOL music indicated that it successfully engages disempowered children and young people, although the short-term nature of such projects may pose challenges for those needing more stability (Millar et al., 2020).

There were plenty more examples of positive engagement and enjoyable experiences (See for instance, Bandyopadhyay et al., 2024; Gowland-Pryde, 2017; Varley, 2019). Overall, the findings across these studies illustrate that, with very few exceptions, children and young people sharing their experiences with evaluators, derive great enjoyment from arts and culture programmes, which positively impacts their engagement, overall experiences and development.

4.2.4. Evidence that links to impact of arts/culture programmes at a wider community level

Most studies provide some evidence relating to the positive impact of programmes on peer relationships, family and/or community.

Peer

There is evidence that arts/culture programmes have an impact on peer relationships and peer support among children and young people. In the evaluation of Good Vibrations music programme, conducted by Henley (2015), a participant reflected on their initial nervousness about group work with peers before concluding that, "*It made me feel like I'd achieved something. I did that. It made you proud of yourself.*" This example highlights how engagement in collaborative activities with peers can support a sense of personal achievement, even after initial concerns.

The necessity of working together in creative ways such as theatre performances or in music groups can contribute to relationship building with peers. Henley (2012) found that participants, through collaboration and facilitator modelling, were able to "*put aside differences in order to produce a good musical outcome*" which strengthened ties and led to a sense of group ownership over the project. Participants expressed pride in their work and shared their achievements with family, reinforcing connections beyond the project environment.

Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024) noted that programmes create a "*positive sense of family and belonging*" by bringing children and young people with shared interests together in inclusive spaces. Caulfield et al. (2019) observed improvements in peer relationships through small group activities. Staff reported that young people began to change their perceptions of each other, creating an environment where they could share experiences and advice. One staff member remarked on the benefit of peer influence when a young person shared insights from their own experiences within the youth justice system, illustrating the value of peer support from those experiencing similar things.

Throughout some of these programmes, the evaluations noted that the relationship dynamics among participants evolved. For instance, in Henley's study of Good Vibrations, initially, students addressed one another formally, but as they interacted more and became more familiar, they began using first names, began respecting each other more, and the project led to the formation of at least one new friendship. While not all differences were resolved, the project enabled students to collaborate and work with peers, demonstrating the potential for art/culture programmes (as with most other group-based activity programmes) to enhance peer support among children and young people (Henley, 2012)

Family

In many of the studies, attending an art/culture programme was reported to have an impact on children and young people's relationships with their families and support networks. Caulfield et al. (2021) found that most young people discussed their arts experiences with friends and family which helped build communication skills and strengthen family ties. Children and young people expressed pride in their achievements by sharing their work at home, an opportunity often lacking for those in contact with the criminal justice system.

de Viggiani et al. (2014) noted that, in sessions, young people frequently discussed the music their parents enjoyed, which can then offer conversation points and facilitate deeper conversations and bonding between families.

In Caulfield et al.'s (2019) study, participants linked their increased communication skills and confidence in communication to their experiences on the music project. One young person reported, "*I don't argue with my family anymore*," indicating a positive shift in family dynamics. On a practical level, in Gowland-Pryde's study (2017) one participant became the designated photographer at family gatherings after learning about photography on the Summer Arts Award which increased his self-esteem and allowed him to engage meaningfully in family life.

Community

There were numerous examples in the studies of the ways in which art/culture can make a difference to the connection between children and young people and their wider communities, including the police and other authority figures, by building social connections and redefining relationships with authority figures. In the study conducted by Caulfield et al. (2021), including the police in creative activities with children and young people allowed trust to be developed between the two groups. One police officer noted that after the session, "*they saw us as human beings, not police*," highlighting the shift in perception that can occur in informal settings. A staff member reflected on how one young person, initially resistant to the police, ended up having a positive experience, sharing a meal and engaging in conversation. This interaction helped the young person see the officer as "a person" rather than a figure of authority (Caulfield et al., 2019).

Also on this programme, staff noted that their relationships with children and young people improved through creative activities. One staff member remarked on how young people began to view staff as "more positive figures", recognising them not just as disciplinarians but as individuals who are there to support young people (Caulfield et al., 2019). This shift allowed for deeper conversations, enabling staff to better understand the challenges faced by children and young people.

Other examples of community connections and bonds, a sense of belonging and improved social relations within the community were included in the studies by Henley (2012), Millar et al. (2020) and (Varley, 2019).

4.2.5. Findings that contradict the 'positive' impact of programmes

On the whole, studies reported a range of positive outcomes for children and young people engaged in arts/culture programmes. However, while uncommon, some negative experiences and outcomes were also reported. For example, in the studies conducted by Caulfield et al. (2021) they found that music, while beneficial for some could lead to feelings of failure and exclusion where young people were disappointed in their own perceived lack of achievements on the programme. Other feelings of anxiety, depression (some of which were present before the programme) or simply a lack of interest in the programme were found in de Viggiani et al's study (2014) causing children and young people to miss sessions. These sorts of negative emotions (about themselves or the programme) can lead to children and young people failing to engage and missing sessions, undermining the very purpose of the programmes and their intended benefits. While, in itself, this is concerning, it also raises questions about the participants who did not feature in these evaluations as either positive or negative. These young people are currently hidden among the data leaving evaluators with no sense of the impact of the programme on them.

4.2.6. Sustainability of change: Follow up data

There is some limited evidence to suggest that changes identified in young people's behaviour is sustainable after the end of the programmes discussed in the studies included in our review. However, it becomes difficult to know for certain if these changes occurred as a result of the programme or alongside the programme.

Some of the studies in our review included follow-up data collection to see whether early changes were sustained post-programme, or if further changes could be identified. Of the selected studies, six included some form of longitudinal or follow up data collection element, but only five of these were post-programme.

Qualitative data:

Follow-up interviews three months post programme (de Viggiani et al., 2014 and Varley, 2019) and six weeks post programme (Henley, 2012) provide qualitative accounts from small numbers of staff and young people attesting to the continued impact of the programmes. Changes in levels of self-esteem, quality of sleep as well as a reduction in criminal and 'risky behaviours' including drug-taking were noted. However, as Henley (2012) noted about one respondent, despite the '*clear evidence to show that the project allowed him to listen to others and respect their opinions more'*, it is difficult to say *'whether or not the Good Vibrations project helped him move into this position'.*

Similarly, Caulfield et al.'s (2021) follow-up study gathered qualitative evidence from practitioners and young people at a Summer Arts College. They noted the successes of some young people who had attended the programme, such as going on to enrol in college courses, sometimes following creative careers after taking part' in the programme that they argue demonstrates sustained, embedded change that is demonstrably related to attendance at the programme.

Quantitative data:

There is some quantitative evidence in two of the studies to suggest that art/culture programmes reduce rates of crime committed by participants. *Quantitative d*ata to support ongoing changes was gathered by Varley (2019) after three months and showed a reduction in those classed as medium risk (from 60% pre-intervention to 25% post intervention) and an increase in those classed as low risk (from 40% pre-intervention to 75% post intervention). In addition, Varley (2019) used CRIME PICs II pre-, post and follow up surveys with children and young people to measure changes in attitudes. Significant positive improvements in six measures related to attitudes towards offending, victim empathy and current life problems were also recorded. This is the strongest evidence about changes in attitudes towards crime from the studies reviewed.

Tarling & Adams, (2012), evaluating the impact of the Summer Art/culture Programme, found that it consistently met its objectives of reducing offending. Offending rates were measured at 13 weeks pre-programme, during the programme, and 13 weeks post-programme. The percent offending at 13 weeks pre-programme was at 44%, this reduced to 12 % during the programme and increased again to 26% post-programme. However, it should be noted that the follow-up study was only based on programme completers and has not been subject to significance testing so these results should be interpreted with this in mind.

It should be pointed out that improvements noted by Caulfield et al 2022 and Caulfield et al 2023 on the attitudes and behaviour scale (not a validated scale and also not specifically about crime) were not significant.

Overall:

The anecdotal evidence of sustained change for some young people is available, but robust quantitative or qualitative evidence demonstrating that change has occurred as a result of a particular programme, is harder to obtain. That is not to say that sustained changes for many young people are not directly linked to arts/culture-based programmes, but rather that the evidence to support this claim is hard to generate given the range of factors that can influence change: for instance, the extent of other work around young people engaging in serious violence, the impact of maturation, and the challenges of conducting randomised control trials with this population (as academics interviewed for this research noted).

4.2.7. The complexities of programme delivery (and evaluation)

Relationships between children and young people and practitioners/facilitators

Practitioner relationships play a key role in facilitating programme delivery for children and young people. All studies except three highlighted the importance of these connections (although this does not mean it was absent in those that did not highlight it) and relationships were a strong theme discussed in the studies.

