Police Drug Diversion (PDD)
A realist impact, process and economic evaluation

Collaboration, Manualisation and Theory of Change

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Nadine Hendrie, Dr Helen Glasspoole-Bird & Prof Alex Stevens

University of Kent

Centre for Policing Research and Learning — The Open University

University of Kent

Police Drug Diversion Project

PDD – National Evaluation of police drug diversion schemes

The PDD project is a £1.8 million project funded by the Cabinet Office, Evaluation Accelerator Fund (EAF).

Started Sept 2022 – ends March 2025

Police Drug Diversion – defining terms

Diversion:

- Away from the criminal justice system

- Towards education and treatment

- For drug involved suspects at pre-arrest or pre-charge (scheme dependant)

Definition of harm: how we use it

PDD as 'harm reduction policing'

'Adoption of evidence-informed policies and practices which aim to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences associated with drug use, drug markets, *and with efforts to control them* through the criminal justice system.'

(Definition adapted from Bacon (2023). From criminalisation to harm reduction? The forms and functions of police drug diversion in England and Wales. *Policing and Society)*

Realist evaluation: useful for decision makers, evaluations need to identify **'what works in which circumstances and for whom?'**, rather than merely 'does it work? (Pawson & Tilley)

Realist evaluation aims to identify the underlying generative **mechanisms that explain 'how' the outcomes were caused and the influence of context.**

Why the PDD Evaluation ?

The effects of PDD on crime, health, and public spending have not been evaluated in the UK.

Similarly, there is no research on the cost-consequences of PDD for different service providers and government departments, or an assessment of its impact on equalities.

The evaluation of PDD schemes has been recommended by various bodies, including

- The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
- The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
- Dame Carole Black's Independent Review of Drugs
- From Harm to Hope 10-year drug strategy
- Harm reduction and public health approaches in policing
- Reform to adult out of court disposals framework

"We will become world-leading in our approach [to drugs], with evidence-led and data-driven interventions, and a commitment to build the evidence base where necessary"

HM Government 2021

PDD PROJECT PARTNERS

Work Packages

WP1: Description & Manualisation

- **Initial theory of change**

- **Intervention description**

WP2: Process evaluation

WP3: Outcome evaluation

WP4: Cost consequence analysis

WP5: Equity assessment

WP6: Realist synthesis

Research Questions

What other effects do PDD schemes have (e.g., on wellbeing of individuals, families and communities)?

What are the effects of PDD schemes on health outcomes (measured using hospital data, and drug treatment entry and retention)?

What are the effects of PDD schemes on offending (as measured by reconviction)?

What are the cost-consequences of PDD schemes for health, police, and other service providers?

Are there inequalities in the use of PDD schemes (e.g., on grounds of ethnicity, gender, levelling-up)?
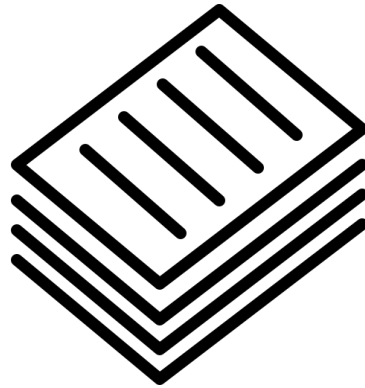
Data Collection

Descriptive: Police diversion schemes

Qualitative: interviews

- Diversion Partners
- OPPC
- Police(various ranks)
- Drug involved suspects
- Support organisations - health

Quantitative:

- OHID – MOJ, NHS , NDTMS

Purpose WP 1

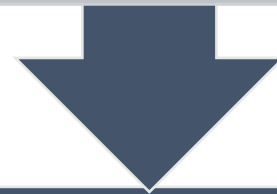| Fidelity	Test framework for other WPs	Inform coding map	Inform interview focus

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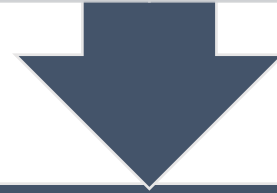
Process - collaborative

TIDieRs	Workshops	Stakeholder meeting

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Product

Manuals & later addendum	Revised Theory of Change	Scheme costings (Economic Evaluation)

Purpose WP 1

Fidelity	Test framework for other WPs	Inform coding map	Inform interview focus

Process evaluation: Qualitative and quantitative research in the inte
implementation fidelity and uncover the mechanisms by which PDD

Conceptual frameworks used for implementation fidelity.

