



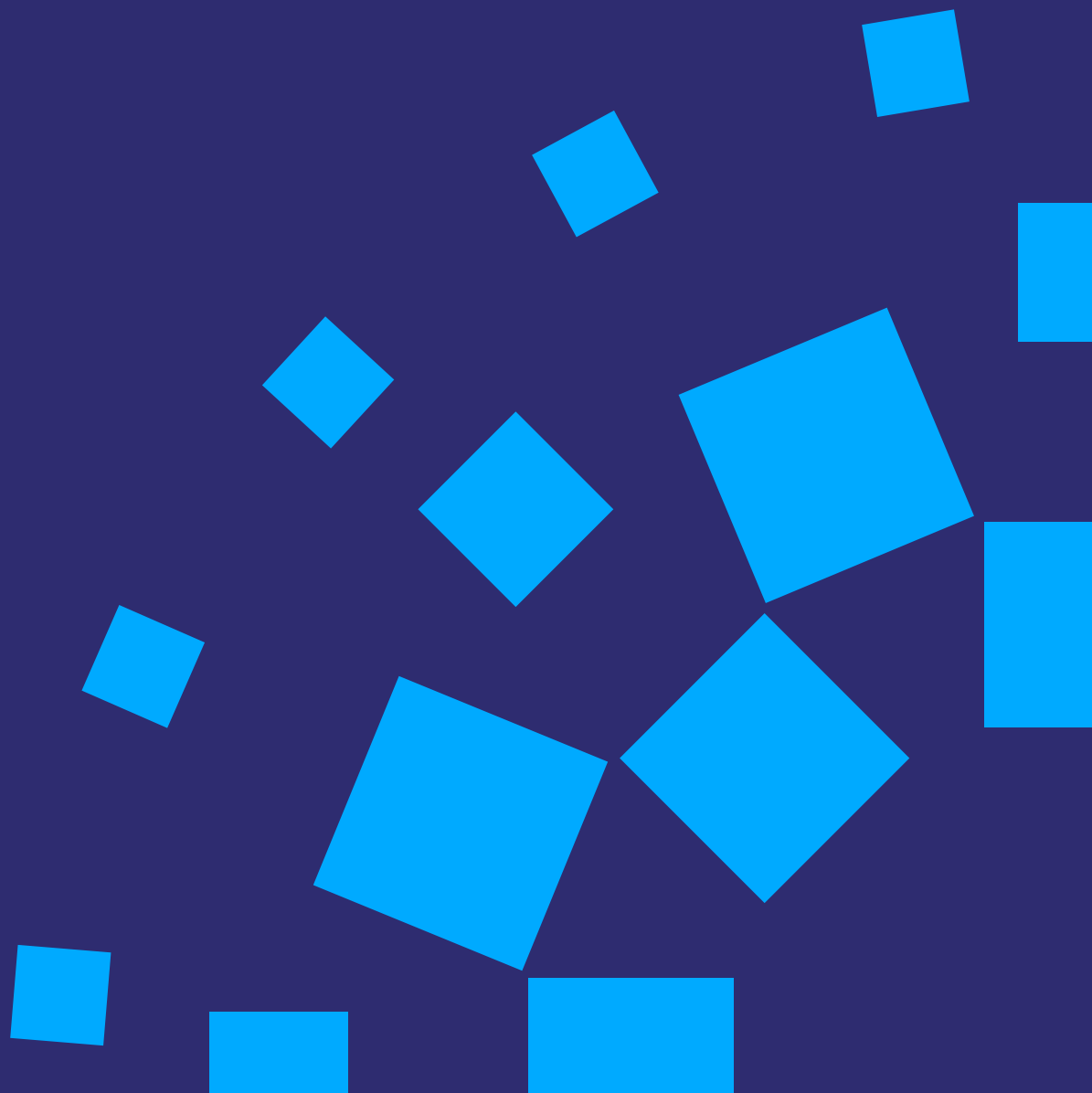
College of  
**Policing**

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**Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme**

# Evaluation of DIVERT

**Key findings and implications for practice**



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### Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme (VVCP)

The College of Policing was awarded a grant through the Home Office Police Transformation Fund to develop the evidence base on vulnerability and serious violence. The programme focused on key areas of interest to policing, including knife crime, gangs, county lines, criminal exploitation of young people, and child sexual abuse and exploitation. This is one of nine summaries accompanying ten reports delivered as part of the VVCP.