Studies describe the wide range of attributes and skills needed by practitioners to engage children and young people through art-based methods, and the range of mechanisms through which quality relationships are formed/maintained. Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024), noted that many children and young people related well to their mentors, especially where they shared similar backgrounds and lived experiences. This relatability encourages trust and openness. Similarly, Wilkinson et al. (2022) found that artists developed rapport with children and young people through a shared passion for music. Such connections enable practitioners to engage with children and young people, making them relatable, and enhancing young people's overall experience. Several practitioners mentioned that motivational staff can inspire young people's engagement, especially where artists were perceived as "cool".

Recognition by programme staff also plays a role. Morgan et al. (2020) noted that acknowledgment from staff could positively influence how participants viewed themselves and their aspirations. This recognition can shift attitudes towards education and employment, and support young people as they move through education, training or work. Conversely, Howard (2020) highlighted challenges in practitioner interactions, where preconceived assumptions about children and young people led to less engaging educational experiences. This situation often resulted in lower-quality arts education, limiting opportunities for creativity and exploration.

There were additional features of relationships between young people, raised in most of the studies, that could be considered 'promotive'; those that 'enable young people to challenge risk-based identities and navigate the barriers they face' (Deakin at al, 2022). These include creating safe spaces where children and young people can express themselves (see, for example, Bandyopadhyay et al 2024), responding to the unique needs of individual children and young people (see, for example, Morgan et al, 2020; de Viggiani et al 2014), and building a sense of community and belonging (See, for example, Henley, 2012).

Practitioners were seen, in the evaluations, to be skilled at building rapport and communicating effectively and straightforwardly with children and young people (see for example, Parker, et al, 2018; Daykin et al 2017; de Viggiani et al 2014; Wilkinson et al 2022). Other key characteristics of successful practitioners mentioned widely in the studies were patience and persistence, conflict resolution, encouragement and an understanding of diverse cultural background and experiences of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Overall, the relationships between practitioners and children and young people are a key part of successful programme delivery, impacting engagement and personal development.

Voluntary vs mandatory programmes

The voluntary nature of programmes for children and young people has distinct benefits and drawbacks. Caulfield et al. (2019) noted that activities should align with the interests of children and young people, emphasising the importance of autonomy in encouraging genuine participation. However, some experiences indicate a sense of obligation, and one participant mentioned that certain activities felt mandatory. This highlights the potential for reduced motivation when engagement is not entirely voluntary.

Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017) found that voluntary participation in drama and theatre supports personal growth and resilience, creating a safe space for children and young people to express themselves. Wilkinson et al. (2022) highlighted the benefits of sessions driven by the interests of children and young people, promoting a more engaging and tailored experience. This ties in with other studies (Henley, 2012; Smithson and Mchugh, 2018) that found that a sense of agency among young people and flexibility in the programme encouraged engagement.

Facilitators to successful programme delivery

Overall, those delivering arts/culture programmes felt that their success is influenced by various factors, including contextual conditions, relationships with staff, social inequalities, and peer or group dynamics. These elements shape how children and young people engage with and benefit from arts and culture-based programmes. There were many facilitators to the delivery of successful programmes discussed in the studies and the interviews. The main points are summed up here:

Facilitators included positive group dynamics that can be encouraged by spending time engaging in teamwork activities and '*deflecting attention away from dominating or inappropriate behaviour and trying to refocus participants' attention on the activity in the face of distractions and disruptions' (*de Viggiani et al., 2014). Ensuring that the venue, programme timing and transport options are all suitable is essential preparation and will encourage attendance. However, being flexible in these arrangements was also mentioned in cases where this is necessary:

'*Across the sites, it was impossible to deliver an equivalent standard, format and approach to the music programme workshops, essentially due to constraints with timetabling, physical space and security'* (de Viggiani et al., 2014).

Flexibility was also mentioned as a benefit to participants in some cases, allowing them flexibility from their timetables and a space to relax (Millar et al., 2020). However, for programmes to have a long-term impact on young people's behaviour and attitudes, the programmes themselves need to be sustained and benefit from greater policy attention:

'*for such programmes to achieve more sustained, long-term impact, the musicians acknowledged that more time, resources and political commitment were needed*.' (de Viggiani et al., 2014, p. 137)

Staff taking part in several of the interviews and the studies recognised that creative avenues do not appeal to all children and young people. Music, for instance may not be of interest to all young people therefore the links between music-making and routes towards desistance are not universally applicable or necessarily a straightforward solution (Daykin et al., 2017). Others emphasised that creative methods can enhance engagement but that does not automatically increase motivation among children and young people, and significant effort is necessary for new approaches to be accepted and become effective (Caulfield et al. (2021). The emphasis should be on providing opportunities for those who wish to participate, ensuring that they are supported by adequate resources and committed staff, and linking them with community resources to sustain their engagement.

The success of an arts/culture-based programme, like any intervention, must take account of a number of considerations and contexts in relation to the young people it hopes to engage. For instance:

- many children and young people lack prior engagement with the arts, highlighting the need for accessible and inclusive approaches using language and methods that resonate with these young people

- many will have complex and chaotic life circumstances including Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma which can prevent them from participating fully, so programmes need to be able to adapt.

- children and young people need to be ready and open to change in order to benefit from these programmes, so programmes need to be available when the time is right, and work on 'readiness to change' with young people.

- many of the young people will struggle with a sense of belonging, acceptance and self-worth, so programmes need to look at individual needs and circumstances in order to encourage engagement.

4.3. Overall, what is the quality of the evidence?

Rigorous evidence that arts/culture programmes engage children and young people and reduce their risk of crime is severely limited as much of the available evidence lacks robust controls, adequate sample sizes or validated measures, leaving the binary question of effectiveness unanswered. However, a handful of the reviewed studies which use quasi-experimental designs demonstrate statistically significant positive outcomes for children and young people receiving arts/culture programmes, including: improvements in

compliance Youth Justice orders; self-reported improvements in attitudes towards offending, engagement with Education, Training and Employment (ETE) and well-being post-programme; reduced self-reported likelihood of carrying a knife post-programme; and reduced Asset Score risk classification. A small number of other studies report positive outcomes based on quantitative data, but the data has not been subject to significance testing, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. That said, all but one of the studies reporting quantitative data report this alongside qualitative data, which tends to support the promising findings in the aligned (descriptive) quantitative analyses.

Research in this area is predominantly qualitative, aiming to evaluate projects by understanding the value of arts/culture programmes from the perspectives of children and young people and practitioners. These studies report a vast range of mechanisms through which arts/culture programmes engage children and young people and consistently describes outcomes (based on the reporting of children and young people and professionals) that are linked with the desistance process.

There is a dearth of longer-term follow-up data (qualitative or quantitative) assessing whether the changes reported post-programme were sustained. Whilst a small number of studies report follow-up data indicating some degree of sustained improvements in the weeks and months following programmes, it is not possible to ascertain whether the changes occurred *as a result of the programme.*

Whilst some of the studies evaluate programmes across multiple sites, generally studies are of small-scale interventions and findings should be interpreted within the specific context of the intervention. Generalisability of findings is therefore highly limited. Despite this, taken together, the studies highlight consistently the features of programmes which their success (or failure), and the mechanisms through which change occurs. These features and mechanisms (highlighted throughout section **4.2**) may be transferable to other contexts, although to establish this would require further investigation and more rigorous testing.

Overall, whilst the available evidence has a range of methodological limitations and much further research is needed to answer the question of effectiveness, the convergence of evidence from multiple and varied sources can to some degree increase our confidence that arts/culture programmes make a contribution to reducing children and young people's risk of committing crime. However, the extent of that contribution is currently unclear.

5. Phase 3 results: Empirical work

5.1. Children and young people's views on arts/culture programmes

The voices of children and young people participating in arts/culture-based change programmes is central to an understanding of how programmes can promote change, for whom and in what context. Using data collected as part of other projects (currently or recently) conducted by the research team, we were able to gather opinions from 35 (majority male) children and young people across four arts/culture programmes that are currently running, or have been running in the last three years, in community and secure settings. These programmes all focussed on elements of music creation, drawing, creative writing (of song lyrics and short stories) and recording with some elements of drama/theatre involved. This analysis, while only partial, offers some insight into how children and young people engage with programmes as well as their views on the benefits and challenges of arts/culture programmes.

5.1.1. Exploring emotions through art

Many of the children and young people mentioned something that they found to be of value in the 'arts-part' of the programme. They talked about writing, drawing and creating music as a way to process their thoughts and emotions as well as providing a distraction from daily life, serving as a coping mechanism, especially in custodial environments.

> *"Writing feels like some sort of meditation. It clears my mind, and I do it for fun." (Evan)*

> *"It takes stuff off my mind. It's a good distraction. Good teachers make it interesting. I've started to enjoy books." (Callum)*

‘It’s very therapeutic and really helps with your self-confidence’ (Zeke)

These findings suggest that creativity can help them to explore emotions in a way that feels accessible and safe, providing a structured outlet for feelings that may be difficult to express in other ways.

