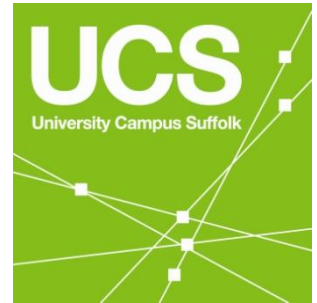


UNIVERSITY CAMPUS SUFFOLK



# ‘Enhanced Triage’ an Integrated Decision Making Model

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Evaluation of the Suffolk Pilot

Mark Manning

November 2015



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Mark Manning

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## Executive Summary

This report is based on evidence gathered as part of an evaluation of Enhanced Triage (ET) which was undertaken by University Campus Suffolk (UCS) between January and December 2015. The evaluation demonstrates considerable support for the implementation of ET throughout the county of Suffolk. There is clear evidence that through ET and the integrated decision making process, disposal decisions concerning young offenders are more consistent and through the assessment process, more likely to deliver improved outcomes for young offenders as well as victims of crime and the wider community.

- ◆ Universal support for Enhanced Triage both in principle and practice, expressed by police officers, Youth Offending Team (YOT) practitioners, young offenders and their parents/carers.
- ◆ The use of ET helps to address underlying individual factors that Community Resolutions (CRs) are able to identify.
- ◆ Allocating responsibility of the Victim Officer to a seconded police officer received universal praise from practitioners as well as increasing the self-reported satisfaction levels of victims of crime resulting from effective Restorative Justice (RJ) processes.
- ◆ The seconded police officers attached to ET received considerable praise from police officers and YOT practitioners for their willingness to deliver ET effectively and increasing knowledge of the process.
- ◆ Young people and their parents/carers perceive that through ET, young people are provided better opportunities to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and reduce reoffending.
- ◆ Police Officers reported a lack of formal training in ET.
- ◆ There appears to be no identifiable, direct financial benefit of delivering ET, however, the programme provides a potential for considerable improvements in life opportunities thereby reducing risk and motivation to commit crime.
- ◆ No young person who received a triage intervention at level 1 has reoffended, thereby reducing the number of 'First Time Entrants' (FTEs) into the Criminal Justice System.
- ◆ The reoffending rate of those who received a triage intervention at level 2 or a caution is reported to be lower than the national average when compared to figures published by the Youth Justice Board.
- ◆ Young people and their parents/ carers reported concerns regarding the lack of clarity relating to the ET process and the voluntary nature of the interventions. This perception was supported by some police officers and YOT practitioners.
- ◆ Clear evidence demonstrated concerning consistency and efficiency in the decision making process.

Table 1: Glossary of terms

<b>Community Resolution</b>	<b>CR</b>	An informal out of court disposal used by the police
<b>Challenge 4 Change</b>	<b>C4C</b>	The triage model currently in use by the commissioners outside the pilot area.
<b>Criminal Justice System</b>	<b>CJS</b>	The wide definition of the system of justice in England and Wales with responsibility for the administration of justice for adult and youth offenders.
<b>Enhanced Triage</b>	<b>ET</b>	A diversionary and integrated decision making model for young offenders operationalised in the pilot area by Suffolk Constabulary and Suffolk Youth Offending Service, and the subject of this evaluation.
<b>Suffolk Youth Offending Service</b>	<b>SYOS</b>	The joint commissioner of this evaluation
<b>The Durham Model</b>		A triage model for young offenders developed by the County of Durham Youth Offending Service.
<b>County of Durham Youth Offending Service</b>	<b>CODYOS</b>	
<b>Youth Justice System</b>	<b>YJS</b>	The system of justice in England and Wales responsible for the administration of youth justice. It includes the police, youth offending teams and the courts.
<b>First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System</b>	<b>FTEs</b>	National Performance Indicator measured against an annually agreed local target. A young person receiving a formal statutory disposal or outcome for the first time counts as a 'First

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		Time Entrant to the Youth Justice system'
<b>Out of Court Disposals</b>	OoCD	These are comprised of statutory and non-statutory disposals. The non-statutory disposal is a Community Resolution. The statutory disposals are a Youth Caution and a Youth Conditional Caution.

## 1. Introduction

This report details the findings of a qualitative research evaluation of ‘Enhanced Triage’ (ET), an integrated decision making model piloted in the north of Suffolk by the Suffolk Youth Offending Service (SYOS) in partnership with the Suffolk Constabulary. The pilot was conducted between 1<sup>st</sup> February and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015. The evaluation, jointly commissioned by SYOS and the Suffolk Constabulary, was conducted during the same period by iSEED at University Campus Suffolk (UCS).

The use of the title ‘Enhanced Triage’ is actually ambiguous because ET, through the support of the commissioners, incorporates a number of features such as, arrangements to improve the decision making process in respect of young offenders by the use of joint decision making between the police and the youth offending service; provision of a wider range of support services available to young offenders, and to make more effective use of restorative justice processes. Generally, the use of the term ‘triage’ refers to locally agreed partnerships between the police and youth offending teams, where non-statutory intervention strategies are operationalised and focussed on diverting young offenders away from further offending and the formal Youth Justice System. Central to the use of triage is the involvement of the victims of crime and the use of restorative justice processes (RJ) to encourage young offenders to take responsibility for their offending behaviour and to make some reparation for the harm caused to the victim and the wider community. However, triage is not a disposal option *per se* and should only be considered as a voluntary feature of any disposal option from the range of ‘Out of Court Disposals’ (OoCD) available to decision makers.

According to the Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board- *Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services on the use of ‘Youth Out-of-Court disposals’* (2013, p.3-6)<sup>1</sup>; there are five possible disposal options available to decision makers in respect of young offenders under the age of 18 years: *take no further action; Community resolution; Youth Caution; Youth Conditional Caution and charge to appear before the Youth Court*. It is suggested that “*Out of Court disposals aim to ensure outcomes are both proportionate to the crime committed and effective in reducing the risk of further offending*”. The guide is clear that the police, as decision makers, can only make disposal decisions in respect of summary and either-way offences for first time offending by young people. For subsequent offending, disposal decisions should be made jointly by the police and the Youth Offending Service, and this is a feature of the new Enhanced Triage process. In respect of young people accused of indictable offences, *The Crown Prosecution Service* remains the primary decision maker.

ET is actually an evolution of an earlier intervention strategy for young offenders operationalised in Suffolk, named *Challenge for Change* (C4C), which was evaluated by UCS in 2013<sup>2</sup>. Both ET and C4C are also similar in form to a number of other triage schemes including one devised by the County of Durham Youth Offending Service (CODYOS) – the Durham model. The use of triage and diversionary strategies within the Youth Justice

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<sup>1</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2013). *Youth Out-Of- Court Disposals, Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services*. London:YJB.

<sup>2</sup> Bond, E. and Agnew, S. (2013). ‘Everyone deserves a second chance’ Findings from a qualitative review of the Challenge 4 Change (C4C) Intervention Programme, Ipswich: iSeed.

System (YJS) has widely demonstrated beneficial outcomes for young offenders, not only by diverting them away from the youth courts, but also by taking appropriate steps to address the underlying causes of the offending behaviour. In addition, the Durham model is claimed to have demonstrated significant cost savings for the CODYOS, the police and the wider Criminal Justice system (CJS)<sup>3</sup>. It was hoped this pilot would achieve a similar outcome. As such, in accordance with instructions from the commissioners, this evaluation of ET includes a relative cost analysis and consideration of cost savings as well as a consideration of improvements in efficiency and better outcomes for young offenders.