If you have any questions about the VVCP, please email:

[research@college.pnn.police.uk](mailto:research@college.pnn.police.uk)

## Overview

DIVERT is a Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) intervention targeting those aged 18-25 who are detained in police custody and are not currently in education, training or employment (ETE). DIVERT aims to prevent these young adults from reoffending or returning to police custody by redirecting them into ETE or wider support services, depending on their individual preferences and needs. Using police custody as a 'teachable moment', the programme employs trained custody intervention coaches (CICs) to work with the young adult to develop an action plan for after they leave police custody. Action plans are tailored to the individual, for example, securing accommodation support for young adults experiencing homelessness or a place on a construction course to gain employment. DIVERT has been providing support for young adults in police custody since late 2016, expanding to a total of six custody suites in 2018. During that time, 1,034 young adults have participated in DIVERT, from having an initial conversation with a CIC to being referred on to training, employment and other support opportunities.

### Does it work?

The overall findings from the evaluation of DIVERT require careful interpretation. In locations where the intervention is well-established and properly implemented, there is a positive impact on rates of re-arrest at a six-month follow-up for individuals who have an Information and Guidance (IAG) meeting with a CIC. Across other custody suites, this positive impact is not observed. This may be because these suites only had the intervention in place for a limited time before evaluation activity began.

### Background

#### **About this report**

This report summarises the findings of the full independent evaluation of DIVERT, which has been undertaken by NatCen as part of the College of Policing's Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme (VVCP). This summary describes how DIVERT works in practice and outlines the evaluation's key findings in terms of impact, process and cost. Emerging implications for practice are also discussed.

**[Read the full DIVERT report](#)**

## What is DIVERT?

DIVERT is delivered in six custody suite locations across London. At each location, CICs work with young adults in IAG meetings to develop action plans for their next steps after leaving police custody. These plans are tailored to the need of the young person and can focus on helping them to move into ETE, organising secure accommodation or supporting them to get some form of ID before considering ETE.

In the DIVERT intervention, custody is used as a 'teachable moment' when young adults may be more open to diversion away from negative behaviours.

After the IAG meetings, CICs keep in touch with the young adults on their caseload to provide ongoing mentoring. CICs also identify local opportunities for support and engagement through referral partners, which offer a range of services. Some partners offer funded education or training opportunities across a variety of sectors, including – but not limited to – construction and engineering, arts and music, security, sports, hospitality and recruitment. Other partners provide health and welfare services for young adults, including help with mental health, drug and alcohol misuse, benefits advice and accommodation.

DIVERT is run through a charity called the New Era Foundation, on behalf of the MPS, in partnership with football clubs local to some custody suites. Football clubs were approached as partners because of their likely appeal to the main demographic that DIVERT is aimed at, and because of their potential to engage with young adults. In addition, involving football clubs enabled use of their community programmes and networks around ETE opportunities.

DIVERT is underpinned by three core values, which are seen as central to the programme's ethos and success. An important part of developing the programme was building partnerships with referral organisations and strategic partners who aligned with these core values.

<b>Deliverability:</b>	All DIVERT staff are expected to deliver on promises made to young adults, to keep them engaged in the programme and support them to change.
<b>Commitment:</b>	It is essential to employ, and partner with, individuals and organisations who are committed to the success of the intervention, and who are both positive and solution-focused.
<b>Collaboration:</b>	The intervention is supported by effective partnership working, collaboration and sharing resources between all staff groups involved in DIVERT, including custody staff and officers. For the intervention to succeed, it is important that these groups communicate regularly, and share advice and learning.