5.1.2. Achievements, skills, hopes and dreams

Children and young people also reported that they had developed communication skills, resilience, and confidence through attending arts/culture programmes. Even those who initially claim they disliked writing, drawing, or music often produce meaningful work when given the right support.

For example, some young people who said they disliked writing still found themselves producing work they were proud of:

"I’ve written stories, I wrote a poem that got published in a book whilst here. I don’t enjoy it, but I do it and am good at it." (Mo)

Similarly, many of the participants in of the music programmes expressed pride in themselves at their final event, describing a strong sense of achievement. Showcasing creative work—whether through publications, exhibitions, or performances—builds young people’s confidence and motivates them to continue achieving.

Finally, many talked about how the programme they had attended had sparked an interest in music or drama as a career, allowing them to build skills and envision a different future:

‘I spent time with Barney and Damian, who are two local musicians who over the weeks and months I’ve spent with then have not only helped me with my music making but allowed me to ask them lots of questions about working in the music business and all the different areas there are’ (Sami)

‘They have helped me work out what I want to develop and how I can work with my support worker to help me start putting it into practice’ (Zeke)

Promoting ideas about opportunities and what the future could hold are important elements in a child or young person’s change journey as they begin to consider a life after custody or post criminal justice involvement.

5.1.3. Engagement and participation

A key factor in children and young people’s engagement and participation in sessions is whether the creative work feels meaningful to them. Some children and young people were selective about what they engage with, showing enthusiasm for certain topics but resistance to others. Engagement with the content of the programme as a whole, as well individual sessions, was dependent on young people’s individual interests, learning barriers, and whether they feel it is relevant to their own experiences.

"I enjoy writing if it's something I like; otherwise, I’m not a big fan." (Aaron)

Many of the children and young people attending programmes involving writing (stories or lyrics) talked about focusing their creativity on their own real-life experiences either through storytelling, lyric writing or another form of art. For young people in music-based programs, engagement is often strongest when they are able to create music or lyrics related to their own experiences or based on situations that they are familiar with. Similarly, for those taking part in the creative writing programme, participation seems linked to personal storytelling rather than abstract themes.

"I enjoy diary writing and real rap about real things." (Keiran)

This suggests that programmes that incorporate both imaginative and reality-based/experiential topics and creative work will be best placed to promote participation and engagement.

5.1.4. Barriers to participation

Not all of the young people felt comfortable engaging in creative activities. Some experienced difficulties due to SEND, handwriting struggles, or frustration with the product of their writing.

> *"I struggle with writing, especially my handwriting. I can't just sit there and write." (Hamz)*

> *"I find spelling hard as I have dyslexia and ADHD. Writing is not the one. I've written five short stories, but I struggle. I was 14 or 15 then, so I had help." (Mo)*

Similar challenges were reported in response to drawing elements of some of the programmes, where some participants expressed disappointment that their drawings did not meet their expectations. Others find group-based creative work intimidating, particularly in performance settings. While facilitators in these sessions were skilled at encouraging participation, boosting confidence and making task fun, not all children and young people can be encouraged to participate.

5.1.5. Skilled facilitators and a supportive environment

The way creative activities are delivered significantly impacts engagement. Several children and young people noted that having supportive facilitators and engaging teaching methods made a difference to their enjoyment, productivity and willingness to participate. In the writing programme, Callum and Josh noted that:

> *"Good teachers make it interesting. I've started to enjoy books." (Callum)*

> *"Writing takes a lot of thinking. It's hard, like maths, but I do prefer English. I only write in lessons." (Josh)*

In each of the programmes discussed here, young people noted the value of inputs from professional musicians and writers, helping young people overcome initial resistance and boosting confidence. The link with real-world experiences and connections to creative careers was also highly valued by young people attending sessions.

5.1.6. Overview of children and young people's views

From children and young people's perspectives creative programmes can offer meaningful opportunities for self-expression, emotional growth, and development of skills, opening their eyes to new opportunities and supporting change. Whether young people are in custody or serving community sentences, they want to engage with topics that feel relevant to them (either directly addressing their own experiences, or reflecting relatable situations), they value skilled facilitators who improve their engagement and motivation, and they feel pride in their achievements.

5.2. Role of arts in YJS: a view from practitioners, decision-makers and academics

5.2.1. Current landscape of the sector

There was a general consensus among practitioners and decision-makers, echoed by academics, that arts/culture are undervalued in terms of their role in crime reduction. This feeds into a lack of funding, a lack of research and a wider underappreciation of its value. Many felt that the role and impact of arts/culture-based programmes in preventing and reducing crime is not well understood by those who are not delivering the programmes or working with the children and young people receiving these programmes:

> *"I would just really like to see it have a bit more of a higher profile and it not be kind of seen as a bit of a soft touch. I think there's always that fear that the public's going to say we're going easy on kids." - Participant 4 (Senior Staff, violence reduction)*

> *"I would like to see arts and culture viewed on the same level platform as sport. I think always arts and culture is seen as a kind of second fiddle, but I think there are a huge number of young people who don't like sports…. I think it's about actually seeing arts and culture as a real key player." - Participant 18 (Senior practitioner, arts intervention)*

This perception reflects a broader undervaluing of the role of arts within the education system:

> *"We also know we're fighting against a system which has undervalued it, you know, it's never been an EBAC subject. It's been downplayed and under resourced systematically in schools" – Participant 6 (Decision-maker, violence reduction)*

> *"It's also about developing talents that in the recent past may not have been valued in schools. We saw how arts and culture has been squeezed out of the curriculum, so kids who might have incredible talents and skills in arts and culture. They may not have been that much space for it, so again, you're feeling like you're not, you know, you're not valued" – Participant 5 (Decision-maker, Arts sector)*

The undervaluing of the arts is a problem that is perpetuated by very real accessibility issues, especially for young people at risk or already involved in the justice system who typically face barriers such as marginalisation, affordability issues, and lack of access to safe transport:

> *"The young people that I work with…*[they] *come through the door. And* [they] *haven't touched art materials for a long time. And that feels really sad" – Participant 1 (Arts therapy practitioner, youth justice)*

> *"In terms of the barrier for young people… Increasingly about lack of access, and that might be because of affordability or they haven't got the resources or it might be because actually they're ignored as a as a marginalised group of people, they're seen as a deficit more than they're seen as an asset….So yeah, it's a lack of affordability in terms of having access. There's a lack of transport." – Participant 12 (Decision-maker, Arts sector)*

> *"The young people, they don't have the financial means to access some of the costs around art and culture… it is very expensive. Clubs are very expensive, so we want to ensure it's accessible" – Participant 14 (Senior staff member, violence reduction)*

> *"…even with the buses, like, course we can give out bus passes. They might not feel confident to get on the bus. They might feel threatened getting on a bus. You know, they might not have the ability to read the bus timetable or a parent who can read a bus timetable either" – Participant 3 (Senior practitioner, Arts sector)*

Our discussions touched on some key issues facing arts in the sector. Funding remains a significant challenge, particularly following COVID. Several participants mentioned that where funding is available, it is often short-term which "*really lets young people down*" - *Participant 12 (Decision-maker, Arts sector)*.

"The hope is that all these amazing small charities and arts organisations will be able to continue doing what they're doing, but without funding…we potentially will lose some really amazing experience and expertise within the sector. So I really hope, yeah, that funding does come to kind of save that because if that's gone and then that's gone and it won't be something that the prison service develops internally. It's always been kind of charities that are bringing this expertise and knowledge with into prisons" – Participant 8 (Senior practitioner, arts organisation)

"But as always, these things you know, you get the funding for the project, you do the project and then as much as you think all the impact or the outcome is going to be XY and Z funding stops, you're kind of then stuck there going OK what do we do now?" – Participant 21 (Senior practitioner, arts organisation)

There is a clear need for training and skill development among artists becoming involved in complex issues around violence and safeguarding:

"The expert staff are undervalued in my view, yet they are what I call hidden. They're hidden assets these people because they work in the field, they're committed to it, and they're very, very good at what they do…They don't just teach the art, they support, more broadly, the people who are taking part" - Academic

"These mentors need to be more than like a football coach or a drama teacher or an arts teacher. It must be someone who actually can have fully up skilled in training in the areas that there are more reason behind violence. So they have to have a complete understanding of complex or issues around violence. So we often build that capacity within them to to upskill them enough to engage with those young people and the families to have an understanding around conceptual safeguarding. And around county lines, all those kind of areas" – Participant 14 (Senior staff, Violence reduction)

