

Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme

Evaluation of Operation Divan

Full technical report

July 2021

About

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1. Executive summary

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Background

Operation Divan (Op Divan) is an intervention that aims to educate and support young people under the age of 18, where there is information or intelligence to suggest they may be carrying a knife or other weapon. North Yorkshire Police (NYP), alongside the Youth Justice Service (YJS)/Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) have delivered Op Divan since May 2018.

North Yorkshire has a low rate of knife crime. There were an estimated 39 knife or sharp instrument offences per 100,000 people recorded by the police in 2019, which is lower than the national average of 81 per 100,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2020). However, NYP felt the number of young people carrying knives in North Yorkshire was increasing. Op Divan was set up after a number of young people were found with knives (or reported to be carrying knives) in local schools and in the community.

Op Divan focuses on early prevention. It involves a voluntary face-to-face meeting between a young person and a NYP school liaison officer, NYP police officer or YOT officer (where the young person is currently involved with the YJS for other offences), where an Official Notice is given (for educational purposes only; it is not legally binding)¹. The overarching aim of the programme is to help keep young people safe, reduce the likelihood of them offending and reduce the criminalisation of young people.

1.1.2. Method

The College of Policing commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to scope, design and deliver an independent evaluation of Op Divan. It

¹ A two-page document, 'Carrying a Knife or Weapon: is it worth the risk?'. The Notice describes what is meant by a knife/weapon-related crime and its consequences, and provides details of who to contact if they are concerned about their or someone else's safety. See Appendix A.

forms part of a series of work evaluating interventions as part of the Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme.

The evaluation of Op Divan comprised logic model development, a qualitative process evaluation and light-touch analysis of management information (MI):

1. Eleven interviews were carried out for the process evaluation, with representatives from NYP, the YOT and local schools, as well as a young person who received Op Divan and their parents. Interviews explored intervention set-up, delivery and perceived impacts.
2. NYP records Op Divan participants' characteristics in their MI, including age, gender and who referred them into Op Divan. MI was available for 84 Op Divan participants recruited between June 2018 and September 2019. The data was analysed using frequencies.

A scoping study conducted as part of the evaluation concluded that a robust impact evaluation was not feasible. The primary barrier to an impact evaluation was a lack of suitable administrative data on young people in non-intervention areas.

1.2. Key findings

Key findings are presented in Table 1.1 below, under the EMMIE (Effect, Mechanism, Moderator, Implementation, Economic Cost) framework.

Table 1.1. Summary of the key findings presented under the EMMIE framework

Evaluation element	Findings
Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The three (linked) longer-term impacts that Op Divan hopes to have in North Yorkshire are to: (i) keep young people safe; (ii) prevent criminalisation of young people; and (iii) to promote culture change around carrying a knife. ▪ A robust impact evaluation (experimental or quasi-experimental) was not feasible. Therefore, the data gathered on impact is qualitative in nature.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The police, YOT and school staff interviewees were confident that young people had not carried a knife or other weapon since receiving Op Divan, and so considered it a success. This was based on their knowledge of intelligence received from schools, and/or police-recorded incidents. However, some interviewees discussed rare cases where a young person had continued to carry a knife. ▪ The MI indicates that by the end of July 2020, nine of 84 Op Divan participants had been involved in 11 knife crime incidents after the date they were initially reported to Op Divan, with incidents including possession and assault, among others.
Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Op Divan relies on a team of police officers, school liaison officers and YOT officers to facilitate meetings with young people, alongside partnerships with other services, such as the Early Help Service², for referrals and further support. ▪ Key intended outcomes of Op Divan are: improving young people's understanding of the consequences of carrying knives/weapons, increased take-up of support options among young people, and a reduction in the numbers of young people carrying knives/weapons. ▪ The intended longer-term impacts of Op Divan are to: keep young people safe, create culture change around knife carrying and prevent criminalisation of young people.
Moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As robust quantitative analysis was not feasible, there is data on moderator effects.

² Formerly the Prevention Service, the Early Help Service offers a range of universal and targeted specialist support services, to children and young people aged 0 to 24. The Early Help Service falls under the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, a multi-agency partnership comprising North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The majority of referrals (with a recorded source of referral in the MI) came from NYP, with fewer referrals from school liaison officers and the YJS/YOT. The volume of referrals was relatively consistent over time. Police records management systems STORM and Niche were also proactively searched for potential Op Divan participants.▪ The NYP intelligence department reviewed the referral information and graded it³. It was then taken to a daily management meeting where Op Divan cases were discussed and allocated to officers from the local area to carry out meetings with the young people (within a 72-hour timeframe, unless deemed urgent).▪ The number, length and content of meetings vary depending on the young person's needs and circumstances.▪ Generally, meetings last between 30 minutes and an hour. The meeting might solely focus on giving the Official Notice and the risks and consequences of carrying a knife or weapon. It could also branch into other areas such as mental health, substance misuse, e-safety and physical safety in locations where gangs operate.▪ Changes to delivery have occurred following a change in the intervention lead. These include police officers no longer attending the face-to-face meetings alongside YOT officers, and responsibility for entering outcome data being transferred from school liaison officers to the intervention lead. Both changes arose from concerns about efficiency.
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³ The source is evaluated to establish its credibility and reliability. See app.college.police.uk/app-content/intelligence-management/intelligence-report/ for more information [Accessed 23 March 2020]

Economic cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Op Divan does not receive any external funding.▪ Op Divan operates within existing resources and was seen as 'self-sufficient'.▪ Cost analysis was not carried out for this evaluation.
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1.3. Discussion and conclusions

1.3.1. Eligibility and suitability

There were a number of ambiguities around people's eligibility and suitability for Op Divan, including cases where: young people were **talking** about using knives, even if they were not suspected of carrying one; the young person was under the age of criminal responsibility; and the young person was over the age of 18. Going forward, it is important that there is clarity around these ambiguities at the referral stage and at the daily management meeting where young people are allocated to officers, to ensure consistent and effective programme delivery.

1.3.2. Transferability

Police interviewees believed an early prevention focus could be replicated in any force, both culturally and practically. If the number of referrals in a given force was unmanageable, they could be prioritised by grading the intelligence received and acting on the most serious cases.

Op Divan was adopted by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in April 2019 ('Op Met Divan') and rolled out across the Bromley, Croydon and Sutton Basic Command Unit (BCU). There were differences in delivery processes between the two programmes, particularly in their approach to intelligence gathering. Op Divan used both proactive and reactive approaches while Op Met Divan proactively sought intelligence. Op Divan strategic leads also felt that the intervention might not have the same (perceived) success as in North Yorkshire, given the higher rates of knife crime in London.

An important requirement of transferring Op Divan across forces (and sustainability within an individual force) is its dependency on the skills and qualities of those delivering it. These include the passion and commitment of the Op Divan lead, as

well as attributes of officers facilitating meetings with young people. These include being patient, having a supportive manner and earning the trust of young people. Training in these softer skills could support officers in delivering this type of intervention.

1.3.3. Evaluation challenges and limitations

The findings in this report show the range and diversity of views and experiences among those interviewed for the process evaluation. However, a clear limitation was that interviews were carried out with just one young person and two parents due to recruitment challenges.

Suggestions from the research team about further MI that NYP could collect include:

- Other demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity.
- More detail about the outcome of young people's involvement with Op Divan, such as whether they had continued to carry a knife, and details around the support they were referred into (this could usefully be captured at specific time points following the meetings (eg, three months, six months, 12 months).
- Identifiers to enable data linkage and longitudinal analysis in the future.

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2. Background

Operation Divan (Op Divan) aims to identify, educate and support young people under the age of 18, where there is information or intelligence to suggest they may be carrying a knife or other weapon. North Yorkshire Police (NYP), alongside the Youth Justice Service (YJS)/Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) have delivered Op Divan since May 2018. This section provides background information on Op Divan as well as the rationale for its creation and implementation. It concludes with the intervention's logic model, which presents its inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

2.1. Context and rationale

North Yorkshire has a low rate of knife crime. There were an estimated 39 knife or sharp instrument offences per 100,000 people recorded by the police in 2019, which is lower than the national average of 81 per 100,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2020). However, police interviewees described how the number of young people carrying knives in North Yorkshire was increasing, and they considered the area vulnerable to 'county lines'⁴ activity (the practice of trafficking drugs into rural areas and smaller towns from bigger cities, increasingly involving the exploitation of young people). County lines drug supply was seen as a factor that might lead vulnerable young people to carry weapons as a form of 'protection'⁵.

'We are coming more and more across things like county lines at the moment and young people getting involved [...] to either distribute or sell on drugs locally. Young people potentially are carrying bladed articles as a means of [...] protecting themselves [...] [North Yorkshire is] small and rural. It's ripe for people coming in from the outside to try and use our young people [...] to distribute those drugs.'

(Police school liaison officer)

⁴ North Yorkshire Police has proactive county lines teams who aim to disrupt drug dealing activity and safeguard vulnerable young people who may be exploited by organised criminals.

⁵ This is in line with Brennan's three explanations for carrying knives (2017): self-protection and fear; self-presentation; and utility.

Op Divan was set up after a number of young people were found with knives, or were reported to be carrying knives, in local schools⁶ and the wider community.

‘There was certainly an increase in those [knife crime] situations arising in the last five years, I would say. Not significant – we’re talking about a handful, single figures, the fingers of one hand kind of thing. But there was more awareness of that being something that we were responding to.’

(School staff)

Op Divan strategic leads and school staff described an increase in young people using terminology around weaponry (such as ‘slash’ or ‘shank’) because of media coverage about knife crime. Schools would pass this information to the Early Help Service, but local police were not always being informed. An NYP lead for early intervention believed a joint intervention was needed to ensure this information was recorded at the earliest opportunity and appropriate multi-agency support was in place for the young person and their parents, schools and partner agencies.

2.2. The intervention and staffing arrangements

Op Divan focuses on early prevention and intervention. It involves a face-to-face meeting between a young person and one of the officers listed below, where an Official Notice is given (for educational purposes only; it is not legally binding):

- **NYP school liaison officer** (police officers or police community support officers (PCSOs)), of which there are eight.
- **Police officer**⁷.
- **YOT officer**, if the young person is currently being supervised by the YJS or has had contact with the YJS before⁸.

⁶ Interviewees were not able to say how many schools this related to.

⁷ Police constables (PCs). At the time of writing, an agreement had just been made to allow PCSOs to deliver Op Divan as well (see 5.1.1).

⁸ A young person might fall under the YOT if they are already subject to a court order or out of court disposal, such as a youth conditional caution or a referral order. A youth conditional caution is a caution with one or more conditions attached. If a child does not keep to the condition(s) they could be prosecuted for the original offence. A referral order is a community sentence used by the courts when dealing with 10-to-17 year-olds, particularly first-time offenders who plead guilty.