EMMIE: Effect, Mechanisms, Moderators, Implementation and Ecor
interventions or families of programmes (Johnson et al., 2015). About
framework | College of Policing

VICTORE: Volition, Implementation, Contexts, Time, Outcomes, Riva
al., 2020) Adherence: Content, coverage, frequency, duration and m
(intervention complexity, facilitation strategies, quality of delivery, p

- [+] E. Mechanisms
- [+] E. Moderators
- [−] Ev. Implementation
  - [−] c..Fidelity
    - [−] c.Adherence
      - [−] c.Content
        - [−] 121
          - Needs Assessment
        - E-learning
        - Group
      - [−] c.Coverage (of people)
        - Discretion on diversion
        - Eligibility criteria
      - c.Duration
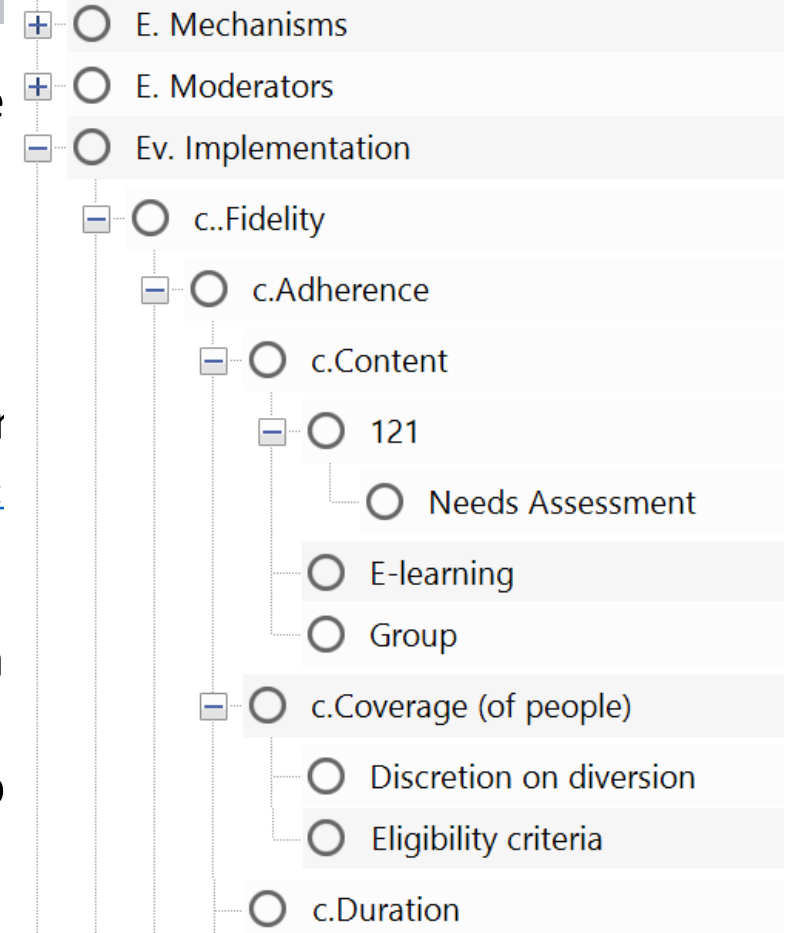
Process - collaborative		
TIDieRs	Workshops	Stakeholder meeting
Received TIDieR descriptions from three schemes	Area workshops to interrogate and clarify the TIDieR	Area workshops to interrogate and clarify the TIDieR

All informed:

- the detailed description of implementation

- provided a comparison for fidelity of implementation

- manualised how the intervention is implemented in each area

Protocols answered TOC, to judge fidelity and inform practice.

What is the TIDieR+ framework ?

Tidier+
(Hoffmann et al., 2014)

Template for
Intervention
Description and
Replication

Project name	Delivery dates	Eligibility criteria
Capacity	Referral pathway	The scheme
Added value	Partners	Delivery locations
Personalised	Materials	Modifications
Delivery	Economic costs	1;1 & Group Sessions info

Process - collaborative

TIDieRs	Workshops	Stakeholder meeting

In-person workshops x 3

Stakeholders included

- Police officers/various ranks
- Police managers
- Staff and managers of the agencies DIS are diverted to
- User Voice
- Local partner agencies
- NHS liaison and diversion services
- Public health substance misuse lead officials.
- Home Office /Cabinet Office

National stakeholder workshop.

Presented revised scheme

descriptions for all three focus areas.

Important: This event provided all

stakeholders the opportunity to

agree the revised theory of change

and their area scheme description.