"…mentors can be extremely powerful, but if they're not trained properly or if they're not managed properly, there can be consequences. So there are some organisations that we are aware of that have employed ex offenders. Their training perhaps hasn't been as as solid as some of the organisations and that can be quite detrimental to young people" – Participant 20 (CEO, Arts organisation)

"I'm telling you all the nice stuff, about interventions we deliver, which is brilliant. But in [geographical area]*, we deal with a lot of sadness and stress. We have a lot of very serious incidents go on. We have a lot of staff who experience children losing their lives, who we've worked with for years. We have staff who experienced children taking another person's life or stabbing someone…When you work in that environment and you're constantly taking on, absorbing children who suffered abuse, you know, and then you're moving on to another kid who suffered this. It pays its toll, and it's called vicarious trauma. So you're absorbing the trauma through the work you do. So we use art and trauma therapists to support staff to work through and process that trauma. Which is unique." – Participant 10 (Decision-maker, youth justice)*

As well as for 'gatekeepers' to understand the role arts can play:

"…all of this work can only happen if the gatekeepers enable it to happen. Because we're working in other people's institutions, children's homes, etc. So you have to convince the gatekeepers, you have to build relationships with the staff, with the governors, with the heads of those units, or those children's homes or those therapeutic environments. You have to convince them of the value of the work. And because they hold the key…If they don't buy it. If they don't get it. If they don't see the value of it, they don't understand what you're trying to achieve. Then you can't do anything" – Participant 11 (CEO, Arts organisation).

It was noted that the provision of arts within youth justice often relies on a handful of passionate individuals rather than a structured directive, indicating a lack of infrastructure to support these initiatives:

"I think we're able because of the relationships we've got, we're able to go like to the youth service and say I've had this crazy idea we're going to [start an arts project] *and they're like, cool. That sounds great. No idea how it's going to work, but we'll find a way*" – Participant 4 (Senior staff, violence reduction)

"…there's pockets of stuff all over the place. It's never been directed to us from the Home Office that no one ever has landed on my doorstep and said, right, we really want you to crack on with some arts and culture. It's just not in the vocabulary" – Participant 6 (Decision-maker, violence reduction).

Practitioners and decision-makers taking part in our interviews noted the importance of understanding who the participants of programmes are in order to respond to context-specific needs. Many described the very complex vulnerabilities and chaotic lives children and young people face as well as previous negative experiences of services that have led to a distrust of support.

"If you looked into who which young people are committing crimes, you'd probably find that they may lead chaotic lives. They may come from poorer families. They may have emotionally turbulent lives or they may be experiencing neglect. They may economically be living in quite challenging circumstances" – Participant 5 (Decision-maker, Arts sector)

"You know, they can't regulate like we can. And these are young people who generally have not benefited from good schooling, if any school in after year 6, they're not benefiting from healthy community environments. They're not mainly not benefiting from healthy home environments. They're around criminality. As soon as they open their eyes" – Participant 16 (Senior staff, arts organisation)

"…a lot of the young people we work with are very vulnerable, facing complex social backgrounds" – Participant 17 (CEO, Arts organisation)

"We've got a lot of young people who don't know how to navigate their way through challenges" – Participant 20 (CEO, Arts organisation)

"The young people that we're working with, they're very vulnerable. They've not had very good relationships all the time with services. So they don't really trust people" – Participant 4 (Senior staff, violence reduction)

These factors are crucial in terms of how a child or young person responds and can impact negatively on programme delivery, however, it is hard for any programme to target all factors of vulnerability.

"How do we build scaffolding for people to feel like they can participate at a level which is OK for them? Even the very idea of me of young person coming into a space where there are other people can be so terrifying for some. They've got, you know, very, very damaged, low self-esteem" – Participant 11 (CEO, Arts organisation)

Conversely, they also discussed a wide range of external or environmental mediating variables which may support the success of a programme, e.g. comfortable safe venue, and group dynamics including the formation of friendships.

"The effectiveness of the therapy really is determined on the space that we've got to facilitate the therapy in… we have to be really creative about finding a space that feels right. That's a really big determining factor" – Participant 1 (Arts therapy practitioner, youth justice)

"This [the programme delivery site] is slightly more of a what I call a safe space here. Which is crucial. We had a young man killed about a mile down the road last night. Shot in [local area]. There are very, very few safe spaces where young people can be themselves, so once they do come here, they tend to really enjoy it" – Participant 16 (Senior staff, Arts organisation)

"They met each other in our theatre group and then when they got released in prison, they stayed in touch and they continued creating. Like being creative together, doing writing and music like that." – Participant 17 (Senior practitioner, arts organisation)

One participant spoke of a group of young people who set up their own band during a youth justice summer programme:

> *"This group* [of children and young people] *set a band up in like in a week. They then kept coming to our* [weekly] *session and they formed really good friendships" – Participant 10 (Decision-maker, youth justice)*

Many of the discussions around successful programmes were linked closely with the skills of a committed facilitator who is able to motivate and enthuse participants, deal with group dynamics, and adjust the session to "*what you find in the room*" *– Participant 16 (Senior Practitioner, arts intervention).*

> *"Group dynamics are very important, and musician facilitators require strong skills to manage these and to understand the workings of cultural capital in micro settings" – Academic*

> *"We do a lot of of group work.. so its peer on peer, peer led which is really important because as much as I value my staff and the work that we do, we are very removed from the lifestyles that the young people lead, so although we can have fantastic relationships with them, sometimes when you hear advice coming from somebody your own age or somebody that's just slightly older, that has a really positive impact, which is why we also employ a lot of mentors" – Participant 20 (CEO, Arts organisation).*

These factors must be considered in relation to whether a programme works or not and are essential to understand the extent to which findings can be transferred to other groups / settings (to whom, when and in what contexts).

5.2.2. Research landscape

This evidence review and empirical work has enabled us to understand the research landscape but also unpack why there appears to be 'no robust evidence that arts reduce offending'.

Practitioners are keen to know what works, with calls for "*a clearer understanding and like sharing of the evidence base of like you know, does it work? Why it works? Because we know like services are stretched" – Participant 4 (Senior staff, violence reduction).*

While many felt, anecdotally, there's a change in young people accessing programmes, they are unable to fully evidence this change:

> *"Across our programmes, what we're trying to establish is, you know, is there an impact on crime and violence outcomes? There seems to be just this gap when it comes to, you know, understanding the impact on violence or offending itself… We don't feel we can say they work, we don't feel we can say they don't work in terms of crime and violence prevention, it's this sort of we don't know phase" - Participant 9 (Researcher, youth sector).*

> *"We do know they* [arts interventions] *work from either, you know, call it anecdotal evidence or experiential evidence or expert evidence. We do know that there is evidence that these things can be supportive and helpful in all sorts of different ways. But in terms of actual effectiveness, studies or trials, we don't know. There's just not the evidence, it isn't there" - Academic*

Research in this area has not so far produced evidence of change based on reoffending that many practitioners and decision-makers would like to see. With the exception of a small number of longer-term programmes (discussed above) that are capturing post-intervention follow-up data showing much-reduced re-offending rates, the majority of data gathered focuses on well-being-related outcomes for at-risk or justice-involved children and young people. These reflect a holistic, child-first approach, aiming to improve overall well-being rather than solely addressing reoffending, and often align with the various approaches through which arts programmes engage children and young people:

> *"the research and the evidence out there, especially for us looking at how arts and culture has an impact on reducing violence. It's been hard to find specifically arts and culture's impact on reducing violence…you can look at the mental well-being aspects you can look at the self-*

expression and all that points to good positive things, which will then in turn have a preventative impact further down the line. If you're looking at it more holistically" – Participant 7 (Decision-maker, violence reduction)

"…I think that the quality of the evidence specific to risk of offending is quite poor, because I think that that isn't the question that most of the research has been asking. So I think it's. I don't think that the issue is that these programmes don't do that, but I think that the research is largely not been asking that question" - Academic

Thus, whilst the research conducted is valuable, it hasn't provided robust evidence about crime reduction.

There were some key problems raised in relation to conducting research in this area. Several academics noted that funding constraints hinder larger studies, and the requirements for scale and consistency in randomised controlled trials often clash with the inherent diversity of the delivery of arts/culture-based programmes:

"The question of whether a randomised controlled trial is a relevant research design in these complex spaces is also a bit of a challenge. I mean, there are all sorts of pragmatic ways you can do randomised control trials, but there's no money or resources to do them in this space". - Academic

"There are also methodological difficulties including small sample sizes, lack of suitable controls." - Academic

"I guess we're talking about the arts and culture. I mean that's huge and broad and trying to apply any sort of consistency to this when you're trying to tease out the impact of it, the difference between music programmers and interventions for children over here. Compared to, I don't know, something for an entirely different group who might, in a loose way, be deemed at risk because of their status or something and an entirely different type of programme. I think that's a huge challenge in thinking about the evidence-base and how you compare these sorts of things that are really different." - Academic

Academics emphasised that the complexity of the populations served, and the nature of secure settings in particular complicate the evaluation process:

"Programmes tend to be short-term and attendance can be erratic due to chaotic environments. Issues of confidentiality are difficult to manage" - Academic

"Accessing people, building relationships with those people. You know, there's people who are actually in the criminal justice system, which is one thing around ethics and access. You know, people who are in Youth Offending Institutions…you need very specialist access and people with specialist knowledge of working with those and the ethics of it is difficult" - Academic

Practitioners highlighted various mediators of success complicate evaluation processes, making it clear that choice and flexibility are essential for effective arts programmes.