The Notice is a two-page document, 'Carrying a Knife or Weapon: is it worth the risk?'. It describes what is meant by a knife/weapon-related crime and its consequences, and provides details of who to contact if they are concerned about their or someone else's safety (see Appendix A). Op Divan is designed to educate young people at the earliest opportunity and aims to: reduce the number of young people carrying a weapon; raise awareness of the consequences of carrying a weapon (and reduce the risk of young people doing so); and signpost young people to other available support. The overarching aim of the intervention is to help prevent the criminalisation of young people, keep them safe, and promote culture change around attitudes to carrying a knife.

Young people are not eligible for Op Divan if they have previously been convicted of weapon possession or if they have received Op Divan before and continued to carry a knife/weapon (they would enter the YJS instead).

At the time of writing, all NYP PCs and PCSOs could in theory deliver the intervention by facilitating the meeting with the young person and delivering an Official Notice. The intervention has been implemented force-wide, so there are no specific dedicated Op Divan officers, and Op Divan does not receive any additional or external funding. Strategic and operational staff interviewed for this evaluation described Op Divan as operating within existing force resources and therefore 'self-sufficient'.

2.3. Related services or pathways

Some police interviewees spoke of Op Divan working alongside other services or pathways aimed at responding to knife crime among young people. These are outlined in Table 3.1. Others, however, were not aware of any other work being undertaken with young people in relation to knife crime.

Table 3.1: Alternative services or pathways

Pathway/service	Description	Fit with Op Divan
'Knife free' awareness-raising session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-hour session (including 15 minutes of wind-down) delivered in schools by NYP school liaison officers ▪ Focuses on positive choices that young people could make to live knife free, and challenging misconceptions young people may have about carrying a knife ▪ Targeted at Key Stage 3 (ages 11 to 14) ▪ School staff present 	Alternative or supplementary
'Wake-up call' programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two-day programme about hate crime delivered in schools to small peer groups. It also targets other offences such as carrying a weapon, and wider issues such as bullying ▪ Focuses on consequences of behaviour and the impact on other young people ▪ Delivered by North Yorkshire Youth and funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner and North Yorkshire County Council ▪ NYP school liaison officers support delivery 	Alternative or supplementary
Referral to Early Help Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Particularly if carrying the weapon is related to low-level drug use and/or county lines activity 	Supplementary

Pathway/service	Description	Fit with Op Divan
Triage and diversion scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For young people who have begun low-level offending, for example shoplifting or acts of violence or aggression ▪ Voluntary six-week course run by the YOT 	Supplementary /escalation
YJS pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potentially including arrest, prosecution, trial and conviction 	Escalation

Police interviewees highlighted the importance of interventions in schools being targeted at individuals or small peer groups rather than a whole school approach, which could be counterproductive, as the rate of knife crime in North Yorkshire is relatively low. In addition, police did not want to normalise or 'glorify' knife crime, or be 'alarmist', by discussing it with large numbers of young people, particularly in schools where there have been no or few incidents. Schools are asked to provide a reason if they want interventions to be targeted at a large number of young people, especially if there is no recorded history of concerns.

2.4. Logic model

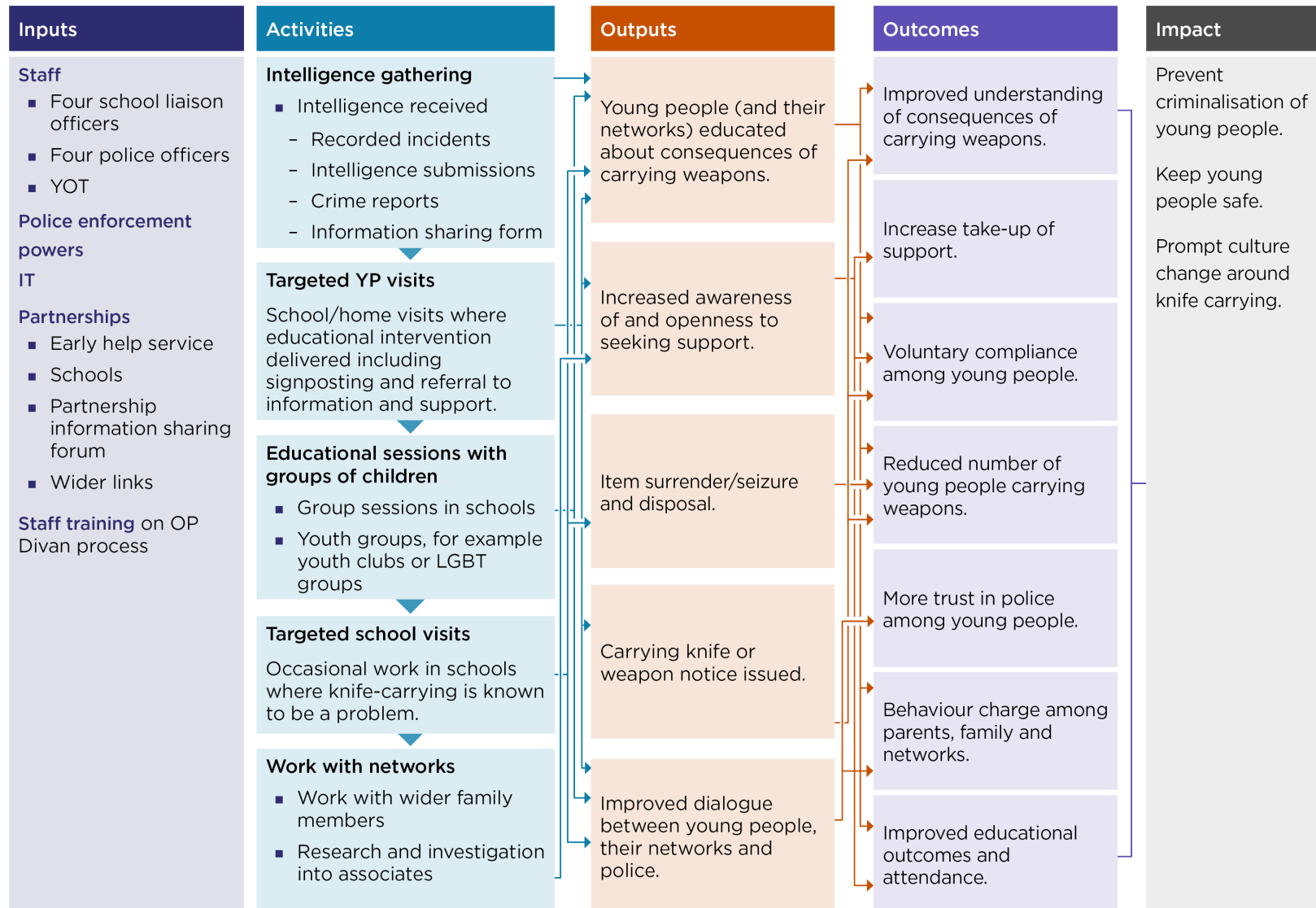
The logic model for Op Divan is provided in Figure 3.1. It is based on discussions with Op Divan stakeholders and a review of project documentation. The logic model approach is provided in section 4.2.

The three key impacts Op Divan hopes to have in North Yorkshire are to:

1. Prevent criminalisation of young people
2. Keep young people safe
3. Promote culture change around carrying a knife

There are several short and medium-term outcomes that are anticipated to contribute to these longer-term impacts, as outlined in the logic model.

Figure 3.1: Op Divan logic model



3. Methods

3.1. Evaluation aims and objectives

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by the College of Policing to scope, design and deliver an independent evaluation of Op Divan. It forms part of a series of work evaluating interventions as part of the Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme (VVCP). The overall objectives of the VVCP are to evaluate interventions currently being tried by forces, to understand effective practice in this area and share learning across forces, enabling effective resourcing decisions to be made, improving outcomes for the public.

The aim of the evaluation is for conclusions to be drawn across the following domains of the EMMIE framework⁹ (where possible).

- Effect – whether the intervention had a causal impact on specified outcomes.
- Mechanism – what it is about the intervention that could explain any effect.
- Moderator – the circumstances and contexts in which the intervention is likely (or unlikely) to work.
- Implementation – the conditions that should be considered when implementing the intervention.
- Economic cost – costs associated with the intervention, both direct and indirect and whether there is any evidence of cost benefit.

The evaluation used qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the set-up, delivery and perceived impacts of Op Divan, and to contribute to an evidence base for knowledge sharing across police forces in England and Wales.

⁹ EMMIE is an evidence appraisal framework. It was developed by academics at University College London. One aim is to help practitioners and decision-makers interpret evidence easily and quickly. EMMIE rates evidence against five dimensions: effect, mechanisms, moderators, implementation and economic cost. Available from [whatworks.college.police.uk/toolkit/Pages/About the CRT.aspx](https://whatworks.college.police.uk/toolkit/Pages/About%20the%20CRT.aspx) [Accessed 28 January 2020]

3.2. Phase 1: scoping study

The aim of Phase 1 was to develop an evaluation design that would capture evidence on Op Divan's effectiveness, using (where feasible) impact, process and cost analysis approaches.

The research team reviewed documentation relevant to Op Divan and facilitated a workshop with key stakeholders involved in setting up and delivering the programme in North Yorkshire, academic advisors¹⁰ and College of Policing representatives. The findings from the document review and workshop informed the development of a logic model for Op Divan, which captured the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and the programme's intended impacts.

An experimental approach to measuring the impact of Op Divan was ruled out during the scoping study, due to concerns about statistical power (ie, the small numbers taking up the programme). Quasi-experimental approaches were also considered. Op Divan collects management information (MI) including demographic data such as age, gender, the young person's location and details of the incident. However, there was no suitable administrative data available for young people in non-intervention areas, from which a counterfactual could have been identified.

Quantitative analysis of Op Divan's MI was feasible, as discussed in 4.3.2.

3.3. Phase 2: mainstage evaluation

3.3.1. Process evaluation

The process evaluation included in-depth interviews with Op Divan strategic and operational staff and delivery partners. Interviews were also conducted with a young person who had engaged in the programme and their parents/carers. Each is discussed below.

¹⁰ The College of Policing appointed three academic advisors to support the Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme. Advisors undertook a range of activities, including visiting interventions, acting as critical friends to the College of Policing and independent evaluators and providing feedback and peer review throughout programme delivery.

3.3.1.1. Strategic and operational staff

In-depth interviews were carried out with the following groups:

1. **Op Divan strategic staff** (the police leadership team).
2. **Op Divan operational staff and partner agencies**, including NYP school liaison officers, the YOT and school representatives.

