

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

**West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit Evaluation: Serious
Youth Violence pathfinder**

Interim findings - Summary Report



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Introduction

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is working to support frontline service improvement through grants and activity that target system-wide challenges. This involves a 'pathfinder' approach whereby local authorities and partners can pilot, develop, and disseminate whole system solutions. The YJB has funded a pathfinder programmes in the West Midlands, overseen by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (WMVRU) in conjunction with the seven West Midlands (Police & Crime Commissioner area) Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

In September 2020 First Class Foundation were commissioned, through a competitive tender process, to deliver their Kitchen Table Talks programme across the seven YOTs. First Class Foundation describe Kitchen Table Talks as a culturally competent, psychologically informed, peer to peer outreach, engagement, and support programme. The aim is to support and work closely with the parents of young people involved with the Youth Justice System and to act a bridge between the parents and the YOS. The service is designed to support parents of those most at risk of reoffending, by helping them to understand the youth justice system, being a sounding board and relaying information back to the YOS to help the service better understand and support the parents.



An evaluation was commissioned to investigate *if* and *how* the development and delivery of Peer Support networks for parents is:

- working towards reducing offending/reoffending and reducing the seriousness of offences
- improving the quality of relationships between parent/carer and the child
- influencing parents' confidence, knowledge, wellbeing, parenting style, engagement

The [first evaluation report](#) was completed in March 2021 and included a number of practical recommendations. This summary interim report presents key findings to date and provides some updated recommendations.

Summary of key findings

- Impact on parents

At the start of their engagement with Kitchen Table Talks and at six-week intervals, parents are asked to complete a questionnaire robust and widely validated measures of wellbeing and perceived confidence with parenting. There is a small amount of data available here, but so far this tells us that:

- there is an increase in participants' **wellbeing** during engagement with Kitchen Table Talks
- there is an increase in participants' perceived **confidence with parenting** during engagement with Kitchen Table Talks

Kitchen Table Talks repositions parents in the context of youth justice, creating a more **constructive relationship** that promotes enhanced engagement and positive outcomes for children, parents, communities and youth justice practice. It views engagement with **parents as assets**, rather than interpreting parents as a problem in need of behavioural change. It also assumes the changing role of parents in youth justice originates with parents and not externally applied criteria about what a 'good parent' might look like. It draws on and develops parental knowledge and skills to **empower and enrich**.

'It's not like you're on a parenting order and if you don't comply, x, y and z is going to happen, it's a different way of working. The parents buy in. One parent has said that they can just have a rant with them - there's no comeback from that. It feels safe talking to them' (YOT staff)

Qualitative data from six parents and two parent ambassadors found an increase in knowledge about the Youth Justice system as well as **better relationships with both professionals and their young people**.

'things have changed with my son, because we then learned to communicate...or communication was much better between us because I started to understand him more from hearing the other parents talk and understanding that, you know, that your teenage years are a little bit different. So, my communication, the way I did it, started to change between us. I also found I was not afraid any more to say to another parent "I understand how you feel....this has happened to me"....I became, as I said, more confident in myself' (Parent)

Becoming an ambassador is positive in terms of the personal growth of the parent ambassador, but also positive for Kitchen Table Talks. Parent ambassadors bring expertise and understanding and the **legitimacy** of having 'insider knowledge' as service users.

- Working relationships between Kitchen Table Talks and the YOTs

Service **integration and good working relationships are vital** for effective, appropriate referrals. When Kitchen Table Talks is treated as ‘another service’ in a context of abundant, complex and varied service provision landscape there is evidence of busy practitioners struggling to integrate this additional provision into a busy, pressured workload. Instead, integration of Kitchen Table Talks staff into review meetings - as found with Dudley YOT - meant busy practitioners did not need to remember to mention and enact referral processes while dealing with a range of complex and sometimes serious issues. Instead, Kitchen Table Talks accessed full information on a number of parents, children and their needs in one YOT visit.

‘it made sense to have (Kitchen Table Talks) there because they could talk about the project and what the offer was, and how they would try and engage with us as a service, and engage with the parents of the children as well, so it was worthwhile having them there’ (YOT staff)

At smaller locations, such as Walsall YOT, lower levels of resourcing mean smaller scale processes and lower levels of resourcing, suggesting it likely to be necessary that Kitchen Table Talks **integration is nuanced locally**. For example, the presence of a business manager at Dudley YOT made it possible for a dedicated member of administrative staff to liaise with Kitchen Table Talks about involvement timings. In other locations, parenting workers served as the contact point, with role differences likely to present different opportunities in terms of developing a predictable, high quality relationship with Kitchen Table Talks.

However, the research completed for this report reveals a disparity between the qualitative data and the quantitative data. Practitioners report that they are referring most, if not all, of their parents to Kitchen Table Talks, and particularly parents from BAME groups, resonating with the need to engage with, and elevate the voices of marginalised groups in youth justice (YJB 2021). However, **referral rates are very low in some areas** (see below).