***"**It's not like a program. It's like a series of projects which are created specifically for that group of young people in that particular setting at that particular time" (CEO, Arts organisation)*

"…sometimes it's just what the community or young people working with are interested in so they would lead on what artform they're interested in, but we wouldn't kind of say anything at all because we are predominantly theatre makers, but we do sometimes pull in a lot of creative writing, movement, dance, some music, poetry, those sort of thing…the support is giving them choice to say you know they can steer how the art form looks and what other art forms they bring in and whether they want to do a film or a play or a monologue or a spoken word piece or writing. So there's lots of choices in it. – Participant 17 (CEO, arts organisation)

Other concerns were about conducting research in this area, such as problems of engaging young people, the meaningfulness of responses gained from outcome questionnaires, noting literacy levels and the ethical concerns that they can be triggering for children and young people:

"So many questions that are on the questionnaires that they point to.. I think on the SDQ and the Warwick Edinburgh scale… Some of the questions on there can actually trigger… You can't really score young people on a a level as to how they're progressing because tomorrow might be a completely different day from today" – Participant 16 (Senior practitioner, Arts organisation)

"When we were working in in secure units, they [the children and young people] *haven't finished school, so they don't respond very well to traditional teaching methods. The vast majority of them can't read and write, so they can't access the curriculum." – Participant 20 (CEO, arts organisation)*

All of this points to a minefield of difficulties in generating research and the subsequent lack of longitudinal studies and follow-ups considering the efficacy of programmes.

Overall, the majority of the practitioners, academics and decision-makers we spoke to identified gaps in knowledge around the long-term effects of arts initiatives and potential impacts beyond those currently considered. Academics stressed the need for funding for 'bigger pieces of work' including randomised control trials handled in 'pragmatic ways', and practitioners and decision-makers called for guidance on best practices, cost-effectiveness, and evidence that can support them in their work.

A significant issue, raised across the board, was the need for clarity in this area. There is still a lot to be agreed, such as: defining what we mean by 'risk reduction' and the features and scope of arts/culture programmes, defining the aims of research and the questions that need asking, as well as agreements about what constitutes valuable evidence and how it should be collected.

A note on measuring success:

There is a clear need to establish which outcomes (and how many) should be used to measure the success of arts participation in engaging children and young people and reducing risk of crime. Interviewees expressed a need for a clearer definition of "reducing risk" from a policy perspective, with academics noting that there are currently different opinions on what constitutes valuable evidence. Practitioners highlighted the importance of a deeper understanding of the value of arts beyond simply being a positive activity, as they described various mechanisms through which the arts engage children and young people and mitigate risk.

Whilst singular, isolated outcome measures are necessary for experimental approaches, in reality, outcomes for programmes which target risk factors at multiple levels and involve whole institutions or multiple agencies are likely to be a complex collection of longer-term changes across a number of behaviours rather than a single measure (Cooper et al., 2017; Makleff et al., 2021; van Dijk et al., 2019). It has been recommended that evaluations should also seek to understand the often smaller, incremental changes in behaviours which occur following an intervention (Makleff et al., 2021).

The measurement of outcomes must consider not only the behaviour changes of young people, but also the contexts in which such changes occur. It is unsurprising that outcomes have typically been conceptualised as quantifiable and global, rather than subjective and local, as the latter is more challenging to capture, isolate and articulate.

5.2.3. Partnerships between arts, police and youth justice

The consensus among practitioners is that arts organisations can be valuable partners to police and youth justice. However, this requires quality relationships and a mutual understanding of the values that the arts bring. Interviewees noted that youth justice must recognise the mechanisms and outcomes associated with arts initiatives. Training is essential for arts practitioners to equip them for working with complex populations, alongside support for practitioners. Examples were shared where the demand for services from arts organisations exceeds available resources.

"I mean Harry [project manager of music programme within the community & secure settings] has waiting lists the whole time. We never have gaps…there's always more young people who

want there's more always more demand than we can meet." - Participant 15 (CEO, Arts organisation)

Conversely, many more practitioners talked about the ways their programmes struggle to engage children and young people due to barriers imposed by gatekeepers, or timetabling within educational or youth justice settings:

> "…one of the other barriers is around access into the schools. It has been hugely challenging. Just trying to get through to the right person. Get past those kind of gatekeepers, and particularly in secondary schools, the challenge of fitting it into the curriculum" – Participant 18 (Senior practitioner, arts organisation)

A frequently mentioned problem was staff from organisations (e.g. school, YOI) not recognising the value in a programme and therefore not enthusing the children and young people to participate.

5.2.4. Community impact of programmes

Practitioners reported that arts programmes bring together individuals who might not otherwise interact, facilitating a better understanding of the community from the perspective of children and young people. This can be seen, for example, in the case study 3 focussing on Artswork presented earlier in this report. These programmes can influence decision-making by acting as a communication tool between children and young people and decision-makers.

Many interviewees noted the positive impact on relationships between children and young people and the people around them. This could be their peers and staff at the programmes, youth justice and social workers, care-home staff, teachers or their parents and siblings. One of the ways that this was frequently evidenced by practitioners was at a final celebratory event or performance that showcases the work young people have created to their families and communities. Many of the practitioners taking part in our interviews noted the effect of their programme on the child's family relationships, especially where family were invited to a final event to celebrate their achievements.

"They get to see the product at the end and they get to share that product with the bigger community that might be in the home, for example. So there's something, there's something super rewarding about that, especially when you think that a lot of these young people will have only, probably had experiences of failure, or of incompletion, or of, you know, disrupted endings" - Participant 11 (CEO, Arts organisation):

Practitioners and decision-makers also noted the potential for influencing community perceptions of children and young people, which contributes to a sense of safety within the community and even has the potential to influence other children and young people at risk of crime. Showcasing their work on art-based programmes in a shared community forum can help to improve confidence in the criminal justice system can result in other agencies recognising the value of arts/culture-based work with children and young people. In addition, valuing the experiences and ideas of young people, seeing their work and hearing their voices, can go some way to changing perceptions within a community.

"we've had some of our young people go back to their primary schools and talk about their experiences. We've had our young people go and be part of conferences for the police or for youth justice and to share their experiences or to put on a performance to highlight their concerns, or how they don't feel like they're listened to so. Perhaps not a direct link to, you know, a shopkeeper or when we think of community, but there is a wider benefit as well in terms of the way these young people present themselves … because they've succeeded at something." - Participant 3 (Senior arts practitioner)

Ultimately, practitioners were clear that the arts and culture-based programmes they are involved with benefit the community in various ways, encouraging a more cohesive and supportive environment.

6. Conclusion: The role of arts in YJS

This rapid review has explored the role of arts and culture in youth justice provision and highlights both strengths and weaknesses across programmes. Our findings from interviews with key stakeholders and academics, and from reviewing the available evidence, paints a mixed picture. This is clearly an area of work built on detailed knowledge about the factors that can lead to children and young people's offending and the factors that can support them towards change. It is filled with dedicated professionals and there are examples of successful partnership working and wider connections with communities. However, provision of programmes is uncoordinated and ad-hoc. Limited funding means that programmes can often lack the required resources to address longer-term change. The short-term nature of programmes may not provide the stability that is needed by vulnerable children and young people, and inequality of access to quality arts programmes is also an issue. Addressing systemic inequalities in provision and ensuring sustained support is necessary for long-term success.

There is a dearth of convincing research demonstrating sustainable change. What does exist, indicates increases in well-being measures and engagement in youth justice services and orders (as a proxy for desistance) but is unable to quantify reductions in crime *as a result of a programme*. In terms of outcomes, many young people attending arts/culture-based programmes report increased confidence and self-esteem, with participants reporting reduced likelihood of involvement in crime (including knife-carrying and violence) and greater consideration for others' feelings (although this might not reflect actual behaviour change). Children and young people also reported improvements in well-being and self-expression, especially where they felt programmes were carried out in supportive environments. These findings are widespread across many programmes and included in much of the evidence from practitioners in our interviews.