The programme leads supported NatCen with recruiting staff to take part in the evaluation and sent information leaflets about what participation in the evaluation involved to these individuals. On agreeing to participate, individuals were contacted by the research team to arrange a suitable time for a telephone interview.

In total, in-depth interviews were conducted with nine strategic and operational staff and partner agencies. They focused on interviewees' views and experiences of Op Divan set-up and delivery, and perceived impacts and outcomes of the programme.

A breakdown of interviews by staff interviewee group is shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Number of interviewees per staff group

Type of interviewee	Number of interviewees
Op Divan strategic staff	4
Op Divan operational staff and partner agencies	5
Total	9

3.3.1.2. Programme participant interviewees

The programme leads and school liaison officers supported NatCen with recruitment. Parents/carers gave permission for the research team to contact either themselves and/or the young people. Information leaflets about what participation in the evaluation would involve were given to individuals by the school liaison officers. On agreeing to participate, individuals agreed for Op Divan to securely share their contact details with the NatCen research team so they could contact them directly to arrange an interview. Individuals could choose a telephone or face-to-face interview.

Recruitment was challenging, so in-depth interviews were conducted with one young person who had taken part in Op Divan and another with their parents (a paired interview).

The young person taking part in the research was given a support leaflet, in case the interview raised any issues or concerns. The leaflet was developed by NatCen in collaboration with the programme leads and the College of Policing. There were different versions for those aged under and over 16.

3.3.1.3. Interview conduct and analysis

The qualitative fieldwork took place between November 2019 and March 2020. Separate topic guides were developed for interviews with different participant groups. They were used to ensure a consistent approach across encounters while allowing the research team a degree of flexibility. The research team used open and non-leading phrasing to ensure they responded appropriately to participants' accounts. An overview of the topic guide's key themes is included in Appendix B.

With participants' permission, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were analysed using the Framework approach (Ritchie et al., 2013), a systematic case and theme-based approach to qualitative data management (see Appendix B). Verbatim interview quotations are used throughout this report to illustrate themes and findings where appropriate.

The findings in this report show the range and diversity of views and experiences among those interviewed. However, interviews were carried out with just one young person and two parents. While these interviews provided valuable insight, the evaluation clearly did not capture the full range of young people and parents' experiences.

As this is qualitative research, the prevalence of views and experiences cannot be estimated.

3.3.2. Analysis of management information

NYP records Op Divan participants' characteristics in their MI, including age, gender and who referred them into Op Divan. The MI was available for 84 Op Divan participants recruited between June 2018 and September 2019. Additional data

concerning further knife crime incidents following the Op Divan meeting (where the weapon is either a bladed implement or glass) was provided for these 84 individuals up until the end of July 2020. Incidents included possession of a blade and assault, among others.

This data has been analysed using frequencies. To avoid statistical disclosure, the content of cells referring to personal characteristics with a count of less than five are suppressed (the cells will read $n < 5$). Cross-tabulations would be statistically disclosive (that is, individuals could be identified based on published data) and regression analysis is not appropriate.

4. Findings

Key findings summary

- Op Divan was set up after a number of young people were found with knives, or were reported to be potentially carrying knives, in local schools and in the wider community.
- The YJS, YOT and local schools were brought on board and Op Divan was felt to have been rolled out force-wide with ease, compared to other interventions. Police and school staff were receptive to Op Divan from the outset. Its focus on early intervention was particularly appealing.
- Most referrals (with a recorded source of referral in the MI) came from NYP, with fewer referrals from school liaison officers and the YJS/YOT. The volume of referrals was relatively consistent over time, at an average of seven per month. Police record management systems STORM and Niche were also proactively searched for potential Op Divan participants.
- The NYP intelligence department reviewed the referral information and graded it¹¹. It was then taken to a daily management meeting where Op Divan cases were discussed and allocated to an officer (NYP, NYP school liaison or YOT) from the local area to carry out the Op Divan meeting within a 72-hour timeframe, unless deemed urgent.
- The Op Divan meeting takes place at home, in school or in YOT offices. The length and content of meetings varies depending on the young person's needs and circumstances.
- Police identified a range of circumstances that led to young people being offered Op Divan. They described how young people said they had been carrying a knife/weapon for 'legitimate' reasons, others carried it for self-protection, while others were threatening harm. This is in line with the wider literature on reasons for knife carrying (Brennan, 2017; Lemos, 2004).

¹¹ The source is evaluated to establish its credibility and reliability. See app.college.police.uk/app-content/intelligence-management/intelligence-report/ for more information [Accessed 23 March 2020]

- A young person would typically attend one meeting, usually lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. The officer facilitating the meeting guides the conversation, which might solely focus on education and the law surrounding knife possession (including giving the Official Notice), or could branch into other areas such as mental health, substance misuse and e-safety.
- Perceived facilitators to delivery included a committed lead, building positive relationships between partners and continuity of care for young people where they met with YOT officers under Op Divan.
- Barriers included perceived anti-police views in some sections of the community; maintaining engagement among young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); and high staff turnover in partner agencies like social care.
- Success was defined as the young person not coming to the police, YOT or school's attention for carrying a knife/weapon again after receiving the Op Divan intervention. Police, YOT and school staff were confident the young people had not carried a knife/weapon since receiving Op Divan, based on the lack of intelligence received by schools and/or incidents recorded by the police on Niche. As such, they considered the intervention a success. The MI indicates that by the end of July 2020, nine of 84 Op Divan participants had been involved in 11 knife crime incidents after the date they were initially reported to Op Divan.
- Police, parents and the young person also noted an improvement in young people's understanding of the consequences of carrying weapons. For the young person interviewed, this understanding related to finding out that carrying a knife for a 'legitimate purpose' (such as a hobby) under the age of 18 was an offence.
- Interviewees identified key factors underpinning perceived impacts on young people. Police interviewees highlighted Op Divan's early prevention focus; police, YOT, school staff and parents described the 'shock factor' of the meetings; and police, parents and the young person interviewed noted the personal qualities of the officers facilitating the meetings, such as being patient and having a relaxed and supportive manner.

- Police and school staff described Op Divan operating as ‘part of the working day’, and as forming part of a ‘toolkit’ of crime prevention interventions aimed at responding to knife crime among young people.

This chapter provides the findings of the process evaluation, alongside analysis of the MI.

4.1. Op Divan set-up

As discussed in 3.1, Op Divan was set up after a number of young people were found with knives, or were reported to be carrying knives, in local schools and in the wider community. In some instances, schools would pass this information to the Early Help Service, but local police were not always being informed. A police lead for early intervention believed a joint programme was needed to ensure this information was recorded at the earliest opportunity and that appropriate multi-agency support was in place for the young person, as well as their parents and school. The concept was supported by senior police leadership, some of whom had been involved in early discussions with the police lead.

Police strategic leads for Op Divan obtained buy-in through discussions with the YJS/YOT and local schools. Bringing partners on board was found to be a relatively straightforward process and allowed Op Divan to be rolled out swiftly across the force. The quick uptake of the programme was credited in part to the simplicity of the intervention, as well as partners’ receptiveness to an early intervention of this nature (see 5.1.3).

‘I thought actually there’s a gap, there’s a vulnerability, children and the public are left exposed. [I went] [s]traight into the school officer; they said yes, we can do it and on that basis I said, ‘Let’s continue!’ As I say, it’s as easy as that, it really was, because I think it’s the right, proper and logical thing to do. We could’ve managed that within our existing resources, we could’ve managed that within our existing intelligence processes, so didn’t need any escalation, higher decision-making [...] there’s a problem, there’s a solution, let’s get on with it.’

(Senior police leadership)

‘Initially when we spoke to schools and other agencies about it, it fit their needs as well and it seemed proportionate to give them [young people] a warning notice [...] rather than just trying to stop them on the street and almost orchestrate them being arrested really.’

(Police school liaison officer)

Op Divan police strategic leads and school staff also drew comparisons between Op Divan and Outcome 21 – a resolution in youth-produced sexual imagery cases, where the making and sharing of images is not considered abusive or malicious¹². School staff inferred that this perceived similarity encouraged partner buy-in.

‘[...] although a very different line of concern, but I suppose it was built from the successful work of Outcome 21, to respond to issues of youth-produced social media images or images of inappropriate, either sex lives or naked images. That was a way of the police responding, which worked through in a logical way with young people the mistake they’d made, without taking routes that went down criminalised pathways.’

(School staff)

The Early Help Service was less involved in set-up (and delivery) than originally envisaged due to their lack of awareness about the school liaison officer role. At the time of writing, meetings were being planned in specific areas of North Yorkshire for Early Help Service staff and school liaison officers, to raise awareness about Op Divan and the referral process (see section 5.2.2). A longer-term aim is for the Early Help Service to deliver Op Divan meetings without police involvement, particularly for young people who are reluctant to engage with the police.

4.1.1. Leadership and governance

Police interviewees highlighted the passion, commitment, dedication and availability of the original Op Divan lead who developed the intervention. These qualities were

¹² An Official Notice is not given to the young person as part of Outcome 21, but they/their parents may be given information explaining the principles of the resolution in writing (College of Policing, 2016).

flagged as integral to the effective set-up and delivery of interventions of this nature (such as being readily available to answer any questions NYP, schools or YJS/YOT had about the referral process or delivering the Op Divan meeting with young people).

There was a change in Op Divan leadership towards the end of 2019, with the new lead coming from a strategy role rather than frontline delivery. The new lead was concerned that some of the delivery processes were 'overcomplicated', and sought to review delivery processes, to ensure they were as straightforward as possible and therefore maximised police engagement and partner buy-in. Another key change to the programme was to allow PCSOs to deliver Op Divan after an agreement was reached with Unison, their trade union. Allowing PCSOs to deliver the intervention helped to maximise delivery capacity so the Op Divan meeting could take place as soon as possible after intelligence was received and reviewed.

'I think the guidance for Op Divan said only police officers should do this [the Op Divan meeting]. [The new lead] worked with Unison who represent PCSOs to basically open it up to them as well. If it's safe to do so then PCSOs can now do Op Divan interventions. I think one of the reasons [the lead] wanted to do that is that if we're relying only on police officers, many police officers work a shift pattern and it can be difficult to do these interventions quickly if people aren't available. We know that, especially with children and young people, the quicker the better [...] because we want to prevent any crimes from happening. [...] [I]f we open it up to PCSOs to do it as well, then we've got more opportunity to get it done quickly.'

(Senior police leadership)

NYP has a bimonthly Knife Crime Task and Finish Group for activity related to the Serious Violence Strategy (2018). The Group provides ultimate oversight for Op Divan alongside other knife crime interventions underway in the force area. Op Divan and knife crime education is a standing agenda item, alongside other initiatives such as Op Disarm, which is aimed at disrupting habitual knife carriers.