## 1.1 Background to ET

The intention of introducing ET in Suffolk was to resolve some perceived operational deficiencies arising from C4C, and additionally, to address a new problem created by the [perceived] inappropriate use of *Community Resolutions* (CRs) by Suffolk Constabulary. Community Resolutions were formally recognised in the new disposal framework following the enactment of the *Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (2012)* (LASPO), as the only non-statutory, disposal option for the police to deal with predominately low-level crimes. As already stated, the use of triage is also recognised as a locally agreed non-statutory intervention available to support the other disposal options. The use of Community Resolutions had been a cause for growing concern due to the fact that their use potentially provided multiple contacts between young offenders and Suffolk Constabulary following alleged criminal activity, with no effective intervention utilised to understand the causes, nor ameliorate this behaviour. In essence, there were concerns that the use of community resolutions led to non-referral of young offenders to SYOS and opportunities were being missed to enquire into, and intervene in this offending behaviour. It needs to be acknowledged that this problem was not unique to Suffolk. Nonetheless, it was perceived by the commissioners that in Suffolk, the inappropriate or over use of CRs and the lack of appropriate referral of young offenders to SYOS, had the capacity to undermine existing diversionary programmes, thereby, producing less beneficial outcomes for young people, and may also have been less cost effective to the wider YJS in Suffolk by failing to address the potential for re-offending. This led to the Enhanced Triage pilot.

The new ET model proposed that police officers engaged in the pilot area would administer one CR disposal to a young offender aged between 10 and 18 years. Thereafter, any consideration of further out of court disposals for those who reoffend, would be referred to SYOS and a new *integrated decision process* for a decision to be made on the most appropriate disposal option. This new process is wholly consistent with guidance from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) (2013), *Youth Out-of-Court Disposals: Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services*<sup>4</sup> that lays out the protocols, which should be in place between the police and the YOS for joint decision-making. It was intended that practitioners from SYOS would make a detailed assessment of the cases referred to them in partnership with a seconded police officer, and then make a joint decision on the most appropriate disposal option. Outcomes from the joint decision making process could include taking no further action,

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2012). Integrated pre-court disposal programme by County Durham Youth Offending Service. London: MOJ.

<sup>4</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2013). Youth Out-Of- Court Disposals, Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services. London:YJB.



referring the matter back to the police for further investigation and consideration of a prosecution, application of a statutory Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution, or the voluntary engagement of young people on the locally agreed, non-statutory triage programme. The YJB guide (2013, p.12) also suggests “*Any out of court disposal should have a foundation of solid and accountable decision-making to ensure transparency of the process and consistency of application. It is vital that all decisions, and importantly, the rationale behind them, are recorded within the custody record or within the YOT file*”. To assist decision makers, a Youth Gravity Factor Matrix, has been devised by the former ‘Association of Chief Police Officers’, as a guide for deciding the most appropriate option. This guide also considers whether the disposal option reflects ‘public interest’ principles as well as the sufficiency of the evidence. For those who voluntarily engaged with triage, restorative justice (RJ) and other appropriate interventions, would be utilised to increase the young offender’s understanding of the impact of their offending behaviour, whilst also addressing the contributory factors which may have led to this behaviour. Whilst voluntary engagement is a requirement of all OoCD options, this evaluation has considered how this is operationalised in practice.

The ET pilot implemented a 2-tier framework formulated for the aforementioned C4C pilot. This framework was comprised of two levels of intervention following a risk and needs assessment:

Table 2: Levels of Intervention

**Level 1 intervention:**

<p>Generally consisted of 2 meetings with a YOS worker/ practitioner that lasted approximately one hour each; however, this was increased to four meetings within a month if deemed appropriate.</p>	<p>Level 1 is predominately deployed for less serious offending where there are clear elements of support for the young person already in place. For example, intensive familial support and where the initial screening assessment indicates that this is a sufficient intervention. The focus of the level one intervention is on Restorative Justice.</p>
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**Level 2 intervention:**

<p>Consisted of a 3-month programme of voluntary engagement with the young person aimed at those with more complex needs and who may have committed a more serious offence.</p>	<p>Level 2 interventions provided a more holistic approach to tackling wider issues than just the immediate offending behaviour and it would be expected that family members would also be a focus of the intervention. Exit strategies were developed to ensure there was support in place once the intervention was completed.</p>
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The evaluation of C4C in 2013<sup>1</sup> demonstrated considerable support for this 2-tier approach as an effective mechanism for tackling offending behaviour amongst young people. Importantly, because it demonstrated the capacity to address the underlying factors that influenced delinquent behaviour, whilst avoiding criminalizing young people unnecessarily

and contributing to the First Time Entrants (FTE) into the formal Youth Justice System Figures. However, in addition to operational deficiencies, some other weaknesses were also highlighted which ET sought to address. Amongst these concerns were:

- ◆ Many young people and their parents/carers felt that police officers had a limited understanding of C4C and only provided a basic outline; many professionals mirrored this perception.
- ◆ The motivation of Parents/Carers was also questioned as their primary focus appeared to be avoiding a criminal record for young people, rather than a long-term focus of diverting young people away from crime

In order to address these earlier concerns and to evaluate the effectiveness of ET, with the support of the commissioners, this new evaluation has gathered rich qualitative data concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the model from a variety of relevant stakeholders. This qualitative data is supported by quantitative financial data provided by the commissioners and analysed by the research team. It was envisaged that this approach would enable a more detailed consideration of whether the new model is also cost effective, and in order to enhance the evaluation, the financial data was also shared with Ben Estep from the *Centre for Justice Innovation*, London. Ben was involved in the development of a model to calculate cost avoidance as well as cost savings to all agencies delivering YJ interventions, and his analysis is reported elsewhere.

## 1.2 The evolution of Triage as a Youth Justice Diversionary Strategy

The use of Triage schemes as diversionary strategies for young offenders, operated as partnerships between the police and youth offending teams, are not a new idea. Indeed, a report published by the Home Office (2012)<sup>5</sup> detailed an evaluation of Triage schemes operated in 7 areas of England and Wales. The report was supportive of Triage in principal, whilst also highlighting challenges for YOTs to fund these schemes without impacting on service delivery in other areas of their work. The use of Triage was deemed most effective in areas where there was a good working relationship between the police and the YOS, and when they shared a 'strategic goal' of diverting FTEs' away from the YJS. This evaluation has considered whether this shared goal is demonstrated in Suffolk and the findings are clear that there is a strong and positive relationship between the commissioners in support of ET. It is, therefore, clear that evaluations such as these have already demonstrated the benefits of the police and YOTs working together to make appropriate decisions on disposals for young offenders. These benefits include disposals, which also, and importantly, encompass the views of victims, supported by RJ practices, which enquire into the causes of the offending behaviour. This is important because in 2010, the political and legislative landscape changed and introduced new considerations that highlighted the importance of strong partnership working and privately funded initiatives across the spectrum of criminal justice services.

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<sup>5</sup> Home Office. (2012). Assessing young people in police custody: An examination of Triage schemes. London: Home Office.

In a time of austerity for public services, The Ministry of Justice Report-*Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders* (2010, p.72)<sup>6</sup> challenged YJS partners to find more cost effective Youth Justice interventions. However, the legislation which followed: *The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act* (2012), retained as a legislative provision, the opportunity for the police use of non-statutory community resolutions (CRs). A briefing report written on behalf of the *National Association for Youth Justice*,<sup>7</sup> suggested that CRs are similar in form to Youth Restorative Disposals (YRDs), previously trialled in 2008/9 and evaluated by the Youth Justice Board. The use of CRs required the involvement of victims and the use of restorative justice measures. Incidentally, The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) had already published a report: *Restorative Justice Guidance and Minimum Standards* (2011)<sup>8</sup> which laid out the criteria for an effective restorative justice intervention, this included an admission by the offender, the involvement of the victim and a structured process that sought to repair the harm caused by the commission of the offence. CRs seemed to introduce an effective method for resolving low- level crime. However, without clear guidance, concerns began to be raised that CRs were not being used appropriately and allowed several contacts to be made with the police before any examination was made into the causes of the offending behaviour by young people. This led to the publication of a Home Office report '*A Revised Framework for Recorded Crime Outcomes* (2013)<sup>9</sup> which reinforced the need for police discretion, whilst ensuring a victim oriented approach within a transparent framework.