However, in terms of reliable measurable evidence, whether or not changes in attitudes and behaviour improved significantly varied across studies (a problem of measurement rather than the programme? - see discussion in section 7.1.4. regarding the importance of validated outcome measures). Further, without evidence from randomised control trials, again it is very difficult to say that changes occurred *as a result of the programme*. Overall, while many children and young people have experienced positive developments during and after participation in arts/culture-based programmes, a causal link between the programme and the outcome hasn't been confirmed.

We return now to the original research questions:

1. **What arts, museums, heritage and library activities and programmes are currently being delivered that can potentially help prevent crime?**

There is a huge amount of work in this area that includes a wide range of creative arts and cultural activities delivered in community and secure settings, which is largely funded by local authorities, National Lottery and/or Arts Council England funding. It is an area that attracts passionate and dedicated practitioners. Some arts/culture-based activities are integrated with mentoring or some form of education. Their intended outcomes include: Improvement in mental health/wellbeing; Raised aspirations, resilience, confidence and self-esteem; Skills development ; Awards/accreditation; Qualifications and pathways to employment, education & training; Peer support and development of friendships; Strengthening family relationships & support; Community cohesion; Keeping children safe from exploitation, violence and other harms; Preventing and/or reducing involvement in anti-social behaviour, offending, knife crime and gangs. However, there is little rigorous evaluation of these programmes. Delivery is currently ad-hoc and uncoordinated. Many of the programmes are short-term.

2. **Can arts and cultural organisations be valuable partners to the police and youth services, offering activities, expertise and venues?**

Arts and cultural organisations CAN be valuable partners to the police and youth services. This is already happening, as evidenced by our case studies. However, meaningful engagement requires quality partnership working and training (of arts practitioners in working with vulnerable populations and of YJS staff in understanding the value of arts/culture). Positive examples of the police engaging with young people in

arts/culture programmes (for example attending showcase events) have been described by practitioners as an example of improving community relations.

3. **What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these programmes?**

If by 'effectiveness' we mean preventing/reducing crime the answer is not straightforward. Arts and culture programmes consistently produce outcomes (based on children and young people's reporting, and professionals' views) that feed into an overall picture of improvement in children and young people's lives. These can be categorised as attributes of desistance. There is no doubt that many children and young people benefit hugely from participation in creative programmes designed to address offending behaviour. What this body of research gives is a snapshot of projects where some powerful outcomes have been reported including the development of skills and changes to attitudes and behaviours that are linked with the desistance process.

The value of these changes in children and young people's attitudes, development and behaviour was expressed strongly by practitioners in our interviews. Overall, they felt that arts/culture-based programmes encourage many personal and social forms of development that ultimately reduce criminal behaviour. However, many of these developmental attributes are difficult to measure and not easily quantifiable.

While it would be gratifying to be able to pinpoint arts/culture programmes as key turning points or sliding-doors moments, the process of desistance is complex and slow, it is not a linear path, and it is unique to each child or young person. Without long term follow-up studies with children and young people who attended programmes set alongside a matched control group of those who didn't, it is difficult to say what contribution a project has made to their development.

4. **What is the quality of evidence to demonstrate the impact of arts and culture to engage young people and reduce their risk of committing crime?**

As above, there is some evidence (albeit piecemeal and of varying quality) that arts can and do successfully engage children and young people in this context and that these are factors that are linked to reduced risk - the 'softer', desistance-focussed outcomes reported are indicative of risk reduction as set out in the socio-ecological model (**Figure 2**) and the wider body of research on risk and protective factors. However, studies and evaluations are not necessarily framing the question around reducing the risk of crime. In order to find evidence of impact 'as a result of the programme' that is rigorous and convincing, evaluations of arts/culture programmes need to include suitable controls, large sample sizes, longitudinal data collection, and achieve low attrition rates. Unfortunately, these kinds of effectiveness studies are expensive, resource heavy and not necessarily appropriate in these complex spaces where programme delivery may not be consistent, populations are transient, and the ethical issues are profound. An opportunity, therefore, presents itself for researchers and academics, along with practitioners and other stakeholders, to rethink the ways that programmes can be evaluated, and impact can be demonstrated. This may include a simplification of the rigorous conditions required for a randomised control trial to suit the unique practical and ethical context of this research.

5. **What evidence exists of the effects of arts on crime at a wider community level, rather than on an individual level (e.g. making communities feel safer)?**

Again, robust evidence is hard to find although anecdotal evidence is convincing. Evidence from the case studies, the selected studies and our interviews with professionals shows arts/culture programmes are linked with improvements in peer support, as collaboration in sessions builds trust and teamworking skills. Children and young people also reported better communication with family as they shared their experiences and showcased their achievements. We also heard evidence of arts/culture programmes reshaping young people's perceptions of authority figures, and the wider community feeling more comfortable around them. Showcase events and other forms of activity connecting children and young people with those around them seem to feed into a wider sense of a cohesive community, as familiarity reduces misunderstanding.

7. Recommendations

7.1. Policy

Early intervention:

Enhance support outside the CJS to increase access to the universal arts/culture offer amongst marginalised children and young people. This could include an increase in subsidised activities, provision of more safe venues for creative activities, and provision of safe transport where possible.

Infrastructure for the sector:

Develop a more robust infrastructure for arts/culture programmes seeking to engage children and young people and reduce their risk of committing crime. This could include:

- An evidence-based curriculum or framework for programmes
- A cohesive programme delivery strategy that responds to contextual differences and accounts for the length of time required to see results
- A training and skills development programme for artists working with children and young people with complex vulnerabilities in youth justice settings
- Longer-term funding investment in programmes to ensure continued provision and stability for children and young people at risk of entering (or who have already entered) the Youth Justice System

Such an infrastructure would enable more consistent delivery of programmes, contributing to a reduction in the inequality of access and allowing for more robust and meaningful evaluation of programmes, including opportunities to measure the sustainability of change over time.

Understanding between sectors:

Consider developing a strategy to promote understanding between arts practitioners and criminal justice providers regarding the value of arts/culture programmes for children and young people facing justice. Such a strategy should aim to increase collaboration across sectors, enabling smoother delivery of programmes, more effective use of funds, and therefore more positive outcomes for children and young people.

7.2. Practice

As with any intervention, successful implementation requires careful consideration of the diverse contexts and circumstances of the children and young people involved. Recommendations from those we interviewed, and from our review of the available research include:

- Ensure programmes encompass accessible and inclusive approaches that use language and methods which resonate with children and young people, as many children and young people lack prior engagement with arts/culture.
- Ensure programmes are informed by diverse the contexts of trauma, disadvantage and social inequality which may hinder participation.
- Adapt approaches to individual needs where appropriate to encourage continued engagement
- Work on children and young people's 'readiness to change', as they need to be ready and open to change to benefit from these programmes.
- Provide a range of opportunities for participation, recognising that not all artforms suit every child or young person.
- Support programmes with adequate resources and committed staff.
- Offer opportunities for children and young people to showcase their work to the wider community.
- Connect children and young people with community resources to sustain engagement post-programme

7.3. Research

A research agenda should be developed collaboratively between policymakers, researchers, academics and organisations delivering arts/culture programmes to 'at risk' / justice-involved children and young people that addresses:

(1) The research questions that need to be asked;
(2) The outcomes that should be focused on;
(3) The types of evidence that are considered valuable;

(4) The research methods that would provide meaningful data but are also practicable, ethical and cost-effective, and would account for the context and complexity of the population and the variety of mediators of success/failure that are not easily controlled.

To this end the research agenda needs to:

- Better understand how, why, for whom and in what circumstances programmes lead to outcomes.
- Explore the use of less rigid, more pragmatic types of randomised control trials that may fit better with the requirements of research in this space.
- Investigate the suitability of outcome measures and the possible utility of creative methods.
- Explore existing YJS or other relevant data that could be analysed for this agenda.
- Explore the value of a variety of economic evaluation methods for complex social programmes.
- Focus on transferability and flexibility, considering the elements of programmes that may need to be adapted (or not) in various settings.
- Explore the changing needs and values of children and young people, particularly post-COVID – are the measures/scales used fit for purpose and reflective of children and young people's needs and values in 2025?
- Explore the skills and training needs of arts practitioners and YJ practitioners to facilitate a co-produced research agenda

This will require significant investment and excellent collaboration between youth justice professionals, arts practitioners and (where possible) children and young people to co-produce.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – GrantNav search