4.1.2. Training and communications

Training materials for the intervention combined face-to-face and written guidance with a suite of online tools, including: the documents needed for the meetings with young people (including guidance on how to use them); briefing papers for partner agencies, and a 'one-minute guide' so partners can quickly understand what Op Divan is and what it involves. Police interviewees generally thought the training and guidance available meant Op Divan could be understood easily and quickly, particularly as they considered it a relatively straightforward intervention. The nature and extent of training received varied by interviewee group, as detailed below.

- **Police:** information and guidance about what Op Divan is and when it should be used was posted frequently on 'Briefing Manager' (NYP internal communications bulletin, read when frontline officers go on duty). The frequency of these postings was felt to be a strength and ensured it 'got into the backs of everybody's mind' to raise awareness among police officers. Other online tools included the documents needed for the meetings with young people, such as the Notice itself and process flowchart, alongside guidance on how to use them. Police interviewees valued these tools for their clarity and felt they were effective in familiarising them with delivery processes. Some also described attending a face-to-face briefing, led by the original programme lead, where they could work through an example scenario, ask questions about written guidance and 'interrogate' it, so they fully understood Op Divan delivery before the programme went 'live'.
- **YJS/YOT:** a YOT interviewee described how written guidance and documentation (the Notice and process flowchart) on their intranet was supported by informal face-to-face training by the Op Divan lead. Both sources were considered helpful, and it was also felt that training and support were 'always available' if needed.

'It's pretty straightforward. All the information is on our internal site to go and read and you can print it out and there's flowcharts and there's when and where to give [the Notice] and what to give and what to say. There's a little training package on there. There's a package where you can give a young person an intervention session and the forms are there to print out. So, it's

all very simple. A lot of cops when they find out you've got to give an Op Divan to someone they think, 'oh no, it's a big piece of work', but it's not. It's very simple and the process is very simple on our system.'

(Police seconded YOT officer)

- **Schools:** school interviewees did not receive any formal training, but one described how a PC from NYP had discussed Op Divan at a pastoral leaders' meeting they attended regularly, which was followed by a 'poster campaign' to raise awareness. Schools also used the documentation given to them by the police, including the 'partnership information sharing form' – a document that collects intelligence around child safeguarding issues (discussed further in section 5.2.3).

4.1.3. Early expectations

Police interviewees and school staff were receptive to Op Divan from the outset, and reported that others generally were too. It was felt to go 'back to basics with policing'. They saw its focus on early intervention and avoiding the criminalisation of young people as a particular strength. The police leadership team wanted it to become embedded in business as usual.

'My initial thoughts were that [...for] North Yorkshire Police, there was nothing else out there [like it]. It [other interventions/pathways] was either criminalising young people or adults. There was no education out there with regard to the carrying of knives, why it's wrong, the type of knives that could be carried, the types of knives that can't be carried and the reason for carrying knives and weapons in the first place [...] [I thought Op Divan was] Really just about educating young people, keeping young people out of the criminal justice system, [and] getting them to think about what they're doing.'

(Police school liaison officer)

However, some police interviewees reported that other officers were initially sceptical about the effectiveness of Op Divan, for two reasons. Firstly, Op Divan was initially

misunderstood as an out of court disposal¹³ by other police officers and was considered too lenient for the types of offences that would typically require this approach. Op Divan leadership explained the intervention was never intended for this purpose, but that Op Divan had been misused early on, and young people had been given Op Divan as a disposal. In these instances an agreement was reached whereby the information given through Op Divan could be incorporated **into** a criminal justice outcome, but not be used as a disposal by itself.

‘I think some people perhaps had the perception, wrongly, that this was a criminal justice outcome. It’s not; it’s far from it and I don’t believe that it’s suitable as a criminal justice outcome. So, I’ve never suggested that if a child is found in possession of a knife, Operation Divan is used as a disposal. I don’t think that’s right. They should go through the normal process of the criminal justice system that they’ve committed a serious offence. Just the information [...] around the impact of carrying a knife can be used as part of the criminal justice outcome [...], so after a little bit of misunderstanding, we managed to get [...] the support in place for that.’

(Senior police leadership)

Secondly, there were concerns that the educational focus of the Official Notice, and the fact it was not legally binding, would create a risk that young people would view it as ‘just a piece of paper’ and ignore it. These concerns appeared to have dissipated as Op Divan bedded in, as officers and delivery partners familiarised themselves with the programme.

4.2. Op Divan delivery

This section explores Op Divan delivery; specifically, the profile of young people who receive Op Divan, the referral pathway, intelligence gathering and management, the Op Divan meeting itself, and facilitators and barriers to effective delivery.

¹³ An out of court disposal is a way of dealing with less serious offending and for young people can include a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution.

4.2.1. Profile of Op Divan cases

Op Divan is aimed at young people under the age of 18. The MI from NYP suggests that the majority of interviewees are male and between 13 and 18 years old. A very small number ($n < 5$) of individuals receiving Op Divan were below the age of criminal responsibility (10 years old) – see Table 5.1. While a senior police interviewee highlighted that children under the age of criminal responsibility could still be eligible for Op Divan, given its focus on early intervention and prevention, a NYP school liaison officer felt the Official Notice would be difficult for a child under 10 to understand. But a version of the meeting could still take place with a specially trained officer, using resources aimed at younger children instead of the Official Notice.

Table 5.1 Profile of Op Divan participants

Characteristic	Number (N=84)
Gender	
Male	71
Female	13
Age	
Less than 10 years old	$n < 5$
10 to 12 years old	7
13 to 15 years old	45
16 to 18 years old	28
19 to 25 years old	$n < 5$
Greater than 25 years old	$n < 5$

Base: All Op Divan participants recorded in the MI (84) recruited between June 2018 and September 2019

At the time of writing the police leadership team were considering whether adults could be made eligible for Op Divan if they had mental health problems, learning

difficulties or other comprehension issues. The MI indicates a very small number of adults had received Op Divan prior to any formal decision being made.

Young people already convicted of weapon possession are not eligible for Op Divan. Similarly, if a young person had received Op Divan before and continued to carry a knife/weapon then they would enter the YJS.

‘We’ve kept it fairly simple; [young people are eligible] if the information is that they’re carrying a knife, and of course they haven’t had one before [Op Divan meeting] or they’ve never been convicted of knife crime before. If they meet that criteria, we’ve set the bar low intentionally so that actually we’re educating, preventing and making sure those further offences don’t take place.’

(Senior police leadership)

Police interviewees described a ‘wide spectrum’ of circumstances in which young people were thought to be carrying knives. Some young people said they had been carrying a knife for ‘legitimate’ reasons (for example, hobbies such as fishing¹⁴, construction and crafts), others were being bullied and carried it for self-protection¹⁵, while others were threatening harm. However, there were some discrepancies in interviewees’ accounts about when young people were eligible for Op Divan, and ambiguity about eligibility criteria. For example, school staff described examples of young people being accepted for Op Divan where they had talked about using knives, including on social media, but had not actually threatened to use a knife, and were not suspected of carrying one.

‘The last two that I’ve referred have been around knife vocabulary. We’ve not ever actually had somebody with a knife. We had one young girl with a penknife, so they’ve been and

¹⁴ Interviewees noted that North Yorkshire is a rural area and so young people from farming communities might ‘routinely’ carry knives for legitimate reasons.

¹⁵ Lemos (2004) refers to this as ‘defensive weapon carrying’.

talked to her, but nobody threatening with a knife [...] physically.
It's been verbal.'

(School staff)

However, a strategic police interviewee stated Op Divan was only for young people thought to be carrying a knife.

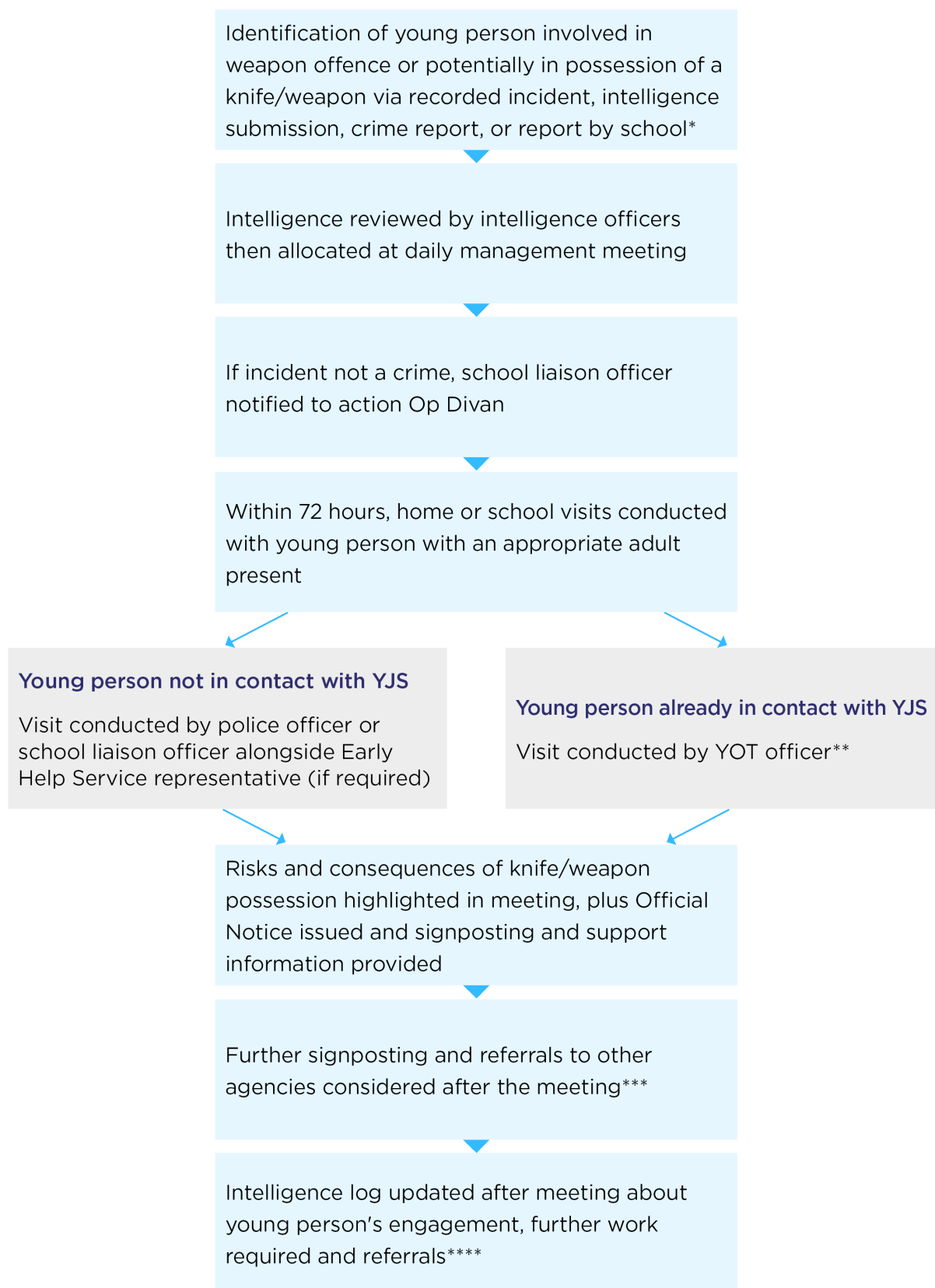
'No, it's purely around the carrying a knife, so if the language has been – I don't know, some kid turns round and says, "Oh, I'd love a zombie sword knife, I admit I'd love one," actually no, this is the position of carrying them.'