## How was the intervention evaluated?

Following the development of a logic model<sup>1</sup> for DIVERT, a mixed-methods design was developed, including three evaluation strands:

- impact evaluation (does it work?)
- process evaluation (how does it work?)
- cost analysis (how much does it cost?)

The DIVERT logic model (see [Figure 1](#)) identifies five main outcomes. It was not possible to assess DIVERT's impact on all of these outcomes within the current evaluation, so the work focused on exploring the impact of DIVERT IAG meetings on re-arrests, rather than on reoffending. The process element of the evaluation also gathered some qualitative data on the impact on the wellbeing of young people.

The **impact evaluation** used police data and DIVERT management information to test whether DIVERT participants were less likely to reoffend after receiving the intervention, and whether the severity of their offending changed when compared with a comparison group<sup>2</sup>.

The **process evaluation** involved interviews with the DIVERT leadership team, CICs, strategic staff from partner organisations, referral partners and young adults taking part in the intervention. Interviews explored:

- experiences of setting up and delivering DIVERT
- the perceived impacts of the programme on staff, eligible participants and local communities
- views on the sustainability and replicability of the programme

The **cost analysis** data was collected from intervention leads and used to estimate the cost of DIVERT per participant, averaged over three years to account for higher costs associated with programme setup and rollout.

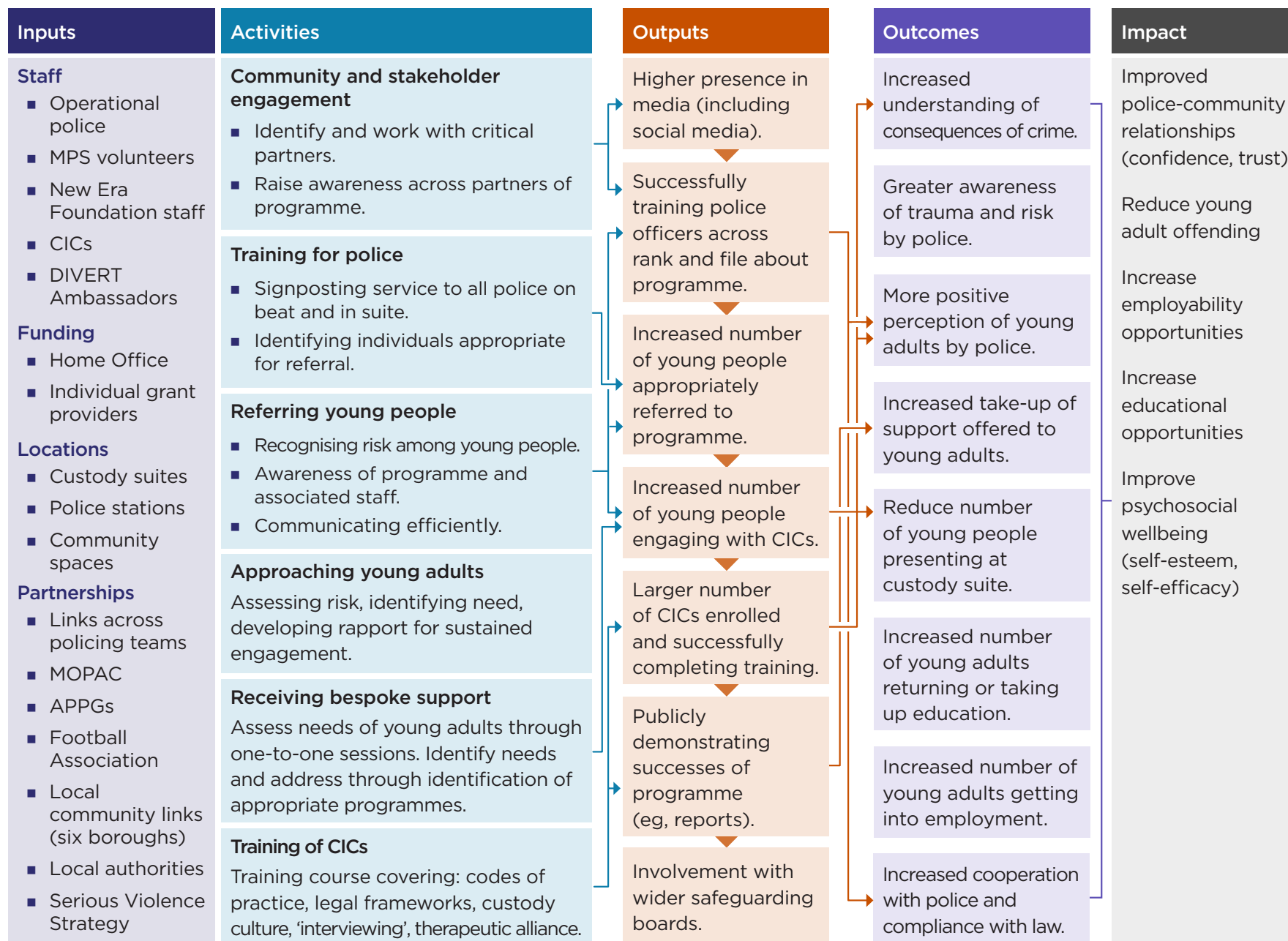
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1 A logic model helps you to think critically about the links between your problem, your intervention and your measures of success, to show how and why your intervention might work. More information can be found here:

[whatworks.college.police.uk/Support/Pages/Research-guidance.aspx](https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Support/Pages/Research-guidance.aspx)

2 The comparison group was created using propensity score matching (PSM). PSM is a quasi-experimental method in which statistical techniques are used to construct a comparison group by matching intervention participants with individuals not receiving the intervention but who share similar characteristics. Using these matches, the researcher can estimate the impact of an intervention.

**Figure 1: DIVERT logic model**





## How did the intervention perform?

Evidence is presented using the EMMIE framework, which was developed to help practitioners and decision-makers understand and access the evidence base quickly and easily. The EMMIE framework describes findings across five dimensions:

<b>Effect</b>	Impact on crime or offending	Does the evidence suggest that the intervention led to an increase or decrease in crime or offending, or that it had no impact?
<b>Mechanism</b>	How it works	What aspect(s) of the intervention could explain this effect?
<b>Moderators</b>	Where it works	In what circumstances and contexts is the intervention likely (or unlikely) to work?
<b>Implementation</b>	How to do it	What conditions should be considered when implementing an intervention locally?
<b>Economic cost</b>	How much it costs	What direct or indirect costs are associated with the intervention, and is there evidence of cost benefits?

### Effect: what was the impact of the intervention?

Evidence on the overall impact of the intervention is limited by both the duration of the evaluation period and available data sources. In the absence of longer term data, the best available measures of change were used to give an indication of potential impact. Future follow-ups using longer term data would help us to understand better the overall impact of the intervention.

The impact of DIVERT on re-arrests was measured at both six months and 12 months after the initial IAG meeting. In the very short term (up to six months), DIVERT participants were found to be arrested at higher rates than those who had not participated in an IAG meeting. In the longer term, re-arrest rates were no different between groups, with the exception of the suite where the intervention had been running for the longest (Brixton), where the evaluation found a positive impact on re-arrest after 12 months.

Possibly due to DIVERT running for longer in Brixton than in the other custody suites, relationships with partners and custody staff and officers were more well established. There was also a greater variety of support on offer for DIVERT participants in Brixton compared to the other suites. This finding suggests that, when implemented well, DIVERT can have positive impacts on rates of re-arrest. Further research to explore the impacts over a longer period would be valuable to build a stronger understanding of the overall effect of the intervention.