Whilst the emphasis was placed upon officers using their professional discretion to achieve the best outcome for offenders and victims, practice in Suffolk suggested that a closer examination of the use of CRs would potentially produce a better outcome for all parties to the resolution, by consistent decision-making and enhanced RJ interventions. The purpose of ET was to produce this consistent decision making whilst still allowing for the police use of discretion to administer one CR. Thereafter, a more detailed assessment was to be made of the characteristics of the offender as well as the crime, and a joint decision made by staff from Suffolk Constabulary and SYOS to determine the appropriate disposal. The potential benefits to victims and young offenders arising from effective RJ encounters cannot be understated and this is supported in a plethora of Youth Justice literature, including a systematic review of research concerning 'Restorative Justice, Reparation and Victims' to determine best evidence of 'What Works' in Restorative Justice (Sherman, Strang, Newbury-Birch and Bennett, 2007)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2010). *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders*. London: The Stationary Office.

<sup>7</sup> National Association for Youth Justice. (2014). *NAYJ Briefing: Pre-court arrangements for children who offend*. Available online: [http://thenayj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014-NAYJ\\_briefing\\_Pre-court\\_arrangementsFeb14.pdf](http://thenayj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014-NAYJ_briefing_Pre-court_arrangementsFeb14.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Association of Chief Police Officers. (2011). *Restorative Justice Guidance and Minimum Standards*. London: Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales & Northern Ireland.

<sup>9</sup> Home Office. (2013). *A Revised Framework For Recorded Crime Outcomes*. London: Home Office.

<sup>10</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2007), *Systematic Review of Recent Research Undertaken Regarding Restorative Justice, Reparation and Victims*. London: YJB.

From a financial perspective, an examination of the ‘Integrated Pre-court System’ the Durham model of ET (cited in the Youth Out-of-Court Disposals report as evidence of best practice and operationalised by CODYOS), suggests there was potential for many positive outcomes. The report highlighted a 74% reduction of FTEs in the period 2007-2012 and a 50% reduction in re-offending after a pre-reprimand disposal (PRD). At the same time, CDYOS suggested the £670,000 per year investment was delivering a cost benefit of £1.5 million per year (estimated) as a saving to the Criminal Justice System. These claims have been considered in the context have of the ET pilot.

## 2. Research Aims:

This evaluation was comprised of three main aims:

- ◆ to provide a detailed relative cost analysis which will consider both financial and time efficiency savings achieved by Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk YOS and potentially, the wider Criminal Justice System (CJS)/YJS.
- ◆ to consider the impact on SYOS in terms of workload and the capacity required to effectively deliver the ET model, and whether seconding two police officers to the pilot is sufficient/ economically viable to offset the anticipated increased workload.
- ◆ to provide evidence in relation to how effective decision-making practices and outcomes are for children, young people and their families and this will also include early consideration of police understanding of Youth Diversionary Practices (YDP) and referrals. Success indicators will include, for example, an increase in the number of Triage rates for North Suffolk; and increase in overall workload for SYOS in the Northern area; a reduction in reoffending rates and a reduction in the number of criminal convictions for young people; increased use of restorative Justice and earlier and more effective engagement with victims.

### 2.1 Methods

This process evaluation has been conducted in accordance with best practice laid out in the HM Treasury, Magenta Book (2011) *Guidance for evaluation*, which is the recommended central government guidance on any evaluation that seeks to recommend best practice for departments to follow<sup>11</sup>. The Magenta Book suggests that “*an evaluation is an objective process of understanding how a policy or other intervention was implemented, what effects it had, for whom, how and why*” (HM Treasury, 2011, p.11). The guidance further highlights that a range of analytical methods may be utilised, and these methods may be tailored to the policy/intervention being considered. However, process/impact evaluations usually include the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data allows stakeholders to express their own perceptions of the policy/intervention, how it was implemented and their perceptions of any impact made. Whereas, the quantitative data allows consideration of the financial impact of the intervention and an economic evaluation, including the need for additional resources to be “*levered in*” to assist the process (HM Treasury, 2011, P.18).

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<sup>11</sup> HM Treasury. (2011). The Magenta Book: Guidance for evaluation. London: Crown Copyright.

The research team worked to meet the objectives required by the commissioners. The researcher team conducted face-to-face qualitative interviews with a total 70 participants:

Table 3: Participants

18 members of the SYOS – interviews and focus groups
19 police officers – interviews, focus groups
73 police officers – online survey
16 young offenders
16 parent/carers and in one case, an adult sibling.

All interviews were audio recorded with informed consent from the participants and the data was subjected to a thematic framework analysis as devised by the National Centre for Social Research.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, to the qualitative methods adopted, an anonymous survey was conducted using an online research tool on 'Survey Monkey'. This quantitative survey comprised of 19 questions, was directed towards all operational police officers and support staff involved with young offenders in the pilot area (Lowestoft, Halesworth, Leiston, Beccles, Bungay, Eye and the Police Investigation Centre, Great Yarmouth) up to the rank of inspector. The questions sought to gather details of how well the pilot was implemented including training and briefing, and how well it worked. There were also questions to gauge officers' perceptions of diversionary strategies and partnership working. There were 73 responses in total to this survey which have been reflected at 4.2 below in the context of the perception of police officers.

In February 2015, in advance of the data gathering stage of the evaluation, the research team met with the manager and staff from SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary (seconded officers) at the SYOS premises in Lowestoft. The research team briefed the YOS practitioners and this included an overview of the research and its aims and objectives, the strategy for recruiting participants and the provision of informed consent and participant information sheets. In subsequent meetings with the commissioners, agreements were made concerning the scope and content of the quantitative data that they would gather. In respect of police officers, detailed guidance was prepared for the ET model by a police sergeant and circulated to all police officers in the pilot area up to the rank of Inspector.

The findings of the research are reported below. To preserve confidentiality and research integrity in the accounts that follow, all names of participants have been anonymised.

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<sup>12</sup> Ritchie, J. ; Lewis, J.; Mc Naughten-Nicholls, C.; and Ormston, R. (2014). Qualitative Research Practice. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

## 2.2 Agreed objectives for the evaluation of ET

Table 4: Objectives

<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>A detailed relative cost analysis to identify efficiency and any potential cost avoidance to Suffolk Constabulary and the wider Criminal Justice System</b>
How this will be achieved?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) UCS, working with Ben Estep from The Centre for Justice Innovation, will analyse data provided by SYOS on numbers of YP; throughput and workload monitoring.</li> <li>2) The time for specific tasks, for example, assessments, intervention and delivery will be calculated and this will include the time taken by the YOS seconded police officers as part of the pilot. The data will then be subjected to financial profiling by UCS staff and reported upon.</li> <li>3) Individual qualitative interviews with YOS team and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area.</li> <li>4) Online questionnaire with YOS team and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area.</li> </ol>
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Consider the wider impact on SYOS in relation to workload; capacity and resources to effectively deliver Enhanced Triage</b>
How will this be achieved?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) UCS working in partnership with The Centre for Justice Innovation will analyse data provided by SYOS on numbers of YP; throughput and workload monitoring.</li> <li>2) The time for specific tasks, for example, assessments, intervention and delivery will be calculated and this will include the time taken by the YOS seconded police officers as part of the pilot.</li> <li>3) Individual qualitative interviews with YOS team (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data</li> </ol>

<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Consider the wider impact on SYOS in relation to workload; capacity and resources to effectively deliver Enhanced Triage</b>
	<p>collection stage) and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage).</p> <p>4) Online questionnaire with YOS team (12 respondents) and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area (potentially 200 respondents).</p>
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Evaluation of the effective delivery of YDP in relation to YP and their families</b>
How will this be achieved?	<p>1) In depth face-to-face case study interviews with approximately 20 YP and their families.</p> <p>2) Individual qualitative interviews with YOS team (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage) and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage).</p>
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Evaluation of the effective delivery of Enhanced Triage in relation to SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary</b>
How will this be achieved?	<p>1) Individual qualitative interviews with YOS team (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage) and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage).</p> <p>2) Online questionnaire with YOS team and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area.</p>
<b>Objective 5</b>	<b>Evaluation of outcomes of YDP</b>
How will this be achieved?	<p>1) Analysis of data provided by SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary including basic client data; offence type data; time scales; first time entrants and reoffending rates.</p>

**Objective 5****Evaluation of outcomes of YDP**

- 2) In depth face-to-face case study interviews with approximately 20 YP and their families Individual qualitative interviews with YOS team (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage)and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area (6 initial interviews and 12 during main data collection stage).
- 3) Online questionnaire with YOS team (12 respondents) and Suffolk Constabulary in the Northern area (potentially 200 respondents).