(Senior police leadership)

4.2.2. Referral pathway

Interviewees and programme documentation described the Op Divan referral pathway, illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Op Divan referral pathway



*Intelligence actioned based on grading process (discussed further in 5.2.3).

**These meetings were also attended by a police officer before the change in leadership. This has since been deemed unnecessary by the new intervention lead because the young person would already have a relationship with the attending YOT officer. It also took longer to organise meetings that accommodated two officers' availability, which potentially raised risk of harm. However, this was assessed on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes having an attending police officer helped to explain consequences for sentencing, as well as safeguarding the YOT officer if this was considered necessary.

***These can include the Early Help Service, Children's Services, YOT triage and diversion and other local services, such as Compass Reach (for young people with drugs, alcohol or mental health issues). Referrals take place with the consent of the young person and their parent(s).

****Responsibility for data entry has transferred from NYP school liaison officers to the intervention lead following the change in leadership, for efficiency reasons and to avoid overburdening school liaison officers.

4.2.3. Receiving and managing intelligence

The police received information about young people thought to be carrying knives or weapons from schools, community and family members. It came via a number of routes, including:

- Submission of the partnership information sharing form from agencies such as schools or the Early Help Service.
- A report from the school, sent via email (or the partnership information sharing form mentioned above). The report would document the young person's past behaviour (including reports from other students) and flag any indicators of concern or vulnerability, such as issues relating to attendance or truancy, mental health or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), connections to known offenders or concerns around exploitation.
- A non-emergency 101 call.
- Information from Crimestoppers, where a member of the public does not want to contact the police directly.

Police management systems STORM and Niche¹⁶ were also proactively searched for potential Op Divan participants. However, interviewees spoke almost entirely about the intelligence/information they received. NYP's MI indicates that most referrals (with a recorded source) came from NYP, with fewer referrals from school liaison officers and the YJS/YOT. The volume of referrals was relatively consistent over time, at an average of seven per month – lower volumes may be due to data not being available for a full quarter (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Profile of Op Divan referrals

Referrals	n/N (missing)
Source of referral	
NYP	33 / 51 (33)
School liaison officers	3 / 51 (33)
YJS/YOT	15 / 51 (33)
Timing of referral*	
Q2 and Q3 2018	9 / 84 (0)
Q4 2018	21 / 84 (0)
Q1 2019	19 / 84 (0)
Q2 2019	25 / 84 (0)
*Q3 2019	10 / 84 (0)

Base: All Op Divan participants recorded in the MI (84) recruited between June 2018 and September 2019

* Op Divan data is available from June 2018 and the latest data is from mid-September 2019.

¹⁶ See Nicherms.com for more information [Accessed 2 March 2020].

Despite describing a 'zero tolerance' attitude to knife/weapon carrying in schools, school staff interviewed described how it could be challenging to decide whether or not to pass information to the police, particularly escalating what could be seen as 'minor' incidents. This reported reluctance might partly explain the relatively low referrals from school liaison officers. School staff interviewees found discussing cases with other partners such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) helpful.

'They're high-risk moments [...] It's important to make the right judgement of a situation for the young person involved; does it need to be passed on or is it too minor a situation? What is best for that young person? [...] [W]orking in partnership with the agencies helped that.'

(School staff)

The NYP intelligence department then reviewed the information and graded it¹⁷ according to the reliability of the source, whether it was believed to be malicious, whether the young person was known to them, and the risk of retribution or harm posed to the source if action was taken. Once reviewed, the intelligence was put onto Niche and an associated 'intelligence action log' specific to Op Divan, which would also be updated once the Op Divan meeting had taken place.

Intelligence officers used this information to populate a 'daily intelligence summary' which was then taken to a daily management meeting¹⁸. Daily management meetings were a pre-existing process in NYP, and intelligence leading to Op Divan referrals were integrated into this existing process, which included a range of other issues, such as criminal investigations and domestic abuse cases. Op Divan cases were discussed when they arose and if they were not considered a crime and met

¹⁷ The source is evaluated to establish its credibility. There are three source gradings: reliable; untested; and not reliable. The intelligence is also assessed according to its reliability. The grades are: known directly to the source; known indirectly to the source but corroborated; known indirectly to the source; not known; and suspected to be false. See app.college.police.uk/app-content/intelligence-management/intelligence-report/ for more information [Accessed 23 March 2020]

¹⁸ This meeting, usually a conference call, is chaired by the deputy commander for each of the three basic command areas in NYP (typically a chief inspector). Therefore, three meetings are held simultaneously across the NYP force area.

the eligibility criteria, were allocated to an officer from the local area to carry out the Op Divan meeting within a 72-hour timeframe. This could be an NYP, school liaison or YOT officer. If the young person was believed to pose an immediate threat to themselves or others, the meeting would take place as soon as possible. The intelligence would be 'sanitised' so as to protect the source, meaning the allocated officer would not know the source of the intelligence.

'If the intelligence came from the school that Billy's got a knife and we know that the school know that because they've confiscated it, for example, actually that would be really good [because] we know that [definitely happened]. Certainly, with intelligence [...] we don't disclose the source to the person that's going to action it because they don't need to know. It's hidden within the golden copy of the intelligence submission. So actually, the intelligence [...] it's just a form of words, which would say [for example, young person] carries a fishing knife for his own personal safety.'

(Senior police leadership)

Police interviewees felt this process generally worked well, but some highlighted instances where cases had got 'lost in the system', for example where cases were allocated to a policing team rather than an individual officer, and so had not been actioned straightaway. One police interviewee suggested that each time a case was allocated to a team or officer for an Op Divan meeting, it should be recorded as an 'action' rather than a 'task'. This way it would be followed up by a senior officer at the daily management meeting the following day, which reduced the risk of it 'falling through the cracks'.

'So, it would be every 24 hours there would be a senior officer saying, 'Has this been done yet? Has this been done yet?' If it goes more than a day or two, I'd expect the chair of the daily management meeting – it tends to be a more senior officer – to chase it up and make sure that it is done, whereas at the moment that doesn't happen. Once it's tasked out it's kind of forgotten about in terms of the daily management meeting. It doesn't have that local managerial oversight. It's tasked out and

job done, whereas sometimes it is tasked out and it's not job done.'

(Senior police leadership)

The intelligence action log was then updated after Op Divan meetings were completed to include whether the young person had engaged in the process, to confirm if a Notice was given, and the outcome, including any further work required or referrals made to other agencies. If the young person continued to carry a knife or weapon, which led to entry into the criminal justice system, then the refusal of early education around the subject could be used as evidence of 'bad character'.

4.2.4. The Op Divan meeting

The aim is for Op Divan to be delivered as soon as possible after the intelligence is received, to 'get the weapon off the streets' (if indeed there is one). First, the assigned officer either calls the young person's parent/guardian or arrives at their home. They introduce Op Divan, explain the process, ask for the parent and young person's consent and, if on the phone, arrange a convenient time to meet. This 'groundwork' was considered important in building trust between the officer, parent(s) and young person. They will stress that the young person is not under arrest, they are not getting a criminal record and it is unlikely that any further action will be taken on this occasion¹⁹.

Police interviewees, school staff and parents reported that Op Divan is generally received positively at this stage, with one parent describing the decision to take it up as 'common sense'. There's also the opportunity for the parent to explain any relevant context to the young person's behaviour, to inform the assigned officer's discussion with the young person.

The parent interviewed for the evaluation described telling the YOT officer about some challenging family dynamics preceding the incident. However, at this stage in the process this same parent would have liked to have seen greater consideration of her child's reasons for bringing the weapon into school, that is, that he had no intention of harming anyone.

¹⁹ This is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

‘I went in to see [the headteacher] and I said, “I absolutely understand obviously this act is something very serious and I’m not challenging that. What I’m challenging is have you truly taken into context the child’s intention? There is no intention [...] It was accidentally there” and all that.’

(Parent)

The meeting takes place at home, in school or in YOT offices. An appropriate adult needs to be present, though not necessarily directly involved in the conversation, as this could hinder young people’s engagement. To this end it was felt that having parents directly involved in the face-to-face meeting could be problematic. For this reason, some police interviewees felt that school was the optimum location due to parents not being present and there being fewer distractions. Some school staff described how the young person would be given a fixed-term exclusion from school if they were found carrying a knife, and in such cases the meeting would need to take place in the home.

The length and content of meetings varied depending on the young person’s needs and circumstances. A young person would attend one meeting²⁰, lasting between 20 minutes and three hours, depending on the nature of the young person’s engagement, their needs and circumstances, and whether they asked any questions.

Meetings would typically focus on the intelligence received, giving the Official Notice, explaining the risks and consequences of carrying a knife or weapon, and outlining the types and sizes of knife/weapon that are illegal. In some instances, meetings could also branch into other areas such as bullying, mental health, substance misuse, guidance about e-safety and appropriate social media use, and physical safety in particular geographic locations where gangs operate, depending on the young person’s circumstances and needs. There was no evidence to suggest the content of meetings varied according to which type of officer conducted the visit.

²⁰ The young person interviewed for the evaluation described having three meetings, though it is possible he did not distinguish between the Op Divan meeting specifically and other meetings he had with his YOT officer.

'I shared information about our family context and things that we felt would have a negative impact on [child] [...] We were worried about him maybe getting bullied at [sports club] [...] We were concerned a bit about his use of social media maybe and we wanted the worker to kind of explore those things [...] Out of that information [YOT officer] quickly identified what he needed to work on with [child] which was looking at responsible use of social media, exploring how you communicate and what you say to people needs to be appropriate and how to read other people's responses to what you do [...] and how] you don't have to be extreme and draw attention to yourself in the wrong ways [to make friends].'