There are a number of other considerations for how we interpret these findings, including those given below. The impact estimates about the overall effects of the programme should therefore be treated with some caution.

### **Differences between DIVERT participants and the comparison group**

We know that the group who engaged with DIVERT were more likely to have previously committed ‘moderately severe’ offences when compared with our control group. Practically, this could mean that individuals who had an IAG meeting with a CIC were a more challenging cohort of individuals and may also have been more likely to be known to police, potentially increasing the likelihood they would be arrested.

### **Measures of re-arrests are different to measures of proven reoffending or conviction**

Measures of re-arrests alone only tell us so much. The analysis does not estimate impacts based on the severity of offences being committed in the follow-up period. If young adults are re-arrested for less serious offences after engaging with CICs, this may indicate a positive direction of travel.

### **Variation in CIC approaches**

The analysis cannot account for the variation in processes used by CICs – for example, at different custody suites – to identify the most appropriate young people to approach.

### **Variation in individuals’ experiences**

The DIVERT team were unable to provide consistent information for what happened to all of the individuals who had an IAG meeting with a CIC. For some individuals, this initial meeting would have been their only

engagement with DIVERT. For others, the IAG meeting may have been the start of a period of consistent and varied support to help them fully engage in ETE. The analysis shows the overall average effect of having an IAG meeting compared to not having this engagement. It does not tell us which aspects of the support offer from DIVERT may have been more or less successful.

## Mechanism – how did it work?

Through interviews, the following elements of the DIVERT programme were identified by staff and young people as contributing to achieving successful outcomes for young adults.

- The IAG meetings between CICs and young adults in police custody were felt to be important in helping young adults recognise the need for change in their lifestyle or behaviour and in making them more open to support.
- The consistency, persistence and commitment of the CIC in the young adult's life was felt to help build their confidence, self-esteem and psychosocial wellbeing. This, in turn, was felt to increase their motivation to engage with employment opportunities.

## Moderators – where did it work best?

As discussed in the 'Effect' section, the estimated impact of the intervention varied between custody suites, with one custody suite showing lower re-arrest rates for young people involved with DIVERT after 12 months than for those in the comparison group. This suite had been operating DIVERT the longest and, as a result, the CICs in the suite were more experienced in identifying appropriate support for individuals. There was also a wider variety of support available compared to the custody suites that had more recently started to use DIVERT.

DIVERT relies on CICs being able to access a range of support and ETE opportunities for the young people involved. The custody suites where DIVERT had been more recently implemented had less time to develop the network of partners and fully embed the overall DIVERT approach. These differences in how the intervention was implemented are important in understanding some of the different outcomes that we see across suites.

## Implementation – how to do it?

### **Important factors**

The way in which DIVERT was implemented varied by custody suite and CIC. Interviews with staff suggested that factors important to the successful implementation of the programme included the following.

#### **Collaboration**

Collaboration and good communication between the leadership team, the CICs, the organisations providing CICs and the referral partners in the community was important. Effective communication was facilitated by formal meetings and reports, including monthly strategic partnership meetings and weekly progress reports completed by CICs. These progress reports set out how many young people had been seen and any outcomes achieved. Informal ad hoc conversations also took place to address particular problems.

#### **Flexibility**

The flexible and adaptable nature of DIVERT means that young adults' specific needs and preferences can be catered for. This requires access to a range of referral pathways, services and ETE opportunities, so building up a good network of partners is vital.

#### **Relationships**

When CICs and the leadership team built relationships with police and custody staff and officers, this encouraged support for the programme and referrals to CICs when they were not in the custody suite. DIVERT was perceived to have started a culture shift in custody suites, and to have changed custody staff and officers' perceptions of young adults.