(1) The search

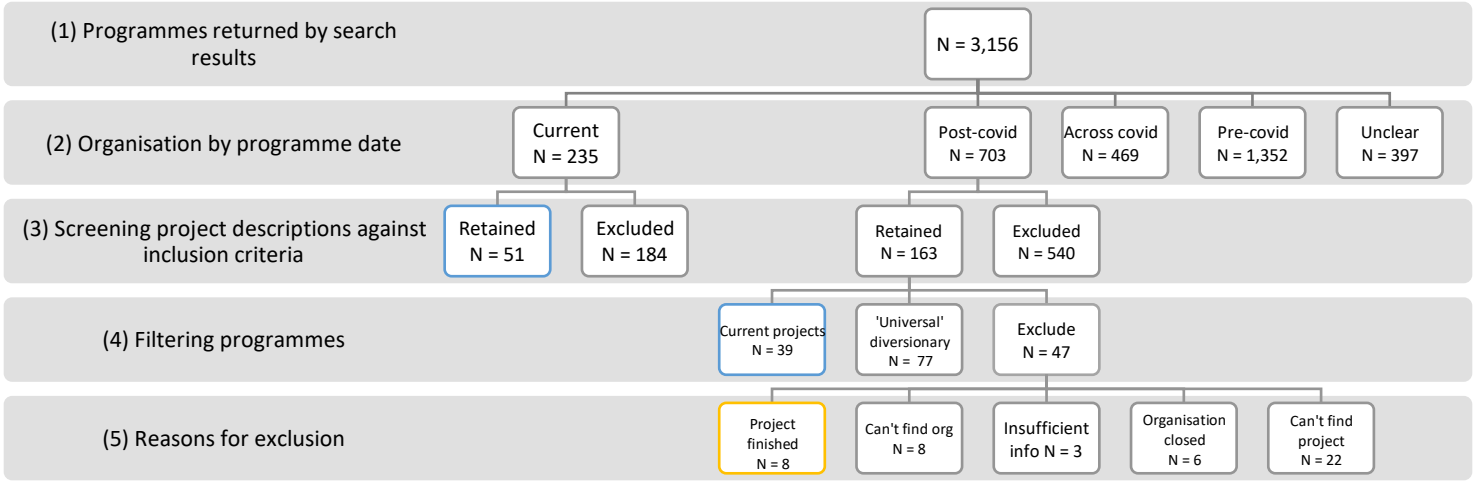
Database https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/

Date of search 19/12/24

Search terms '(youth OR young OR child OR adolescent) AND (crime OR violence OR offending OR anti-social behaviour) AND (arts OR collections OR dance OR drama OR heritage OR libraries OR museums OR music OR creative OR visual OR culture OR theatre OR digital OR performing arts OR literature)' in **'Titles & Descriptions'**

Limiters Award date: 03/2010 - 12/2024

Results 3,156



(2) Organisation by programme date: Date category was assigned according to the planned programme start and end dates. Where these were missing, date category was assigned according to the award date and planned duration where both were available.

Current Programmes running in January 2025

Post-covid Programmes starting August 2020 onwards and where the funding listed on GrantNav ends before January 2025

Across covid Programmes whose funding listed on GrantNav covers any or all of the months between from April 2020 until August 2020, but which finished before January 2025

Pre-covid Programmes listed as ending before April 2020

Unclear Insufficient information in GrantNav database to assign a date category

(3) Excluded programmes

Current programmes	**Post-covid programmes**
Duplicates (N = 7)	Duplicates (N = 12)
Research study (N = 4)	Research study (N = 2)
Prevention/reduction of knife crime/youth violence/**offending** amongst children and young people not an explicit aim of programme (N = 152)	Prevention/reduction of knife crime/youth violence/offending amongst children and young people not an explicit aim of programme (N = 451)
Doesn't incorporate arts/culture (N = 19)	Doesn't incorporate arts/culture (N = 72)
Not in England (N = 1)	Not in England (N = 1)
Wrong age (N = 1)	Wrong age (N = 2)
Total excluded: 184	**Total excluded: 540**

(4) **Filtering post-covid programmes:** To assess whether programmes in the ‘post-covid’ category which met our inclusion criteria were still running, e conducted a manual online search of programmes that met our inclusion criteria and were specifically targeted at children and young people considered ‘at risk’ of criminality or already involved in the CJS. Due to time constraints, we excluded universally-delivered ‘diversionary’ programmes.

Appendix 2 – Mapped programmes by source

Source	Mapped programmes (N)
GrantNav 360giving database	75
Inspiring Futures report (Lanskey et al., 2024)	3
Arts Council NPOs database (Arts Council England, n.d.-a)	1
Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) database	3
Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) websites	5
PCC / local authority websites (VRU areas only)	29
Responses to call outs	14
Total	**130**

Appendix 3 - HM Inspectorate of Probation Youth Justice Services inspections citing arts activities

HM Inspectorate of Probation report	Publication year
A joint inspection of youth justice services in Hackney	2023
An inspection of youth justice services in Bromley	2025
An inspection of youth justice services in Doncaster	2024
An inspection of youth justice services in Enfield YJS	2024
An inspection of youth justice services in Lewisham	2024
An inspection of youth justice services in Redbridge	2024
An inspection of youth justice services in Waltham Forest	2024
An inspection of youth justice services in Wiltshire	2024
An inspection of youth offending services in Bedfordshire	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in Birmingham	2023
An inspection of youth offending services in Bolton	2022
An inspection of youth offending services in Brighton and Hove	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in Calderdale	2022
An inspection of youth offending services in Camden	2020
An inspection of youth offending services in Croydon	2019
An inspection of youth offending services in Ealing YJS	2023
An inspection of youth offending services in East Riding	2019
An inspection of youth offending services in Hampshire	2018
An inspection of youth offending services in Hillingdon	2022
An inspection of youth offending services in Kensington & Chelsea	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in Lancashire	2019
An inspection of youth offending services in Merton	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in North Tyneside	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in Nottingham City	2020
An inspection of youth offending services in Oxfordshire	2020
An inspection of youth offending services in Solihull	2023
An inspection of youth offending services in South Tees	2019
An inspection of youth offending services in Stockport	2022
An inspection of youth offending services in Sutton	2022
An inspection of youth offending services in Swindon	2023
An inspection of youth offending services in Wakefield	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in West Berkshire	2023
An inspection of youth offending services in West Mercia	2022
An inspection of youth offending services in Wirral	2021
An inspection of youth offending services in Wolverhampton	2022

Appendix 4 – Evidence sources for included studies

STUDY	SOURCE
Badger et al. (2023)	West Midlands VRP Data & Insights Hub
Bandyopadhyay et al. (2024)	Youth Endowment Fund
Caulfield et al. (2019)	Manual search
Caulfield et al. (2021)	Youth Justice Resource Hub
Caulfield et al. (2022)	Database search
Caulfield and Sojka (2023)	Database search
Daykin et al. (2017)	Manual search
de Viggiani et al. (2014)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Froggett et al. (2018)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Froggett and Ortega Breton (2020)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Gowland-Pryde (2017)	Manual search
Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017)	Manual search
Henley (2012)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Henley (2015)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Howard (2022)	Manual search
Millar et al. (2020)	Manual search
Morgan et al. (2020)	Manual search
Parker et al. (2018)	Database search
Smithson and Mchugh (2018)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Tarling and Adams (2012)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
van Maanen (2010)	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Evidence Library
Varley (2019)	Manual search
Wilkinson et al. (2022)	Database search

Appendix 5 - Community programmes

Organisation	Programme (where applicable)	Discipline(s)	Location	Region
4DGIMUSIC CIC	4 Dimensional Gifted Individuals: Black Youth Music Workshop	Music	Oxfordshire	South East
4TY Ltd	Red Light Busking - Portable Music Studio Project	Music	London	London
About the Town CIC	Creative Futures, West Lancashire	Artistic activities	Lancashire	North West
Actions for Changes Community CIC	Actions for changes community	Music, arts & film-making	London	London
AIM 121 CIC	Music Project	Music	London	North West
Ambitious Lives CIC	Young & Ambitious	Music	Birmingham	West Midlands
Amplify SW CIC	Amplify DJ school	Music	Cornwall	South West
Antoin Akpom Achievements Foundation	AAAF Knife Crime Action Project	Theatre	Leicester	East Midlands
ART AGAINST KNIVES	Strengthening youth voice	Music, Nail Art	London	London
Arts Winterton	Winterton Rocks!	Music	Humberside	Yorkshire & the Humber
Artswork	Young changemakers	Visual Arts	Hampshire	South East
Artswork	Choices	Drama	Hampshire	South East
Aspiration Creation Elevation CIC	Community Engagement, Step Change	Music	Bristol	South West
Aspire 2 Inspire Communities CIC	MH Inspiring Teens	Arts & crafts	Rochdale	North West
AudioActive	AudioActive Summer Music Provision	Music	Brighton	South East
Baby People		Music	Derby	East Midlands
Barking & Dagenham consortium		Performing arts	London	London
Barnardo's		Photography	Northumbria	North East
Being The Cure	Saturday School for Heroism	Storytelling, music and arts	Newham	London
Belgrade Theatre Trust	The Jag's participation and talent development programmes	Theatre	Coventry	London
Benson Lane Children's Care Home		Literature	Wakefield	Yorkshire & the Humber
Birmingham Urban Rhythm Network	Grant to Birmingham Urban Rhythm Network	Music	Birmingham	West Midlands
Blackburn Youth Zone	Summer Street Zone	Music	Lancashire	North West
Brent consortium		Artform unspecified	London	London
Brink Productions Limited	Terminology Old Trafford	Music	Manchester	North West
Capoeira for all CIC	Youth vs Violence Project	Podcasting, creative art	Merseyside	North West
Central African Youth in Enfield	Youth Music engagement	Music	London	London
Climb 4 Limited	RESPECT Youth - Immingham & Stallingborough	Expressive arts - graffiti, street dance, rap	Humberside	Yorkshire & the Humber
Community Ventures (Middlesbrough) Ltd	Boys in Blue	Crafts	Middlesborough	North East