(Parent)

Sometimes YOT officers used worksheets to facilitate discussions, such as 'moral stories' and case studies²¹. Regardless of the focus of the discussion, police interviewees described the importance of the officer remaining impartial and non-accusatory.

'I go out there and speak about [...] what's been reported. A lot of young people turn around and say, 'I don't know what you're talking about. It wasn't me. It wasn't me.' This is about education. It's not about pointing fingers. It's not about saying that you're in trouble. It's just about giving you some advice with regard to knives and weapons, etc., and just try to keep you out of any trouble. A lot of it is intelligence based. I'm not there to talk about where that intelligence has come from. It's all about trying to keep the young person safe.'

(Police school liaison officer)

²¹ These were mentioned by the young person interviewed. It appeared that these worksheets were part of broader work the YOT was carrying out with him, rather than specific to Op Divan.

The young person interviewed described the meeting as a 'nice conversation' which was useful and 'very relaxed'. The nature of the conversation had surprised him, and he implied he was expecting a more formal conversation.

4.2.5. Facilitators and barriers to delivery

Interviewees identified a number of facilitators and barriers to effective Op Divan delivery.

Facilitators

- A committed intervention lead, who is passionate about the intervention and is available to answer delivery partners' questions about referral and delivery processes.
- Taking time (up to two years) for NYP to build trust and relationships with schools and wider partners such as CAMHS.
- Continuity of the YOT officer facilitating the meeting, where the young person has had contact with the YJS before.
- The officer facilitating the meeting having the 'right' personal qualities for the role (eg, being friendly, having a supportive and reassuring approach and communicating clearly and transparently). This is potentially difficult to guarantee now there is an expectation that all PCs and PCSOs can deliver meetings.
- Young people not being required to sign the Notice or other documentation, which highlights the supportive rather than punitive nature of the intervention.

Barriers

- Anti-police views and attitudes among some communities. It was felt these views and attitudes could potentially be overcome by an approachable manner, clear explanations at an appropriate pace and opportunities for questions.
- Maintaining engagement from young people with SEND. Suggestions for overcoming this barrier included shorter meetings, flexibility with regards to the meeting space (eg, larger space in which to have a walking meeting for a young person with ADHD); or using a speech and language therapist to facilitate communication.

- High staff turnover in other agencies (eg, social care) resulting in a lack of awareness of Op Divan. The inference was that this impacted on support provided following the meeting.
- A perception from school staff that if the young person is involved in gang and county lines activity, and lacks pro-social influences, their peers may reinforce the idea that Op Divan is a 'soft' option and therefore reduce its effectiveness.

4.3. Reported impacts

This section explores the perceived impacts of Op Divan on young people and staff, as well as transferability to other forces.

4.3.1. Impact on young people

All interviewees defined success as the young person **not coming to the attention of the police, YOT or school for carrying a knife/weapon again** after receiving Op Divan. Police, YOT and school staff interviewees were confident that most young people had not carried a knife/weapon since receiving Op Divan and so considered the intervention a success. This was based on the lack of intelligence received by schools and/or incidents recorded by the police. Engagement with the programme is recorded in Niche, so would be seen if the young person's record was subsequently viewed because of suspected possession of a knife/weapon. However, outcomes for young people who had received Op Divan were not checked in a formalised or systematic way.

Rare instances were discussed where a young person had continued to carry a knife, which had led to a permanent school exclusion, or where Op Divan had prompted a more in-depth risk assessment and involvement from other agencies (such as CAMHS due to overlapping SEND), where the young person had been transferred to a pupil referral unit²². Additional data was provided to the evaluation about knife crime incidents (either a bladed implement or glass) that occurred after the date the case was first reported to Op Divan, up until July 2020. This data indicates that nine of 84 Op Divan participants committed knife crime offences after

²² It is possible that in these instances Op Divan generated types of risk management that otherwise might not have occurred.

they were referred to Op Divan, relating to 11 different incidents (including possession and assault, among others).

‘I don’t think we’ll ever know for sure if we have prevented serious assaults and murders, but it wouldn’t surprise me if we have.’

(Senior police leadership)

Police interviewees, the young person and parents also perceived an **improvement in young people’s understanding of the consequences of carrying knives/weapons**, and that this had encouraged some young people to think about the consequences of actions more widely. This outcome was not captured in Op Divan’s MI.

‘I realised [...] it was a bladed article, but the reason I had it in my bag was for a legitimate purpose. It was explained to me that if you were above 18 it would be perfectly fine to carry that around if you had a legitimate purpose for it, which at the time I had, but I didn’t realise because I was under 18 it wouldn’t be in the same sort of clause.’

(Young person)

‘[A family member] got a job last week and that was a big celebration and [young person] had gone to see [other family member] on the train and [other family member] offered to send a bottle of wine for us to celebrate. [Young person] said, “No I can’t go back on the train with alcohol in my bag.”’

(Parent)

A final impact, reported by police officer and school staff interviewees, was an **improvement in how police and other organisations in a position of authority were perceived by young people**. This was reportedly achieved by the human qualities of the police officers involved (discussed further below).

‘It’s a positive contact [from the police], and it’s a very human contact, as well, while still not losing the formality [...] We were able to use an officer that we know, and that people weren’t

unused to seeing in the school, to go through a really important piece of work in a very formal but in a very different way, compared to whoever's on duty just arresting you.'

(School staff)

A key factor underpinning perceived impacts on young people is Op Divan's **early prevention focus** and not criminalising young people 'unnecessarily'. Police interviewees in particular spoke of the importance of 'getting in early' before carrying a knife/weapon or using language relating to using knives was normalised. That Op Divan is an intelligence-led intervention was seen as key to this.

'I think if other forces are wanting to take it on, I think they really need to concentrate on dealing with the intelligence-led interventions and having processes in place that allow that, rather than just dealing with the ones that are reported through your more traditional means of 999 or 101. If we're talking about early intervention and prevention in its truest sense, those are the kids and the young people that you need to get to.'

(Senior police leadership)

Another factor underpinning impacts on young people is **the 'shock factor' and it being a 'wake-up call'**.

'There's the shock effect of you've rocked up at the house and you've got this information. The kid is quite shocked [...] "How did you find out?" That's what their reaction is, "Oh, who told you? How did you find out?" Then just giving the Notice with the help and support and just making them aware of the crime for a start – they didn't think it was a crime – and the consequences and the dangers and the law.'

(Police seconded YOT officer)

Police, YOT and school staff, and parents all described how young people are shocked to be contacted about Op Divan, both the visit itself as well as by the specific messages the intervention conveys: that carrying a knife/weapon is an offence; and the consequences of that offence, including having a criminal record

and the implications of that, such as difficulties finding employment in the future. These feelings of shock appeared to be exacerbated when the young person had no previous experience with the police.

‘Having a police officer show you a quote from various texts that [young person] has sent and realise that the police have the capacity to look at what you’re putting on social media and quote back at you what you said. I think for [young person] who hasn’t had any contact with the police I think that’s enough isn’t it? [...] I think from the background that [young person] comes from, from parents that respect authority, I think that that in itself is the jolt.’

(Parent)

The final factor underpinning success was felt to be the **personal qualities of the YOT or police officers conducting the visits**, including being patient, having a friendly, supportive and reassuring approach, as well as communicating clearly and transparently. They were seen by police interviewees, and reportedly parents and young people, as effective in their role, having a ‘natural affinity’ with young people and being able to put them at ease, and having earned the trust of the young people they were supporting. As such they were felt to be the ‘right people’ to deliver Op Divan.

‘It’s worked for our child [...] [I]t hinges on the quality of the person who is the Youth Offending Team worker. [...] You can have a programme, but if it’s not delivered well, and the young person who is working with that Youth Offending Team worker doesn’t click with them, then it’s not going to be as effective.’

(Parent)

Towards the end of the evaluation fieldwork period, senior police leadership decided that all PCs and PCSOs could facilitate meetings with young people, which may have implications for the extent to which these personal qualities can be guaranteed going forward.

4.3.2. Impact on staff

Strategic and operational police and school interviewees described Op Divan operating as 'part of the working day' and forming part of a 'toolkit' of crime prevention interventions. Since Op Divan was felt to 'fit into an existing picture' of partnership working, staff interviewees reported that it had no real impact on their role or capacity.

'They [police] just see it as another string to their bow really. It's just another way of dealing with young kids [...] [T]hey see it as a positive rather than a negative.'

(Senior police leadership)

Op Divan was also felt by senior police leadership and YOT interviewees to remove burden from frontline police officers. Op Divan was perceived to be less costly and resource intensive than conducting a stop and search, and/or arresting a young person and taking them to custody.

'I think cops like it because it saves them doing an arrest, getting them to custody, doing all the interviews and the files and that. Whereas this you can just go and visit the young person, do the session with them and issue them the Notice. So, it saves a lot of time and hassle and cost and resources and paperwork.'

(Police seconded YOT officer)

Police interviewees spoke about the positive impact the Op Divan meetings had on individual officers' perceptions of young people and countering the attitude of them being likely to get involved in crime and/or antisocial behaviour. However, they also acknowledged that these individuals likely had a positive view of young people to start with.

'I'm probably not the most neutral of police officers [...] because I think very positively about our youth population and I know that the majority of young people are not committing crime and antisocial behaviour. So, I've had some difficult Operation Divans, but there has not been one young person that hasn't

asked brilliant questions and, in the end, comprehended the information and education that we're trying to provide them.'

(Police school liaison officer)

4.3.3. Transferability

Op Divan was adopted by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in April 2019 ('Op Met Divan') and rolled out across the Bromley, Croydon and Sutton Basic Command Unit (BCU). Lessons learnt from this process are captured in the independent evaluation report for Op Met Divan (DeMarco et al., 2020). Police interviewees from NYP were pleased that other police forces were potentially interested in implementing an Op Divan model in their areas, having heard about it through a national police and school networking meeting and 'word of mouth'.

'I'd hoped it'd just become normal day-to-day business [...] I wanted the right process in place and the right support [...] I never expected it to go national.'

(Senior police leadership)

Op Divan strategic leads felt, however, that while the process adopted by NYP would, in theory, be easy to adhere to by the MPS, the intervention might not have the same (perceived) success as in North Yorkshire, given the higher rates of knife crime in London and what was seen as a more entrenched gang culture. In practice, processes differed between NYP and the MPS, most notably their approach to intelligence gathering. While NYP takes both proactive and reactive approaches, the MPS takes a purely proactive approach. They use intelligence from three databases (Merlin, CRIS and Crimint) for Op Met Divan, to identify young people under the age of 18 who have come to the attention of the police for knife/weapon possession, or that may be in possession of a knife/weapon.