The evaluation commenced following ethics approval on 19th February 2015. There was a slow uptake of willing participants, young offenders and parents/carers, although this picked up steadily during the evaluation. Access to young offenders remained an issue but this was in no part because of any failing on the part of the commissioners or the researcher, more so, it demonstrates the complex and occasionally unconventional lifestyles of these participants. Nonetheless, those who engaged provided a diverse range of views on the process, and extracts from the narratives are included below in support of the research findings. YOS staff and police officers made themselves readily available for interviews despite the intrusion into their busy work schedules. Many participants have provided a rich and detailed account of the strengths and weaknesses of ET and suggestions for improvement. The research team have also been provided with a detailed data report compiled by an analyst from SYOS, the contents of which have been considered as part of this evaluation.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Profile of offenders

According to data provided by SYOS (see table below),  $n= 109$  young people were referred to SYOS for assessment during the ET pilot. This represents an increase of 109% from  $n=52$  during the same period in 2014.

- ◆ The average age of young offenders triaged to a level 1 intervention was 14.5 years and for level 2, 14.71 years.
- ◆ The average age of all young people receiving a youth caution 1, youth caution 2 or a conditional caution was 15 years.
- ◆ Of those referred to the pilot,  $n=13$  males and  $n=9$  females were triaged onto level 1 and  $n=33$  males and  $n=13$  females triaged to level 2.
- ◆ For all categories of caution,  $n= 27$  were males and  $n=14$  were females.

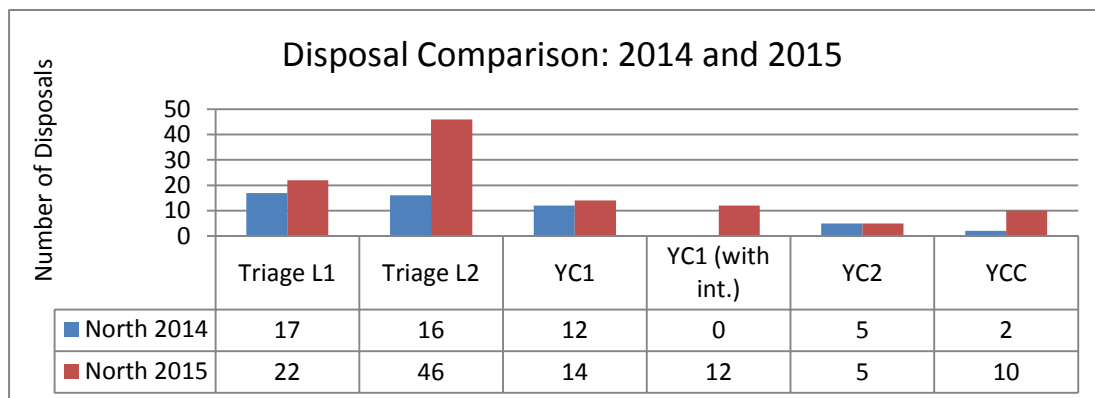
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<sup>13</sup> Suffolk Youth Offending Service. (2015). Enhanced Triage Pilot- Data Report October 2015. Suffolk: SYOS.



Table 5: Referrals to SYOS

1<sup>st</sup> February – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 compared with same period in 2014.



## 4. Economic evaluation

In order to determine any cost and efficiency savings to the commissioners, SYOS and Suffolk Constabulary prepared a process model of a typical intervention with a young offender covering before and during the ET pilot (Appendix 1). This model is comprised of a step-by-step account of all the actions necessarily completed when dealing with a young offender.

In the case of the police, this involves:

- ◆ The time spent taking the initial crime report;
- ◆ Liaising with victims;
- ◆ Gathering *prima facie* evidence that a crime has taken place;
- ◆ The time spent processing alleged offenders either as voluntary attenders to a police station for interview, or by arrest and taking the young offender to the Police Investigation Centre at Great Yarmouth (including travelling, investigation and custody time);
- ◆ Conducting interviews and completing the relevant records including a crime report and a Police Electronic Notification to YOS (PENY). The PENY is National form and provides the Youth Offending Service with the required information to make an assessment of a young person's case. Once completed by the police, the form is submitted by email to the YOS.

This model is supported by a case study provided by the commissioners themselves to reflect the ET model in practice (Appendix 2).

For SYOS, the model includes:

- ◆ the time spent in processing the PENY;
- ◆ conducting initial reviews and detailed assessment of the case;
- ◆ enquiries into the personal circumstances of the offender;

- ◆ the time taken to conduct the intervention at level 1 or level 2;
- ◆ liaison with the victim;
- ◆ the time to conduct restorative justice practices.

The process model also accounts for any differences in the steps necessarily completed before and after the commencement of the ET pilot, and by whom. The model was then subjected to financial profiling by UCS and a detailed relative cost analysis of ET considering any financial savings or costs prepared (Appendix 3). This analysis includes:

- ◆ consideration of the cost of setting up the pilot;
- ◆ the provision of an extra seconded police officer by Suffolk Constabulary to SYOS;
- ◆ the time and cost saved to Suffolk Constabulary by referring young offenders to SYOS;
- ◆ the costs incurred by SYOS by taking on the referral.

The commissioners have also shared this financial data with Ben Estep from the Centre for Justice Innovation in London who has utilised a financial model developed by him, to calculate the estimated cost avoidance of using the ET intervention.

Whilst the framework for the ET process was determined prior to the commencement of the pilot, the police seconded officers have assisted greatly in developing and refining the process by 'gatekeeping' youth crime, and where necessary, intervening in the early stages of investigations with useful advice and guidance. In the course of doing so, a number of tasks have been transferred from patrol officers to YOS seconded officers, thereby, saving considerable time to patrol officers by not having to complete unnecessary paperwork. During the pilot, the YOS seconded officers have become more proficient and experienced in completing these tasks, which highlights the benefits and the utility of using YOS seconded officers in this role.

## 4. 1 Economic Impact

In respect of financial savings, the relative cost analysis has demonstrated that there is little or no obvious financial saving by using ET when compared to the police use of Community Resolutions and other OoCD disposal options, pre-pilot. However, of the 109 referrals to SYOS during the pilot, 62% (n=68) were dealt with by the non-statutory triage at levels 1 and 2. The outcome should be that through ET, young offenders were provided with an enhanced level of intervention when compared with a community resolution. However, as a direct result, the absence of financial saving is because the additional cost of 'levering in' an additional police officer to SYOS has effectively transferred the pro-rata costs of a police officer on patrol conducting a community resolution to that of a seconded police officer in the YOS. Although, it should also be noted that this analysis assumes that community resolutions are dealt with at a low-level without the need for making an arrest and the subsequent time spent in the Police Investigation Centre at Great Yarmouth, including travelling time. In cases where arrests and detention could be directly avoided by the use of ET, there would be a considerable cost avoidance of £390.61 per intervention.

The research acknowledges that decisions to arrest are not taken lightly and are, of course, made in accordance with provisions within the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984), nonetheless, going forward, if planning for the rollout of ET could involve the ability for 'quick-fire' triage decisions to be made without an arrest, considerable savings could be made. The researcher was advised that the use of arrest and detention for young offenders in the pilot area was assessed and seen to be reducing prior to the pilot; therefore, a trend

to not arrest had already been identified. However, the negative impact of non-arrest prior to the pilot had led to a significant reduction of referrals of young offenders to SYOS for assessment and intervention, thereby, potentially reducing the effectiveness of any disposal given by the police. This also represented a missed opportunity to intervene and reduce re-offending, but this situation has improved during the pilot period. According to data provided by SYOS, in addition to those young offenders referred, and who benefitted from triage during the pilot, 37 out of 41 PENY's for caution disposals were also received by Suffolk YOS. The 4 referrals (9.7%) of PENY's not received were for cautions administered by the police without following the ET process.