### **Required facilitators**

Alongside these common implementation features, the evaluation identified a number of factors that were not in place, had patchy coverage across the different custody suites, or were inconsistently implemented in the delivery of DIVERT. To help DIVERT run more effectively in the future and to assist any replication of the intervention, the following required facilitators were suggested.

## **Ensuring a sustainable operating model and managing the demand on staff time**

- Improving the management of CIC workload and availability by creating a new engagement officer role focused on developing and managing referral partner relationships on behalf of the CICs.
- Establishing partnerships with larger commercial organisations to provide more stable and consistent opportunities to refer participants into.
- Planning for sustainable growth by building in more time for network building before expanding to new custody suite locations.
- Developing the DIVERT leadership team by creating a middle management layer to manage day-to-day issues and allow senior leaders more time to think strategically about DIVERT.
- As much of DIVERT is delivered by partners, securing adequate and sustainable funding was felt to be important. This security would enable strategic and financial planning, and would ensure the ongoing commitment of both strategic partners and CICs, who noted that they were unsure whether to look for other work as the end of funding approached.

## **Building infrastructure to improve efficiency and consistency across suites**

- Creating a documented and formalised core knowledge base on training, governance, information sharing and delivery processes for the whole DIVERT team would help to ensure consistent delivery of the programme.
- Developing of centralised systems to support caseload management, including onward referrals to partners.
- Developing standardised recruitment materials and building a structured professional development pathway for CICs (to help keep hold of high-performing staff).
- Ensuring new CICs will have had some frontline experience in police custody before beginning work with young adults.

### **Improving targeting by building evidence to support bespoke referrals**

- Improved targeting of the DIVERT intervention, based on evidence of effectiveness with specific groups of young people.
- Making some funding from DIVERT available to CICs to support referrals into training and education opportunities that are not currently funded by partner organisations.
- Sharing learning from established suites with the new suites, to improve the replication of the intervention and draw on best practice.

### **Economic cost – how much is it?**

Although it was not possible to undertake a cost-benefit analysis as part of this evaluation, we are able to provide an estimated cost. Based on the number of individuals accepted into the DIVERT cohort (n=698) at the time of the evaluation, the estimated average cost per participant was £576.

At the time when fieldwork was undertaken, some concerns were raised over the sustainability of the programme if it did not secure additional funding.

## Conclusion

The overall findings from the evaluation of DIVERT require careful interpretation. It appears that in those locations where the intervention is well established and properly implemented, there is a positive impact on rates of re-arrest for individuals who have an IAG meeting with a CIC. Across other custody suites, this positive impact was not observed. This is likely to be because these suites had the intervention in place for a limited time before evaluation activity began.

It is important to note that we were only able to test part of the DIVERT logic model through this evaluation. The analysis on re-arrests allows us to compare young people who had an IAG meeting with those who did not. All we know about these individuals is that they engaged in the IAG meeting, but we haven't been able to get a full picture of the types of engagement they had with CICs or referral partners after this meeting.

DIVERT appears to be a promising programme when it is embedded and well implemented. There are likely to be risks in seeking to implement the programme without allowing time to build sustainable networks of partners and referral agencies. Building these relationships is challenging, and it appears to be difficult to combine this with being a full-time CIC. New iterations of DIVERT will need to consider how to manage this when planning their approach to delivery and resourcing. The intervention is already expanding outside of London, with new police forces setting up the programme. As new iterations of the programme develop, further opportunities to assess the intervention's effectiveness may present themselves. In particular, we would encourage forces that are introducing DIVERT to undertake an evaluation, with a specific focus on testing parts of the theory of change that were outside the scope of this evaluation. For example, this could include testing the impact:

- on reoffending and over a longer time period to understand long-term impact
- on other outcomes, such as employment and accommodation, as both are protective factors against reoffending
- of different types of support or referral partners, to understand which are effective, as well as whether the length of time that a young person spends with a CIC changes outcomes

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