4.4. Sustainability

Op Divan does not receive any external funding and there are no dedicated Op Divan officers. Police staff described Op Divan as operating within existing resources and police practice and was therefore 'self-sufficient'. They also felt that the delivery of Op Divan represented a 'big cost-saving exercise', on the assumption that it is

effective and prevents (re)offending and its associated costs. These are interviewees' accounts and there is no robust quantitative impact or cost data to support or refute these views (apart from the MI data on outcomes discussed earlier).

'It didn't cost anything. It's easy to sustain because it's a piece of paper that's printed off and you go and knock on the door and issue it [...] so yes, definitely sustainable. What's not sustainable is arresting them [young people] and taking them to custody and going through all that process [...] we haven't got the cops and the funding to do all that. The criminal justice system hasn't got the funding either.'

(Police seconded YOT officer)

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the key implications of the evaluation findings, interviewees' recommendations for future delivery of Op Divan and evaluation challenges and limitations.

5.1. Key implications

According to the Op Divan logic model (see 3.2), the three (linked) longer-term impacts that Op Divan hopes to have in North Yorkshire are to: keep young people safe; prevent criminalisation of young people; and promote culture change around carrying a knife.

As discussed in Chapter 4, a robust impact evaluation of Op Divan, using an experimental or quasi-experimental design, was not feasible²³. Therefore, evidence on impact must come from the perspectives of interviewees from the qualitative process evaluation (acknowledging the small sample size). The extent to which interviewees felt that these impacts were achieved is discussed below, alongside two other key implications regarding eligibility and transferability.

5.1.1. Achieving long-term impacts

Existing evidence suggests the most effective approaches for reducing knife crime tend to involve early intervention and multi-agency collaborative working (McNeill and Wheller, 2019; Ross et al., 2011). Op Divan aims to employ both these approaches; the latter through the intervention's referral mechanisms – both into the intervention and then to other support services following the meeting.

Police interviewees, YOT and school staff were confident the **young people had not carried a knife or other weapon since receiving Op Divan**. This confidence was based on what they knew of intelligence received by schools and/or incidents recorded by the police. As such, they considered the intervention a success. However, two caveats to this perceived success should be acknowledged.

²³ Silvestri (2009) identified the challenge of drawing conclusions about 'what works' to reduce knife crime because of the lack of robust programme evaluation.

- Rare instances were discussed where a young person had continued to carry a knife. The MI indicates that by the end of July 2020, nine of 84 Op Divan participants had been involved in 11 knife crime incidents after the date they were initially reported to Op Divan. While engagement with the programme is recorded in Niche, outcomes for young people who had received Op Divan were not checked in a formalised or systematic way, and not captured in Op Divan's MI.
- A lack of clarity about eligibility meant that school staff described the challenge of deciding whether or not to refer a young person to Op Divan, particularly in the event of so called 'minor' incidents. Therefore, it could be that the intervention is being taken up by young people who do not necessarily pose an actual risk of carrying a knife/weapon (especially if young people were talking about using knives and not suspected of carrying one), when arguably the focus should be on young people posing a higher risk.

Op Divan's focus on **early intervention** and **avoiding the criminalisation of young people** was seen as a particular strength by police and other partners, and felt to fill a gap in service provision in North Yorkshire. The meeting with the young person was felt to have sufficient gravitas to encourage the young person to consider the risks they were taking in carrying a knife and to 'make better choices' going forward.

'I think the main impact is that they've been able to go through a route without being criminalised but has still given them a very clear legal contact with the police. [It] Has given them clear guidance to make better choices in the future [...] These are significant [police] responses, and no one's saying that that's not the case. We are looking to achieve that significant response through a non-criminalised route [...] You [young person] are having a conversation with a badged officer about very serious things. You are getting a clear communication about the legal and personal risks that you are taking, but you're exploring that in a context of Operation Divan, rather than exploring it through a criminal process.'

(School staff)

There was a sense among interviewees that **the culture around carrying a knife or other weapon was starting to change among young people**. Police interviewees, the young person interviewed and parents noted improvements in young people's understanding of the consequences of carrying knives/weapons. They also noted this had encouraged some young people to think about consequences of their actions more widely, such as carrying alcohol for others for example.

These perceived successes were underpinned by what was described as the 'shock factor' for young people (and often their parents) of being contacted about Op Divan; both the visit itself as well as the messages the intervention conveys. Specifically, that carrying a knife/weapon (even for 'legitimate' reasons) is an offence and its consequences; including having a criminal record and the implications of that, such as difficulties finding employment in the future.

5.1.2. Eligibility

Interviewees and programme documentation described how Op Divan is aimed at young people under the age of 18. While NYP's MI suggests that the majority (87%) of participants are male and between 13 and 18 years old, it also identifies a very small number (4%) over the age of 18, and a very small number of participants under the age of criminal responsibility.

There was a lack of agreement about another eligibility criterion, which was under what circumstances young people would be eligible for Op Divan; specifically, if young people were **talking** about using knives, even if they were not suspected of carrying one.

Further clarity around these ambiguities is important to ensure consistent delivery of the programme, and to make sure the intervention is made available to all those who are eligible and who could benefit from it. Clarity around age cutoffs, and whether young people talking about knives should receive the intervention, needs to begin at the senior police leadership level and cascade to operational staff.

5.1.3. Transferability

Op Divan was adopted by the MPS in April 2019 ('Op Met Divan') and rolled out across the Bromley, Croydon and Sutton BCU. At the time of writing, other police

forces were potentially interested in implementing an Op Divan model in their force areas too.

Police interviewees were of the view that an early prevention focus can be replicated in any force, both culturally and practically. If the number of referrals in a given force became unmanageable, they could be prioritised by grading the intelligence received (discussed in 5.2.3) and taking forward the most serious cases.

‘I think the ethos of Op Divan of early intervention and prevention and not waiting for the crime to happen, but getting in there early, that can be replicated anywhere. If they [a police force] are inundated with intelligence, then they can look at the most serious cases.’

(Senior police leadership)

An important consideration in seeking to transfer Op Divan to other forces (and in sustaining the approach more generally) is how the approach is dependent on the personal qualities of those delivering it. These include the passion, commitment and dedication of programme leadership, and the skills and attributes of officers facilitating meetings with young people. Relevant skills for frontline officers include being patient, having a supportive and relaxed manner, and earning the trust of the young people they supported. However, these qualities are potentially difficult to guarantee given that all PCs and PCSOs can now facilitate meetings with young people (a shift from when the intervention was first implemented). Force-wide training in these communication skills might be worth considering²⁴.

5.2. Interviewees’ recommendations for future delivery of Op Divan

Interviewees had a number of recommendations in relation to future delivery of Op Divan, whether in NYP or beyond:

²⁴ Findings about the importance of the personal qualities of those delivering Op Divan align with the procedural justice model, which suggests that the police should be able to help reduce crime by ‘winning hearts and minds’. A randomised controlled trial tested the impact of procedural justice training on the quality of interactions between the police and crime victims in Greater Manchester, with findings indicating that the training had a positive impact on outcomes (Wheller et al., 2013).

- **Ensuring the referral process, allocation of cases to officers and the meeting with the young person is as simple to deliver as possible**, to maximise officers' and partners' engagement and to ensure young people do not 'fall through the cracks'. One example was a change that the new intervention lead had implemented, which was YOT officers being able to carry out meetings with young people without a police officer present.

'You will only put other officers off if it isn't a clear and simple process and you're not bogging them down with policy and procedure, especially at this time where everybody is strapped [...] I just think it's simplifying those policies and procedures is the big one, because it doesn't have to be overly complicated, because it is quite a simple thing to do.'

(Senior police leadership)

- **Improving awareness and engagement among other partners**, such as the Early Help Service, Children's Services, and a wider range of schools (primary, SEND, private schools and pupil referral units). As discussed in chapter 5, awareness-raising meetings were being planned for Early Help Service staff and NYP school liaison officers, with a longer-term aim for the Early Help Service to be able to deliver Op Divan meetings without police involvement.
- Due to its perceived success, suggestions were made by all staff groups to **broaden its scope to include different offences** (low-level drug use, peer-on-peer abuse, theft) **and different demographics, including adults** where they have no previous convictions. Using Op Divan with adults was seen as 'common sense' by police interviewees, as 'early intervention isn't just about children'. The NYP MI indicates that a very small number of adults have already received the intervention, though this was not raised in the qualitative interviews.

'But if you've got perhaps somebody who's vulnerable, who doesn't have any previous convictions, and information is that they're carrying a knife, actually why do they feel the need [to carry one]? [...] Those may be occasions where we might consider it [Op Divan], but that's in its extremely early stages where we said, 'If we need something, what would it look like? Is

it feasible? Is it proportionate to do that?’ Certainly, when you’re talking about adults.’

(Senior police leadership)

However, the suggestion of extending Op Divan to adults should be explored with caution, given the success of the programme with young people has not been proven.

5.3. Evaluation challenges and limitations

Both experimental and quasi-experimental approaches to measuring the impact of Op Divan were ruled out during the scoping study. As such, it has not been possible to evaluate whether Op Divan has a causal impact on outcomes, and therefore to draw conclusions about ‘what works’ to reduce knife crime. Light-touch quantitative analysis of Op Divan’s MI was feasible, based on the 84 young people referred to Op Divan between June 2018 and September 2019. Suggestions from the research team about further MI that NYP could collect include:

- other demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity
- details around the support that young people were referred into
- more detail about the outcome of young people’s involvement with Op Divan, such as whether they had continued to carry a knife (this could then be captured at specific time points following the meetings, for example three months, six months, 12 months)
- identifiers to enable data linkage, for example to the Police National Computer (PNC) – this could facilitate longitudinal analysis in the future

The findings in this report show the range and diversity of views and experiences among those interviewed for the qualitative process evaluation. However, aside from staff, interviews were carried out with just one young person and two parents due to recruitment challenges. While these interviews provided valuable insight, the evaluation clearly did not capture the full range of young people and parents’ experiences. This is an obvious limitation of the evaluation. It is also worth noting that staff interviewees generally held positive views of Op Divan, which means more neutral or negative views and experiences have been captured to a lesser extent.

6. Conclusions

Op Divan is an early intervention programme that aims to educate and support young people under the age of 18, where there is information or intelligence to suggest they may be carrying a knife or other weapon. NYP, alongside the YJS/YOTs, has delivered Op Divan since May 2018.

Op Divan involves a face-to-face meeting between a young person and a NYP school liaison officer (PC or PCSO), NYP police officer (PC or PSCO) or YOT officer (depending on whether the young person is currently involved with the YJS for other offences or has had contact with the YJS before), where an Official Notice is given, for educational purposes only. The length and content of the meetings varies according to the individual needs of the young person – it might focus solely on the risks and consequences of knife crime, or could branch out into broader areas such as bullying, substance misuse or appropriate use of social media. Interviewees spoke positively about these meetings, and how officers' softer skills were critical to their success. The perceived need for these softer skills has implications for the transferability of Op Divan. It potentially poses a training need across NYP as all PCs and PCSOs are now expected to be able to deliver meetings with young people.