## 5. Impact evaluation

Evaluation of the qualitative data gathered during the evaluation points to a number of positive outcomes worthy of consideration:

Table 6: Positive outcomes

- 
- ◆ Interviews and survey data from police officers demonstrates considerable support for ET with many officers claiming to have seen considerable savings in police time, increased efficiency, perceived better outcomes for young offenders, increased satisfaction for victims of crime and consistent decision making.
- 
- ◆ YOS practitioners welcomed the opportunity to be more involved in ET interventions, which are more focused on investigating the causes of offending behaviour than the police use of community resolutions. Little or no mention was made by practitioners concerning the use of statutory OoCD disposals such as the Youth Caution or the Youth Conditional Caution.
- 
- ◆ Early indications suggest there may be a reduction in re-offending post ET intervention. Long-term management information gathered by SYOS may provide further evidence of this.
- 
- ◆ SYOS has reported an increase in both uptake of victims of crime in restorative justice, and increased victim satisfaction as a result of a police officer performing the role of victim officer within the YOS.
- 
- ◆ Many young offenders and parents/carers valued the intervention of SYOS and welcomed enquiries into their offending behaviour, and the assistance and guidance provided.
- 

### 5.1 Perceptions of Young People and their Parent/Carers

During the pilot, the research team conducted 16 interviews with young offenders/ 16 parent/carers and in one case, an adult sibling. The majority, but not all of these interviews were completed during the school summer period. The initial uptake of interviews was

quite slow and this was impacted upon by the time it took for the ET strategy to gain momentum. This is not a criticism of the process, but as voluntary compliance of the participants was necessary, it naturally followed that there would be a slow build-up of willing young people and Parents/Carers. This slow start was also impacted upon by the number of willing participants deemed appropriate to take part in the research, many of whom were not considered appropriate for reasons external to the evaluation. Those who were willing often proved very elusive or difficult to contact. As stated earlier, this demonstrates the complex lifestyles that many of these young people lead, but also, how time consuming and difficult it is for YOS workers to maintain contact during the triage period. At the beginning of the pilot there was also a backlog of young offenders awaiting disposal decisions, which for some reason had not been referred to the YOS prior to the pilot. Therefore, some of the offending behaviour of early ET participants pre-dated the commencement of the pilot but this was quickly resolved.

All of the young people interviewed have diverse experiences of ET for several reasons, largely related to their personal and domestic circumstances and the support received from their parent/carers. Not all of the young offenders and their parent/carers reported positive experiences of ET. Some of these are for reasons which they can clearly articulate, others, when interviewed, stated the intervention was ineffective but were still able to identify positive aspects of the intervention in which it was clear that a YOS practitioner/seconded police officer had facilitated access to a range of supportive services that should have improved the life chances of the YP, if only they could recognise that fact. Nonetheless, there are signs that in general, from the perspective of YPs and their parent/carers, ET is seen as an effective diversionary programme for young offenders, which provides an opportunity for them to reflect on their offending behaviour and in some cases repair some of the harm caused. Some questions remain however, concerning how ET is delivered and these are dealt with below.

### 5.1.1 Explaining the Process

Some participants were able to recount very clear and informative explanations of ET and what it sought to achieve. These accounts had been provided from both police and YOS practitioners. However, many young people and their parents/carers also claimed that insufficient explanations were provided concerning ET, what it is, how it is operationalised and the voluntary nature of the intervention. This observation is more in relation to the police explanations of ET rather than the SYOS. Importantly however, many of these participants also accept that being arrested and dealt with by the police is a stressful experience and may have affected their recollection of the incident. Nonetheless, this was a common theme that ran through many responses. It should also be recognised that at the time of release from custody, it is likely that the decision to divert the young offender to ET may not have been made and this may create ambiguity in the information given. However, in relation to those young offenders who were dealt with by the police other than by arrest, similar comments were also made regarding the lack of explanation of the process but to a lesser degree. In respect of SYOS practitioners', young people claim there was less ambiguity in what they were told by them.

Going forward, it would be advantageous to young offenders if the police provided a more comprehensive explanation of the disposal options available to them including where appropriate, the possibility of an appearance before the Youth Court, as well as the full range of OoCD disposals, statutory and non-statutory. In any case, as stated earlier, such considerations should be recorded on the custody record (for those arrested) or the YOS decision file. When the decision is jointly made by SYOS in accordance with the ET process, the reasons for the decision should also be clearly explained to the young person. The YJB

guidance on OoCD disposals, mentioned throughout this report, is clear on the evidential and public interest tests for each level of disposal, so at the point of decision, there should not be any ambiguity on behalf of decision makers as to why the disposal option decided upon is the most appropriate. It is reasonable to suggest that these decisions and the grounds to support them should be clearly explained at the earliest opportunity to the young offender and their parents/carers.

**Georgia** (15 yrs): *“the explanation by the police of what was going to happen wasn’t very good but they were nice, very nice”*

**Beckham** (17 yrs.): *At time of release “they didn’t really mention it”*

**Mary** (Parent): *At the time of release we were told by the police “you will know in 2 weeks if it’s going to court..... more than likely it won’t”.*

**Bob** (14 yrs.): *After the interview the officer said” I may get a caution or spend some time with the youth offending man...a week later I got a call about midday and I had to go and see a lady from the youth offending and she told me I was going to be with xxxxx”*

**Kenneth** (Carer) *“Instead of him getting a criminal conviction, they were trying this new thing out, to nip it in the bud”*

**Phil** (14 yrs.) *“ 2 weeks later a police officer came round and told me I was being referred to the youth offending thing and I had to write a letter of explanation....he made it clear that if I do it again there won’t be any intervention”*

### 5.1.2 ET in Practice

As stated earlier, many participants were very complimentary of the ET process and welcomed the opportunity to engage with SYOS. From the perspective of the parents/carers, many were able to identify the positive aspects of ET and in particular, improved access to the support services they claim they had been asking for but were told they would only get if their child/young person offended. However, it then became clear in the narratives of the participants that a considerable amount of time and effort had been exercised by the police/YOS staff to deliver positive outcomes for young people, and this is true even when it was not obvious to the participants. Examples include interventions in relation to schooling, help with drug abuse, access to positive activities and the considerable time spent asking young people to reflect on their behaviour and the impact it has on others.

**Georgia** (15 yrs.): “We discussed health and safety, drugs and relationships with people..... I want to go there, they help you understand good and bad and stuff you shouldn’t do. It has shown me young people can change and do better”

**Rihanna** (17 yrs.): *“I felt like I shouldn’t be there and xxxxx felt the same.....I asked for help with anger management but we never did anything on it”.*

**Geoff** (Father): *“I thought it was going to court for receiving indecent images and sending them....but they thought he would benefit from youth offending and talking about how serious it all was....they discussed internet security etc. ”*

**George** (13 yrs.): *“There were 2 likely outcomes, court or someone coming to help me with anger....first it was my triggers and we started to try to stop me doing anything before I do it”.*

**Chris** (13 yrs.) “if you go in there (YOS) with a good attitude you are going to do well...you've got to meet them half way”

**James** (13 yrs.) “they tried to help me with my anger”

**Jayne** (Mother) “because she wrote the letter, it caused her to reflect on the effect it had on her family and the store”

**Bob** (14 yrs.) “ I’ve learned a lot of things on it, it’s not all about getting angry and things, there are other ways to sort it out”

### 5.1.3 The voluntary nature of engagement with ET

In the introduction to this report it was mentioned that according to the Ministry of justice and Youth Justice Board- *Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services* on the use of ‘Youth Out-of-Court disposals’ (2013, p.3-6)<sup>14</sup>; there are five possible disposal options available to decision makers in respect of young offenders under the age of 18 years: *take no further action; Community resolution; Youth Caution; Youth Conditional Caution and charge to appear before the Youth Court.* These “*Out of Court disposals aim to ensure outcomes are both proportionate to the crime committed and effective in reducing the risk of further offending*”. The community resolution option mentioned above is not available to decision makers when the matter has been referred to the ET process, however, the non-statutory locally agreed triage intervention is available to decision makers for those young offenders assessed as suitable for this intervention. It was also mentioned in 4.1.1 above that the guide is also clear about the evidential and public interest tests for each level of intervention and that each disposal option should be explained to young offenders. For those arrested, the use of police bail may also be used to allow a decision to be made on the

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<sup>14</sup> Youth Justice Board- *Guide for Police and Youth Offending Services* on the use of ‘Youth Out-of-Court disposals’ (2013, p.3-6)

most appropriate disposal option, including liaison and assessment by the YOS to do so. Albeit, the reasons why bail is granted should also be fully explained to the young offender.