Coventry Boys and Girls Club LTD	Music and Change - Changing Lives Through Music	Music	Coventry	London
Education 2000	Huddersfield Black Empowerment Programme	Heritage	Huddersfield	Yorkshire & the Humber
Elevated Minds CIC	Shining Through Adversity	Theatre	London	London
Fifth Word	Your Voice	Literature, film-making	Mansfield	East Midlands
Fifth Word Theatre	My Place	Literature	Nottinghamshire	East Midlands
Fold Music	Music Production Workshop	Music	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
Freedom Foundation CIC	MH Youth Release	Music	Nottingham	East Midlands
Future Yard CIC	Future Yard CIC	Music & diverse cultural events	Merseyside	North West
Hackney Wick Football Club	THINK OUTSIDE THE BLOX/GRASSROOTS 4 GOOD	Music	London	London
HARDWAY STUDIOS C.I.C.	Release on the Beat project	Music, video production, performance	Manchester	North West
Highfields Centre	Young Futures	Music, photography & videography	Leicestershire	East Midlands
Hope of Overstanding Diversity Conscious C.I.C.	Voices of Reason	Music	Birmingham	West Midlands
Hunslet Nelson Cricket Club	Hunslet Nelson youth club	Art & dance	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
Icon Theatre	Sheerness Holiday Club	Theatre	Kent	South East
Intermission Youth		Theatre	London	London
Irene Taylor Trust	Making Tracks	Music	Various locations	
Jamming Station CIC	Mindfulness and music - supporting vulnerable young people in our community.	Music	Devon	South West
Keep It 100 Youth CIC	Knife Angel Chelmsford legacy statue	Sculpture	Essex	East of England
Key Creative		Drama	Manchester	North West
Keynsham Town Council	Keynsham Youth Inclusion Programme	Arts & crafts	Bristol	South West
Lambeth consortium		Creative arts activities	London	London
LS14 Trust		Creating wood products, upcycling	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
Manor Gardens Centre		Creative workshops including scriptwriting, film-making, recording & editing	London	London
MAP Education	Music and Arts Production Leeds	Music, Arts & Design, digital media	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
MGB Community Service	Musical Connection Project	Music	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
Ministry of Stories		Literature	London	London
Miracle Social Homes CIC	Community Shelter	Arts & crafts, music	Birmingham	West Midlands

Music Over Everything CIC	Rising Sounds	Music	London	London
My Life Productions		Film-making	Northumbria	North East
National Justice Museum	Exhibition	Museums	Nottingham	East Midlands
Netherton Park Community Association		Art sessions	Merseyside	North West
Next Generation Youth Theatre	Next Generation Youth Theatre	Theatre	Bedfordshire	East of England
Northern Roots	Young BAME offenders	Literature, Music	Multiple areas	North East
OddArts	Theatre workshops	Theatre	Manchester	North West
OddArts	Wellbeing Your Way	Theatre	Manchester	North West
One Education		Dance psychotherapy, art therapy	Manchester	North West
One In A Million		Arts & enterprise projects	Bradford	Yorkshire & the Humber
Pan Africa Network		Visual Arts	Northumbria	North East
Pedestrian	We are here	Printmaking, music and lyric writing	Leicestershire	East Midlands
People and Drugs ltd	Silx Teen Bar Thursday evening session	Arts & Crafts	Northumberland	North East
People Empowered CIC		Art, Dance, Drama	Merseyside	North West
Powered by HipHop		Graffiti, music	Merseyside	North West
Prime active communities cic	Hattersley Creative Club	Media production, music	Manchester	North West
Recre8now	Grant to Recre8now	Drama	Birmingham	West Midlands
Reel Creative	Digital Difference	Digital skills including video, film making, animation and graphics	Huddersfield	Yorkshire & the Humber
Reestablish	Grant to Reestablish	Creative arts	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
REGENESIS YOUTH UK CIC	Anti Youth Crime Performing Arts Workshop	Performing arts	Birmingham	West Midlands
Relatable Rolemodels C.I.C.		Music	Buckinghamshire	South East
ReturnMK	MK Digital Media Community Centre	Music, radio, video production	Milton Keynes	South East
Rock Ferry	Utopia Project	Art sessions	Merseyside	North West
Rosscon Training Ltd	Drop the blade, pick a trade	Music	Blackpool	North West
S.M.I.L.E-ing Boys	S.M.I.L.E-ing Boys Project Scaling	Film, photography	London	London
Sensational Vibes	Sensational Vibes Youth and Community Development Group	Music	Leicestershire	East Midlands
Seventh Seal Youth Programme SSYP (CIC)	Broken Seal Project	Film-making	London	London
Sheffield Music School	[Music Initative]	Music	Sheffield	Yorkshire & the Humber
Shepherd Fold Ministry	Supporting Disadvantaged Young People in Hackney to Excel	Creative activities	London	London
SHIFT	AudioActive	Music	London	London

Skool of Street	Skool of Street in The House	Dance	Blackpool	North West
SoCo Music Project	We Make Music	Music	Hampshire	South East
SoCo music project	Music for change	Music	Hampshire	South East
Soundproofbox CIC	Red Flags, Bradford and Leeds	Theatre	West Yorkshire	Yorkshire & the Humber
St Helen's YMCA		Creative sessions	Merseyside	North West
Street Fusion Community Group	Reducing Knife Crime; Making New Beats & Rhymes	Music	London	London
Streetvibe Young Peoples Services (SYPS)	Grass Roots YouthSpace	Arts activities	Leicester	East Midlands
Synergy Theatre Project		Theatre	London	London
Taking Shape Association	Positive Change	Drama & film-making	London	London
The Angelou Centre		Combined Arts (event organised by children and young people including art, history & performances)	Northumbria	North East
The Big House Theatre Company		Drama, music, literature, visual arts	London	London
The Braunstone Foundation	Grove community club	Dance	Leicestershire	East Midlands
The Change Foundation	Street Elite	Dance	London	London
The Compound Wellingborough	Knives Down Mic's Up	Music	Northamptonshire	East Midlands
The Cooke E-Learning Foundation	MH - Inspired Journeys: Creative Approaches to Youth Intervention	Street art, digital design, recycled materials, art photography, film-making	Leicester	East Midlands
The Electric Sunshine Project cic	The Old Electric	Art workshops and other arts-based activities	Blackpool	North West
The Music Works	Grant to The Music Works	Music	Gloucestershire	South West
The Oracle 2 Community Org	Artful Connections	Music	Kirklees, West Yorkshire	Yorkshire & the Humber
The School of Rock & Media Ltd		Music	Bradford	Yorkshire & the Humber
The Somers Town Community Association (Camden)	Young Female Personal Safety Champions	Drama	London	London
The Theatre in Prisons and Probation Centre (TiPP)		Bespoke arts-based interventions	Multiple areas	
Triangular CIO	Grant to Triangular CIO	Creative media young person's programme	Newcastle	North East
Triple Skillz in the Community Limited	Triple Skillz Tech Camps	Creation of podcasts, music and video production	Leicester	East Midlands
United Borders		Music		
Unity Radio	Unity Radio New Talent Academy	Radio	Manchester	North West
Uptown Youth Services		Activities such as music, dance, drama, sports, arts and crafts	London	London

Round Midnight	Virtual decisions	Virtual reality	Various locations	
Wallsend Boys Club	Wallsend Youth Club	Music	Newcastle	North East
West Yorkshire Playhouse		Drama, Music	Leeds	Yorkshire & the Humber
Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council	The Lounge	Arts & crafts	Milton Keynes	South East
Wonder Arts Limited	Communities of Wonder	Visual Arts	Merseyside	North West
Writing on the Wall	WOW young writers	Literature	Liverpool	North West
Yellow House		Theatre, film, literature, poetry, painting, music, sketching	Merseyside	North West
Youth Aspire Connect	YAC Community-based dance project	Dance, Combined Arts (festival)	Hull	Yorkshire & the Humber
Youth Empower CIC	Music to my ears	Music	Liverpool	North West

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