The intended impacts of Op Divan are to: keep young people safe, create culture change around knife carrying and prevent criminalisation of young people. A robust impact evaluation of Op Divan was not feasible at this time, so evidence on impact comes from the perspectives of interviewees from the qualitative process evaluation (acknowledging the small sample size). Interviewees spoke very positively about Op Divan. They were confident that young people had not carried a knife or other weapon since receiving Op Divan and so considered it a success (with a small number of exceptions). This was based on what they knew of intelligence received by schools and/or incidents recorded by the police, but this was not systematically reviewed in Niche or formally recorded in Op Divan's MI. Routinely recording young people's outcomes in the MI would fill a clear information gap and potentially allow for impact evaluation in the future.

Interviewees in the evaluation highlighted Op Divan's simplicity, in terms of both referral process and delivery. There was wider support within NYP and local schools for early intervention programmes, and the perceived similarity of Op Divan to

initiatives such as Outcome 21 (a resolution in youth produced sexual imagery cases, where the making and sharing is not considered abusive), encouraged police engagement and partner buy-in. Op Divan operates within existing resources (it does not receive external funding and there are no dedicated Op Divan officers) and was therefore considered 'self-sufficient' by interviewees. As such, they believed Op Divan represented a 'big cost-saving exercise', on the assumption that it is effective and prevents (re)offending and its associated costs.

Aspects of Op Divan's delivery have changed since its implementation, including the expectation that all PCs and PCSOs can deliver meetings (as discussed above), and that police officers no longer attend meetings with YOT officers. These decisions were made to reduce burden on a small group of officers, increase delivery capacity and maximise flexibility. NYP is also currently supporting the Early Help Service to deliver Op Divan meetings without police involvement. These changes to staffing and capacity could facilitate greater take-up of Op Divan in the future, which in turn would also have implications for the feasibility of robust impact evaluation going forward.

Op Divan's ongoing adaptation and development is a strength of NYP and one that other forces taking on Op Divan should replicate. Another area for NYP's consideration is ensuring clarity and consistency around Op Divan's eligibility criteria, given the ambiguities highlighted in this evaluation.

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8. Appendix A – Official Notice

Carrying a Knife or Weapon

Is it worth the risk?



If you carry a knife or weapon to protect yourself or make yourself feel safe **YOU** are committing a crime – whether you intend to use it or not. **YOU** are also more likely to become a victim of crime as your own knife/ weapon can be used against **YOU** or **Someone Else**

If you are worried or feel you are in danger, tell a trusted adult (family member, teacher, Police officer, PCSO).

We will listen and help you feel safe.

Knife and/or Weapon involved crimes include.....

Carrying or trying to buy a knife under the age of 18

- Threatening someone with a knife/weapon
- Being in possession of a knife (including folding knives if the blade is 3 inches/7.62 cm or more)
- Murder, manslaughter or assaults using a knife/weapon
- Robbery and burglary using a knife/weapon

The Consequences could be.....

- Serious injuries or death
- Criminal Record
- Imprisonment
- Restrictions on employment and travel

DO NOT carry a knife and/or weapon. If you are thinking about it, concerned about yours or someone else's safety, or have been threatened then please contact the Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency. You can also ask to speak with a Force Youth Officer, Youth Justice Officer or contact your local Prevention Service Worker.

We can support you, provide personal safety advice to help you feel safe, ensure communities are safe and prevents **YOU** from entering the criminal justice system.

Remember - the law is clear - if you choose to carry a weapon, you put your future in danger. If you don't take it with you, it won't be used. If you are caught illegally carrying a knife or weapon, including a gun, even an imitation one, you will be arrested and prosecuted. There's no excuse for saying it was for your own protection or you were carrying it for someone else.

It is illegal to carry an article with a blade or point or an offensive weapon in a public place

The Prevention of Crime Act 1953:

Prohibits the carrying of any offensive weapon in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse. A public place includes private premises to which the public have access. An offensive weapon is defined as any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person, or intended by the person for such use. These include items designed to cause serious injury, for example knuckledusters, hand claws and certain Martial Arts equipment, or those which can be easily concealed, including swordsticks and batons. Maximum penalty: Six months imprisonment and/or £5000 fine.

Having or Possessing an offensive weapon or bladed article in a public place

Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 provides for the offence of possession of a bladed or pointed article in a public place. Any person who has an article to which this section applies with them in a public place shall be guilty of an offence.

Possession of an offensive weapon or bladed article on school premises

Under section 139A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 it is an offence for a person to have with them on school premises:

- An article to which section 139 of the 1988 Act applies (i.e. an article with a blade or sharp point other than a small folding pocketknife); or
- An offensive weapon within the meaning of section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953

Offensive Weapons Act 1996

This makes it an offence to sell to anyone under the age of 18 any knife, knife blade or razor blade, axe or any other article which has a blade or which is sharply pointed, and which is made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person.

Stop and Search

The law gives police officers powers to stop and search you, including anything you are carrying, any vehicle you are in and can use reasonable force to do this. This includes searching for bladed articles, knives and any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to any person, or intended by the person for such use. Advice for young people and parents is available: www.stop-watch.org

To report an incident or information please **contact 101 or 999** in an emergency.

The following advice and support is available:

www.childline.org.uk info-advice

www.knifefree.co.uk

www.supportingvictims.org

crimestoppers-uk.org



01609 643100



9. Appendix B – Qualitative methodology

9.1. Topic guides

The main headings and sub-headings from the topic guides used for interviews with strategic and operational staff and partner agencies, and with the young person interviewed, are provided below.

Staff interview topic guide

Introduction

- Introduce self and NatCen, and who is funding the evaluation (College of Policing)
- Introduce research, aims of evaluation and interview process
- Overview of topics to discuss
- Explain voluntary nature of interview
- Explain reporting process
- Length
- Permission to record interview
- Confidentiality, anonymity and potential caveats, including disclosure
- Check if any questions before starting
- Consent

Background

- Participant role
- Brief overview of how participant became involved with Op Divan
- Nature and profile of local area
- Crime types, especially among younger offenders
- Key priorities for knives/other weapons/crime reduction/offender management

Early understandings

- Early awareness and understanding of Op Divan
- Initial/early views of Op Divan

Set-up and implementation

- Role in set-up and implementation
- Their role/broader awareness of how Op Divan was initially set up
- Funding and resources available for Op Divan
- Training and guidance offered/received
- Governance – overview of how Op Divan is managed
- Partnership working
- Any other key facilitators/barriers to set-up

Delivery

- Intelligence process
 - Intelligence about young people
 - Process of checking and grading intelligence
 - Identifying potential eligibility and suitability for Op Divan
 - Panel meetings
 - Pathways/interventions considered that are part of Op Divan
 - Other interventions/pathways considered instead of/in addition to Op Divan
- Initial engagement
 - Initial engagement(s) with young person during school/home visits
 - How Op Divan is introduced
 - Nature of discussion
 - Facilitators and barriers to initial engagement
- Continuous engagement and support
 - Educational sessions with children
 - Targeted visits to schools (eg, to show carrying a knife is a problem)
 - Engagement with wider networks, including family members
 - Relationships with partners, including schools and headteachers
 - Length of engagement/provision of support
 - Range of delivery partners involved (if not already covered)

Perceived outcomes and impacts

- Key outcomes Op Divan aims to achieve
- What constitutes a successful/unsuccessful outcome for
 - Early intervention
 - Awareness and education for young people and their family
 - Possession of knife/other weapon/knife crime/reoffending rates
 - Preventing criminalisation of young people
 - Wider society, including victims and local communities
- Perceived impact of Op Divan
 - On staff
 - Other criminal justice system stakeholders and partners
 - On young people taking part in Op Divan
- What part(s) of the intervention underpin impacts on young people
- External factors underpinning impact
- Wider impacts
- Facilitators and barriers to achieving impact
- Facilitators and barriers to a young person staying engaged with Op Divan
- Alternatives and added value

Recommendations

- Reflections on whether/how Op Divan is currently meeting expectations
- Is it targeting the right people?
- Views on sustainability
- Lessons for implementing and delivering Op Divan going forward
- Any suggestions for improvements

Next steps and close

- Final closing comments – anything else to raise
- Any questions

- Thank participant and reaffirm confidentiality and anonymity, including any caveats

Young person interview topic guide

Introduction

- Introduce self and NatCen, and who is funding the evaluation (College of Policing)
- Introduce research, aims of evaluation and interview process
- Overview of topics to discuss
- Explain voluntary nature of interview
- Explain reporting process
- Length
- Permission to record interview
- Confidentiality, anonymity and potential caveats, including disclosure
- Check if any questions before starting
- Consent

Background

- Who they live with and where
- Where they go to school
- What they like to do when not in school

Referral pathway

- How they first heard about Op Divan
- How they were invited to take up Op Divan
- Information given
 - Content, ease of understanding, any gaps
 - Information about why they were being told about Op Divan
- Views and expectations at this stage

Experience of delivery

- Their experience of Op Divan
 - What happened (conversations, actions taken)
 - Who was involved (the police, local authority, school, parents, peers) and how
 - When the intervention happened and duration
 - Understanding of requirements, such as what they needed to do as part of the intervention
 - Support or guidance offered/received
- Views about their experience
- Views and attitudes towards partners involved in Op Divan

Perceived impacts

- Impacts of Op Divan on them
- Which element(s) of the intervention were perceived to lead to these impacts
- External factors underpinning impact
- Wider impacts

Recommendations

- Overall reflections on Op Divan
- What works well/less well
- Comparison to other interventions/support (if applicable)
- What would it look like/how would it work in an ideal world

Next steps and close

- Final closing comments – anything else to raise
- Any questions
- Thank participant and reaffirm confidentiality and anonymity, including any caveats

9.2. Analysis

Interviews were managed and analysed using the Framework approach developed by NatCen. Key topics emerging from the interviews were identified through familiarisation with the transcripts to develop a thematic framework for data management. All members of the NatCen research team were given a thorough briefing about the analytical framework and a detailed description of what should be included in each sub-theme, to ensure consistency of approach.

The Framework method has been embedded into NVivo version 10. The software enabled the summarised data from the research to be linked to the verbatim transcript. This approach meant that each part of every transcript that was relevant to a particular theme was noted, ordered and accessible. The final analytic stage involved working through the charted data, drawing out the range of experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences and interrogating the data to seek to explain emergent patterns and findings.

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