However, analysis of the narratives gained from interviews with young offenders and their parents/carers suggests that the conditions under which young offenders are said to have 'voluntarily' engaged with triage, or the statutory (but still voluntary) Caution or Youth Conditional Caution, is perhaps an area in need of considerable reflection. It is also a matter discussed below at point 3 Objective 4 in 'what can be improved'. There was a strong theme running through the narratives of young offenders and their parents/carers, that triage was presented to them as a *fait accompli* with no other option offered other than a prosecution/caution and criminalising them. However, the reality is unlikely to be as straight forward as that. It could be argued that if appropriate, triage may be considered as a proportionate disposal option to be offered as an alternative to a statutory OoCD disposal such as the YC or the YCC. It is unlikely however, for triage to be offered as an alternative to a prosecution without first considering the YC or YCC. At this point, the decision makers would potentially be faced with issues concerning public interest considerations as for both the YC and YCC, the YJB guidance suggests these options should only be offered when it is assessed that there is sufficient evidence, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute. As suggested in 4.1.1 above, these decisions should be recorded and explained to the young offenders and their parents/carers, which raises the question why so many of them claim to be so ill informed of the voluntary nature of the OoCD option offered to them, the reasons for the decision and the implications for them if they do not voluntarily engage. In some cases, young offenders were told that a prosecution was likely but then offered triage with no explanation provided to justify the decision or the implications for them if they refused the voluntary triage disposal or disengaged from it.

The perceptions of young offenders and their parents/carers may arise from misunderstanding, or the police/YOS failed to fully explain their decisions as mentioned earlier. However, as a great number of young offenders mentioned this aspect of the ET process, it is worthy of further consideration by the commissioners. Especially so when in the narratives, a few young offenders and their parents/carers also claim that their bail had been cancelled prior to any conversations with them, or their voluntary agreement secured concerning the disposal option decided upon by the commissioners. The YJB guidance on the use of bail suggests these matters should have been discussed and agreed prior to the cancellation of bail. This exemplifies why in all cases, the voluntary nature of engaging with ET should be made very clear and this includes the ramifications for young offenders who choose not to engage or commence an intervention and then disengage. If properly explained and where there is transparency in the decision making process, young offenders are less likely to feel pressurised and more likely to see the benefits of voluntary engagement with a non-statutory disposal option such as triage, when it is presented as a genuine diversionary option from a more punitive outcome. It is significant that when interviewed, some practitioners also expressed concerns over the extent to which voluntary engagement was explained, albeit, the same practitioners highlighted the balance to be achieved by getting young people to understand the potential benefits of engaging with ET, knowing full well that this outcome is highly unlikely if the young offenders are fully aware of its voluntary nature. However, notwithstanding these concerns, there should be transparency in the process.

**Annie** (Parent): *“We heard from the youth offending and they said that you either get a caution for it or you could do the voluntary 12 week course with the youth offending team (emphasis on voluntary) but if you didn’t do the voluntary 12 week course, you got the caution, so it’s not voluntary is it?...I never believed it was voluntary and I told them that from the outset. I was stuck between a rock and a hard place and if we didn’t do it your son gets a caution and a record against his name and I’m going to do everything against that.”*

## 5.2 Perceptions of Police Officers

The evaluation of police officers perceptions of ET has determined strong support for its implementation countywide in Suffolk. Police officers highlighted a number of positive outcomes from the pilot including: savings in police time, increased efficiency in terms of consistency in decision making, better outcomes for victims of crime through improved restorative justice interactions, improved outcomes for young offenders and an improved relationship with SYOS. Interviews with 19 police officers in the pilot area together with 73 responses from the online survey expressed clear support of ET. These officers were also able to astutely highlight the problems associated with the police use of Community Resolutions and how ineffective they were in reducing reoffending but also; the victims and offenders were not always considered. Whilst many officers had not benefitted from the formal briefing documents compiled and circulated by a police sergeant responsible for planning and implementing ET in Suffolk, the majority of officers interviewed, or who responded to the survey, had gained a sufficient understanding to articulate the premise of the pilot and operationalise it effectively. As already mentioned, many officers interviewed were extremely complimentary about the conduct of the YOT seconded police officers, whom it is claimed have been very proactive in disseminating knowledge of ET. A key point raised earlier in the report is that joint interventions between the police and YOS are more effective when they share a common ethos of diverting young people away from the formal YJS. The evaluation finds this is very strongly the case with examples of very effective joint practice exemplified by both police and YOS practitioners.



Police officers from Lowestoft were interviewed in a focus group, all of whom had experience of the ET pilot. The officers pointed out the problems associated with the police use of community resolutions. Specifically, how these resolutions were a quick and easy way to dispose of a crime but the needs of young offenders and victims of crime were not necessarily, fully considered.

One police officer commented *“When it comes to juveniles, we just use them as a way to dispose of something, to close the crime but we have lost something. We have lost the intention of what they were for, which was to help people and prevent them committing further crime”*. Other officers agreed they are largely ineffective.

Whilst officers perceived there were issues with the restorative practices of Community resolutions, they still supported the need for police discretion to give one Community resolution.

Most police officers interviewed expressed some concern about the way CRs were used, or how they have evolved. Whilst some officers highlighted a need to retain some discretion, it was generally agreed that CRs were just a means to dispose of low-level crimes as an administrative function, a process that saves considerable police time but a process that does not fully consider the needs of victims or offenders.

### 5.2.1 Training for ET

As mentioned earlier, one of the problems has been the briefing to police officers in the pilot area concerning the implementation of ET. Should this pilot be rolled out county wide, it is a matter that requires further thought. Notwithstanding this fact, there is strong evidence of effective communication of the pilot between the police and SYOS.

Police officer: *“I don’t recall any formal training or briefing, I may have received an e-mail, whether every officer read it or thought about the implications though, who knows”*.

Police officer) *“I got a 30 minute briefing from a YOS seconded officer”*

Police officer *“I don’t remember any briefing”*.

### 5.2.2 Support for ET

In the narratives of the police officers interviewed, there is an acceptance that community resolutions in the form they are currently used, do not achieve their legislative intention. Whilst some officers highlighted some reticence concerning the removal of their discretion to use more than one community resolution, most officers agreed this was a small price to pay for the removal of a procedural function that takes up valuable police time. It was the savings in police time, which was repeatedly cited as a positive outcome of ET. However,

most officers also cited support for a number of positive outcomes arising from ET. These include: increased efficiency by consistency in decision making; improved outcomes for young offenders by access to SYOS and support for their deviant conduct and improved outcomes for victims of crime.