- Referrals

The Kitchen Table Talks team have provided us with information on referrals to date (as of 22/09/21). At the last reporting stage (23/03/21) 66 referrals had been made and in the last six months 72 referrals have been made.

Table 1: Referral data

Total No. of referrals so far: 138 (some have gone through exit strategy)							
YOT	Sandwell	Dudley	Walsall	Wolverhampton	Birmingham	Coventry	Solihull
No. of referrals total *no. engaged	37, 22*	18, 10*	7, 3*	11, 4*	23, 10*	19, 16*	7, 1*
No. of referrals since March	4	8	2	4	21	14	2
Parent's gender (female/male)	F: 55 M: 4	F: 26 M: 2	F: 9 M: 1	F: 14 M: 1	F: 23 M:	F: 19 M:	F: 7 M:
Parent's Ethnicity							
White British	13	1		2	1	8	3
White Irish	2						
White English	12	14	1	3	4	10	2
Pakistani	4		1	1	1		1
Black Caribbean	5		2	1	6		
Black African	3	2	1		5		
Polish	2						
Slovakian	1						
Somalin	2						
Indian	5		1				
Any other black ethnic group	1	1				1	
White & Black Caribbean	1			1		1	1
Mixed background		1					
Prefer not to say	1						
Concerns highlighted at referral about child	Anti-social behaviour					43	
	Truancy					9	
	Gone missing					23	
	Association with perpetrators of crime					36	
	Behaviour concern					63	
	Substance/Alcohol misuse					36	
	Special Needs					11	
Concerns highlighted at referral about parent/carer	Anti-social behaviour					8	
	Mental health concerns					12	
	Domestic disturbances					27	
	Chaotic lifestyle					14	
	Lack of guidance/supervision over child(ren)					36	
	Substance/Alcohol misuse					12	
	Lack of confidence in parenting					32	

Recommendations and actions

Data

- The Kitchen Table Talks team have been highly responsive in providing data quickly now that a Data Sharing Agreement is in place. We thank them for this. There are some gaps with the data that we are exploring with the Kitchen Table Talks team
- We recommend that we and Kitchen Table Talks agree a detailed plan to enable the collection of more qualitative data

Delivery

- Co-opt parent ambassadors as co-producers of Kitchen Table Talks in any future projects. This level of service user engagement would enhance the efficiency and impact of Kitchen Table Talks, drawing on the benefit of their expertise both as service users and as parent ambassadors, and enhancing the parent voice
- Consider encouraging all parents to become parent ambassadors after they no longer need to use the service, to enhance Kitchen Table Talks but also to complete the journey for the parents

Referrals

- YOTs should ensure that the Kitchen Table Talks offer is open to all parents, particularly those parents deemed to be 'high-need'
- Kitchen Table Talks practitioners to continue to focus on promoting the project and disseminate the benefits of parent engagement in relation to relationships between YOT practitioners and parents, parents and young people and, ultimately, the potential for a reduction in criminal behaviour
- The Dudley referral model, outlined in this report, represents good practice and should be shared with other YOT locations to promote effective information exchange and well targeted referrals, while limiting additional expectations and pressure on YOT practitioners
- Birmingham YOT has made impressive progress with referrals and learning from this should be shared with all YOTs
- YOTs should revisit the recommendations on referrals from the [previous evaluation report](#) and also consider simple means to share good practice (e.g. informal discussions, WhatsApp groups)

About the evaluation

The [Institute for Community Research and Development](#) (ICRD) at the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Birmingham were commissioned to evaluate *if* and *how* the development and delivery of Peer Support networks for parents is:

- working towards reduction in offending/reoffending and reducing the seriousness of offences
- improving the quality of relationships between parent/carer and the child
- influencing parents' confidence, knowledge, wellbeing, parenting style, engagement

We are working with parents and YOT staff to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and the impact of the programme. We are also exploring the way the project has been developed, implemented, and managed. This element will help the continued development of the project, and identify any barriers to success.

We are working with the seven YOTs, making use of data they already collect, to understand the impact of the programme on young people whose parents are taking part in the programme.

Data collection to date:

- Interviews have been conducted with staff from all YOTs involved in the programme and with two members of the Kitchen Table Talks team
- Focus groups involving six parent users of Kitchen Table Talks and interviews with two parent ambassadors
- Data meetings held with each of the YOTs. Now that data sharing agreements are in place with the WMVRU, we are in the process of accessing YOT data for detailed analysis
- Updated referral data has been received from Kitchen Table Talks
- Quantitative data from 29 parents: validated measures of wellbeing and perceived confidence with parenting, completed at the start and six-week intervals during parent's engagement with Kitchen Table Talks

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