Police officer: *“When a community resolution is done its gone, dusted, yeah its victim led but there’s very little interest in the suspect at all....we were ignoring the roots of what has gone wrong. In a response role this has taken a lot of the work from us, once that form is submitted it’s gone, we don’t have the time to deal with it. The officer then explained their perception that SYOS are better equipped to deal with young offenders more effectively.*

Police officer: *“From having done the previous one [procedure] the filling in of the PENY form was just to let the YOT aware, but since enhanced triage, they [YOT] have assumed a lot more responsibility and taken on a lot more work and from what I can see and what I have heard...they [YOT] adapt to individual differences and to individual’s upbringing, home environment and education and a lot more things. Whereas before, it was more down to us to make the informed decisions.....now I can speak to one person in the YOT and get consistent decision making, whereas before, one local sergeant may make one decision and another may be more sympathetic”. The officer further explained that he perceived the YOT were more appropriate to make decisions concerning the outcome of criminal justice disposals for young people, albeit, he clearly understood, as did two other officers present, that disposal decisions are jointly made.*

Police officer: *“I see it as more of a preventative thing, so they [YOT] are putting in place the interventions, go out and see the kids....perhaps, not be so official about things and put in place the interventions to prevent re-offending”. The officer perceived it saves the police; work in the long run even if it is difficult to measure who is likely to re-offend”*

### 5.3 Perceptions of SYOS practitioners

All of the YOS staff presented very positively in support of the evaluation and there were clear signs of prior knowledge and enthusiasm for the pilot. One YOS practitioner also pointed out in one of the initial interviews, that in a time of austerity, it was important to *Make Every Intervention Count (MEIC)*, and this ethos formed part of a recent assessment of Children’s Services within Suffolk County Council. This practitioner implied, and supported the view, that by definition, ET was part of a drive to improve efficiency and outcomes for young people. From the initial interviews, and those that followed, it was clear that most practitioners were well versed in the procedures for the earlier *Challenge for Change* intervention, and were prepared for ET and to become more involved in any strategy that resulted in better outcomes for young people, whilst also making efficiency savings. As the

pilot developed it was also clear that SYOS was able to effectively respond to the increase in workload and as commented upon by many young offenders and their parents/carers, deliver positive outcomes for young offenders which it is highly unlikely that the police use of Community Resolutions would have been able to deliver.

*YOS Practitioner: “I think with the new process, it’s very important to get in with young people at a very early stage. Before with Challenge for change, we did that but now that is gone, with community resolutions, a young person may have several contacts with the police before we get involved. With this new process, that will change. Now we are able to go in, maybe just after the community resolution, so it may be the second offence, but now we can go in and offer and deliver work which hopefully will prevent them entering the court system and save a lot of money”.*

The practitioner went on to explain how beneficial it is for young people and their families, for a YOT officer under the auspices of the ET pilot, to carry out a rapid assessment of the background of the young person within 48 hours to inform the decision making process. “I think this process is better than the triage process we operated before”.

Another YOS practitioner perceived the pilot had got off to a slow start with no discernible increase in workload, but envisaged this would change. The practitioner had observed a very beneficial change to YOS staff which derived from an evolution of the role of the police seconded officers “*they [seconded officers] are more available because they are not case managers, they are still picking up cautions but communications back with police officers on the street is much better and everyone knows them, they have a lot of fingers in a lot of pies*”.

Other SYOS practitioners commented on the outcomes of the ET pilot and its impact on young people.

*“I think its good we’ve had the opportunity to work with them at a much earlier stage”*

*“Through us, they have had access to specialised work around their offending, they’ve had substance abuse addressed through turning point, and we have some who have been seen by our mental health worker, all of which they would not have necessarily have had or known where to get that support, so it has opened other doors up”*

*“I think the key thing from what I have seen is that these children would not have made it through to ‘child in need’ or social care level but because they have come through us, we can provide some of that support or because they have become involved in criminal justice we can obtain some of that help through the back door”.*

### 5.3.1 What was effective?

- ◆ The first point worthy of mention is the pro-active work carried out by the YOS seconded officers. Analysis of data suggests they have been largely responsible for not only briefing and spreading the word, but also, seeking opportunities at all times to deliver triage effectively by meticulous scrutiny of crime reports, intelligence and custody reports, to identify young offenders suitable for triage before they have even been referred. According to peers, they have also demonstrated considerable willingness to assist colleagues within the YOS and police service to deliver triage effectively.
- ◆ In respect of the SYOS at Lowestoft, many staff have been named by young offenders and parents/carers and praised for their considerable hard work, professionalism and dedication. Many young offenders stated they would not have engaged with ET but for the empathy and understanding demonstrated by the YOS staff, without a single complaint about the conduct of any YOS practitioner.
- ◆ Police officers also reported positively in support of the improved working relationship between the police and the YOS, which was supportive of the pilot and effective delivery of ET. The majority of police officers interviewed, and who responded to the survey were completely supportive of ET and diversion in general. They spoke positively about increased efficiency by improvements and consistency in decision-making concerning criminal justice disposals for young offenders, and they were also able to identify significant savings in their time.
- ◆ The decision by SYOS management at Lowestoft to appoint one YOS seconded police officer as the ‘Victim Officer’ during the pilot proved very effective. The victim’s officer has sole responsibility for all liaison and engagement with victims and for delivering many of the Restorative Justice (RJ) interventions with young offenders. The pilot required that first contact with the victim must be made within

24 hours of the referral being made, as consultation with the victim is considered essential to inform the triage decision-making process. There are clear signs that this decision has delivered an increased involvement of victims of crime in RJ processes and increased victim satisfaction. Data supplied by SYOS shows an increase to 13 direct RJ encounters (face to face meetings between the victim and offender chaired by a RJ practitioner) compared with 2 in the same period in 2014, and 25 indirect RJ encounters (letters of explanation, indirect mediation between the victim and offender) up from 19 in 2014. The reported satisfaction level of all RJ encounters during the pilot was 100% based on responses from victims measured on a Lickert scale. Whilst these are small numbers, the increased involvement and satisfaction of victims in RJ is extremely encouraging.

- ◆ During interview, the project manager for SYOS responsible for RJ development throughout Suffolk supported a police officer performing the role of victim officer. This support is derived both from substantial professional experience, and by observing the police officer delivering RJ during the pilot. The manager has observed noticeable differences in the reaction of victims of crime to police officers compared to YOS staff performing the same role, and this is supported by management information concerning RJ gathered throughout SYOS.
- ◆ It is asserted that despite the fact that YOS practitioners receive enhanced training in RJ, and may even have higher-level skills in assessing young offenders; victims of crime appear more convinced about the merits of RJ when the contact is timely, and when this approach is from a police officer. In essence, it appears that victims of crime perceive when police officers contact them it adds more authenticity to RJ. Sherman et al (2007) made the same point in their systematic review of RJ practices. This adds weight to the assertion that utilising a police officer as the victim officer is worthy of consideration if ET is delivered countywide. Police seconded officers do not currently perform this role in the YOS teams at Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds.

## 6. Summary

The findings suggest there is clear evidence that the Youth Offending Team at Lowestoft were prepared, well briefed and supportive of the pilot. Meetings with representatives from Suffolk Constabulary prior to the evaluation suggested that police officers had also been briefed and prepared. However, subsequent interviews revealed this was not the case despite the considerable effort exercised by Suffolk Constabulary in advance of the pilot. The research team has seen the detailed explanatory report, flow charts and forms to be used in the pilot but for some reason, despite their wide circulation, these did not reach many of the constables/sergeants or support workers who should have seen them in advance of the pilot. This has been highlighted in the extracts from narratives above, but it appears that the training/briefing of the officers was insufficient and should be addressed if the pilot is 'rolled out' across the county. Ironically, responses to the online survey suggested that 54% of police officers were aware of ET by the end of February 2015, with only 3% completely unaware of the pilot at the time of completing the survey in August 2015. Albeit, 38.57% reported they were briefed by a YOS seconded police officer, 28.57% by a colleague with only 7.14% learning from an official document and 8.57% from an online briefing.

Despite the survey findings, it must also be acknowledged that these descriptive statistics also demonstrate very clear evidence of effective communication between the YOT and police officers in the pilot area, which has driven a largely successful pilot.

## 6.1 How can ET be improved?

As with any evaluation of this nature, there are some matters identified, which the research suggests are in need of further thought should ET be delivered countywide.

### 6.1.1. Branding

The name 'Enhanced Triage' appears to have been settled upon after the research was commissioned and this fact was not known widely, even by the practitioners. During interviews, young offenders/parents/carers and practitioners also referred to ET as 'Challenge for Change' (the former triage intervention), the 'Durham Model' and 'Integrated Decision Making Model'. This caused some difficulties when asking young offenders and practitioners about an intervention known to them by a different title. Indeed, documentation seen by the research team and in use during the pilot is still branded as 'Challenge 4 Change'. The use of the term triage in the title is also potentially misleading as it fails to distinguish the differences between ET and the former triage model Challenge for Change, and may have led some practitioners to a narrow focus on triage and not appreciate the wider benefits of ET, including the fact that it is an integrated decision making model which supports a range of OoCD options.

### 6.1.2. Voluntary Engagement with ET

A matter of concern is the parameters in which young offenders are said to have participated 'voluntarily' in the ET pilot and more specifically, the explanations provided to them to gain their voluntary participation. The majority of young offenders and their parents/carers claimed to not be aware that their participation in ET was voluntary. Some recalled the use of the term 'diversion' but were not sure what they were being diverted from, a caution, future offending or the Youth Court? Whilst this term is frequently used in Youth Justice Literature, legislation and policy, it can be ambiguous unless the term is properly defined when used. This point is explained earlier in the report at 4.1.1 and 4.1.3. For example, several young offenders honestly believed that if they did not 'voluntarily' participate in triage, they would be charged/summonsed and sent to the youth court. Yet, when they discussed the circumstances of their offending, the timing of the cancellation of their bail and what they were alleged to have committed, it appears very unlikely that a court appearance would have been in the public interest even though they had admitted an offence. Suggesting a prosecution may follow if they do not voluntarily engage in triage, as some young offenders have suggested, may even have been an abuse of process. The YJB guidance on the use of Youth OoCDs has been considered when reflecting on these narratives. Whilst the research team has not received any insight into the individual decisions supporting the application of ET, the fact that most young offenders and their parents/carers said the same thing makes it a point worthy of mention. Incidentally, some practitioners from both the police and SYOS agreed that the language used to engage young offenders is often ambiguous and perhaps confusing. Practitioners discussed openly the problems of trying to engage young offenders onto a programme, which is intended to deliver some good for them, but if practitioners are completely open about the voluntary nature of the intervention, young offenders are unlikely to engage. However, this evaluation suggests that more care should be given to the explanations provided to young offenders and their parents/carers so that their voluntary engagement is secured within an ethical and transparent process.

## 7. Recommendations

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<b>Enhanced Triage</b>	The research suggests there are strong grounds to support rolling out ET countywide subject to the recommendations below being considered.
<b>Branding</b>	The branding, marketing and the use of official forms should identify which triage scheme is being operated and the parameters in which it is operated.
<b>Training</b>	Consideration should be given to how effective delivery of training concerning ET can be provided to ensure practitioners are aware of the provision of ET and able to ensure consistent delivery of the intervention.
<b>Voluntary Engagement</b>	The difficulty of engaging young offenders onto the ET programme is acknowledged. However, it is suggested that the commissioners consider a detailed examination of the parameters in which young offenders are processed into ET, including the transparency of decision making and the explanations given to young offenders, to ensure the process is ethical and transparent.
<b>Prevention Work</b>	Consideration should be given by SYOS to whether there has been a loss of support to young offenders during the transition of prevention work from SYOS to Suffolk County Council-Integrated Services Teams. This may involve liaison with Suffolk Constabulary to ensure they work more effectively with Integrated Services Teams to ensure that young people in need are not ‘falling beneath the radar’ of SYOS and not being picked up elsewhere.
<b>Decision Making</b>	Consideration should be given to a process that prioritises ‘quick-fire’ decisions concerning triage being made without making an arrest. Considerable financial savings could then be made.
<b>Victim Officer</b>	Consideration should be made to how police officers may be more effectively utilised in restorative justice practices. This may involve the appointment of a police officer in the role of victim officer at the YOS but this post could also be used to deliver more effective community resolutions. This may involve using some of the capacity of the YOS seconded officer but not exclusively so.



## 8. Conclusions

This evaluation has demonstrated considerable support for the use of ET as an effective means of dealing with young offenders at a much earlier stage of their displaying signs of deviant behaviour. Whilst the relative cost analysis did not demonstrate a financial saving when making a direct comparison of the police use of Community Resolutions within the wider OoCD framework of the ET model. Many other benefits were identified such as, consistency in decision making; a closer and improved working relationship between Suffolk Constabulary and SYOS in the pilot area; disposal decisions being made far more quickly; victims of crime being consulted much earlier and informing the decision making process; more effective delivery of restorative justice and a strong perception by practitioners that the process is far more time efficient and it also delivers better outcomes for young offenders. A point was also made earlier that with improved joint decision making between the police and SYOS, less young offenders might be arrested and taken into custody. This would result in a considerable cost saving to the commissioners. The research anticipates that Ben Estep from the Centre for Justice Innovation in London will produce more convincing data concerning potential cost avoidance to the Criminal Justice System in Suffolk. His analysis is perhaps more useful to consider the long-term advantages of effective intervention with young offenders at an earlier stage.

Importantly, however, it should also be highlighted that even in the most negative or un-enlightened perceptions of ET, articulated by young offenders and their parents/carers; it is clear from their narratives that Suffolk Constabulary and SYOS have worked well together to produce an extremely effective intervention which provides many support services to address offending behaviour. There are also early indications from data provided by SYOS that the ET process has also had an impact on reoffending rates therefore reducing demand on the police and other resources. None of the 22 young offenders dealt with by level 1 of triage have reoffended. In respect of offenders dealt with by way of level 2 of triage or a caution, there is evidence of reoffending but at a rate that is lower than the national average in the figures provided by the Youth Justice Board. However, it must be remembered that this is a short-term analysis. This evaluation demonstrates that ET is on most occasions, far more effective than the police use of Community Resolutions. Where there is still a need for Community Resolutions as a disposal option, the police retain the discretion to do so on one occasion, and it appears likely that this process will be used more effectively going forward as ET provides ready access to more effective interventions, including advice and guidance, where the police avail themselves of it.

From the interviews and the online survey, it is clear that a common ethos has developed which supports the ET pilot. Both police officers and YOS practitioners are able to identify beneficial outcomes for young people in terms of consistent decision making and decisions being made earlier. Police officers have identified significant savings in police time, increased victim involvement in restorative justice and increased victim satisfaction. Practitioners from SYOS have also articulated strong support for ET citing a number of improved outcomes for young offenders when compared with inappropriate or over use of community resolutions and 1st youth cautions. The online survey that produced 74 responses from police officers, also demonstrated considerable support for the ethos of ET.

Finally, as stated earlier, 62% (n=68) of the 109 referrals to SYOS during the pilot were dealt with by a non-statutory triage disposal option. None of those young offenders dealt with at level 1 of triage have reoffended. This represents a potentially, significant reduction in the number of FTE's into the Youth Justice system when considering those young offenders may



have been dealt with instead by a youth caution. However, the low levels of reoffending also assist with demand reduction for all agencies involved in youth justice system, and the wider community by making less citizens a victim of crime.

## 9. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research was gained from the Research Ethics Committee of UCS and Suffolk County Council Research Governance panel, which ensured that participants were protected throughout the project. In addition this research project complied with both the British Sociological Association (BSA) and the British Psychological Society's (BPS) guidelines and adhered to the guidelines set out by the UKRIO's (2009) code of practice for research and the Singapore statement of research integrity based upon the principles of:

- ◆ Honesty in all aspects of research
- ◆ Accountability in the conduct of research
- ◆ Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others
- ◆ Good stewardship of research on behalf of others

All participants were provided with appropriate information detailing the aims and objectives of the research, how the data collected from them would be used (especially with regard to confidentiality and anonymity) and how the contributions would be published and the findings disseminated.

## **The Research Team**

This evaluation was conducted by Mark Manning, a Lecturer in Criminology at University Campus Suffolk, who also produced this report.

Dr Emma Bond, Associate Professor at University Campus Suffolk, supervised the research.

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