Differences and similarities across the schemes

Process evaluation: additions to note:

- Triage or pre assessment

- Support after the scheme

Characteristics of Police Drug Diversion schemes

	Thames Valley	West Midlands	Durham
Stage			
Pre-arrest	✓	✓	
Pre-charge	✓	✓	✓
Eligible offenders			
Simple possession	✓	✓	✓
Cultivation (personal)		✓	✓
Other offences			✓
Diverted to			
Online course	✓	✓	
Face-to-face course	✓		
Elearning package	✓		
One-to-one: one-off		✓	
One-to-one: ongoing			✓
Payment			
Offender pays	✓		
Free to offender		✓	✓
Non-compliance			
Not eligible in future		✓	
Refer back for decision	✓		
Prosecute for original offence			✓
Recorded as			
Community resolution	✓	✓	✓
Conditional caution	✓		
Repeat offences			
Escalate to conditional caution	✓		
Multiple opportunities	✓	✓	
Caution/charge			✓

Product		
Manuals & later addendum	Revised Theory of Change	Scheme costings (Economic Evaluation)
Manuals: Links https://kar.kent.ac.uk/101846/ https://kar.kent.ac.uk/101852/ https://kar.kent.ac.uk/101848/ TVP addendum: a real time product – evolving Framework for WPs to assess implementation fidelity and uncover the mechanisms by which PDD delivers its effects.	Revised Theory of Change informed by a rapid review of literature published between 2018 and 2023. Agreed by researchers and stakeholders as a viable working framework.	Informs the Economic evaluation.

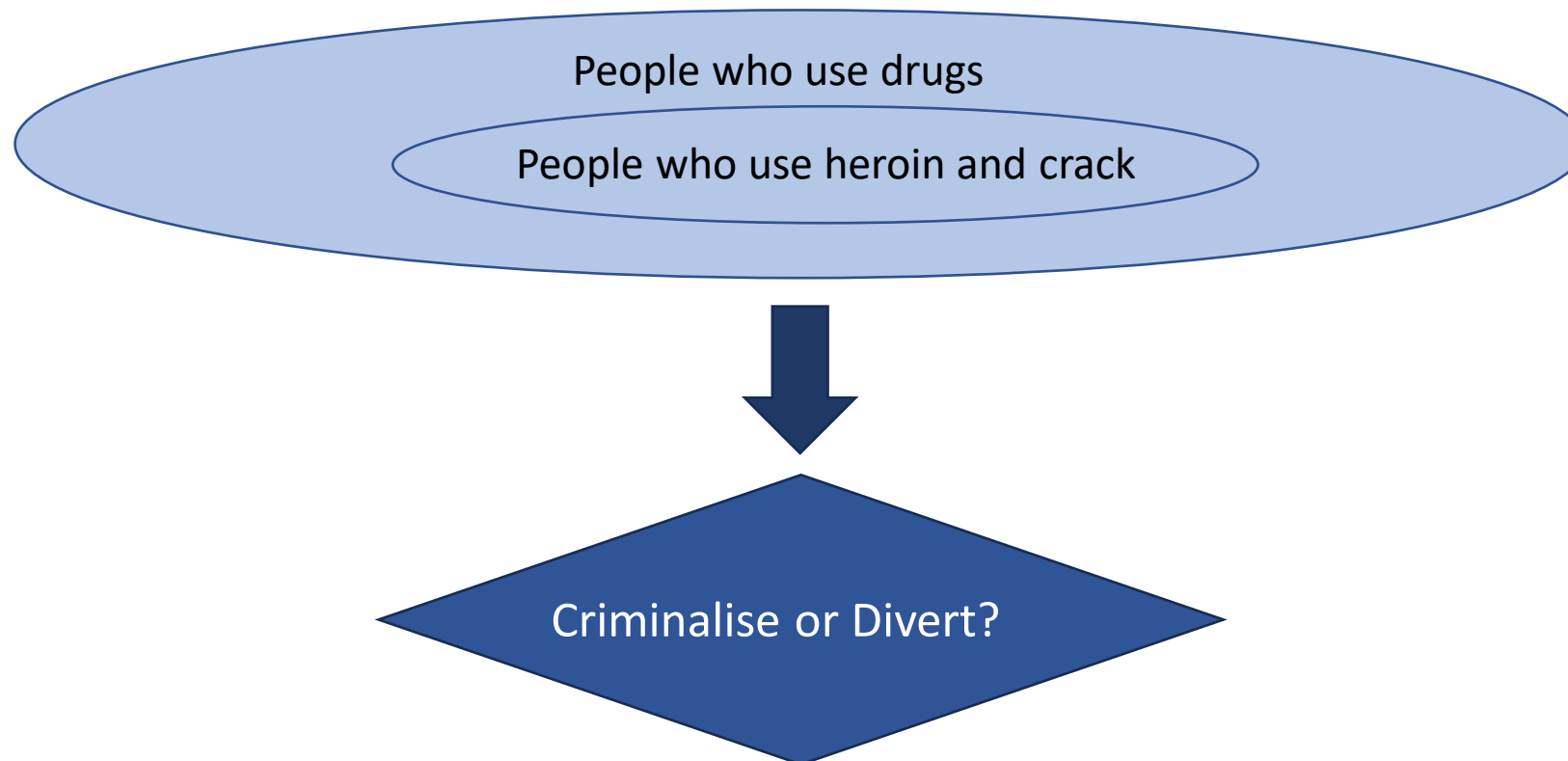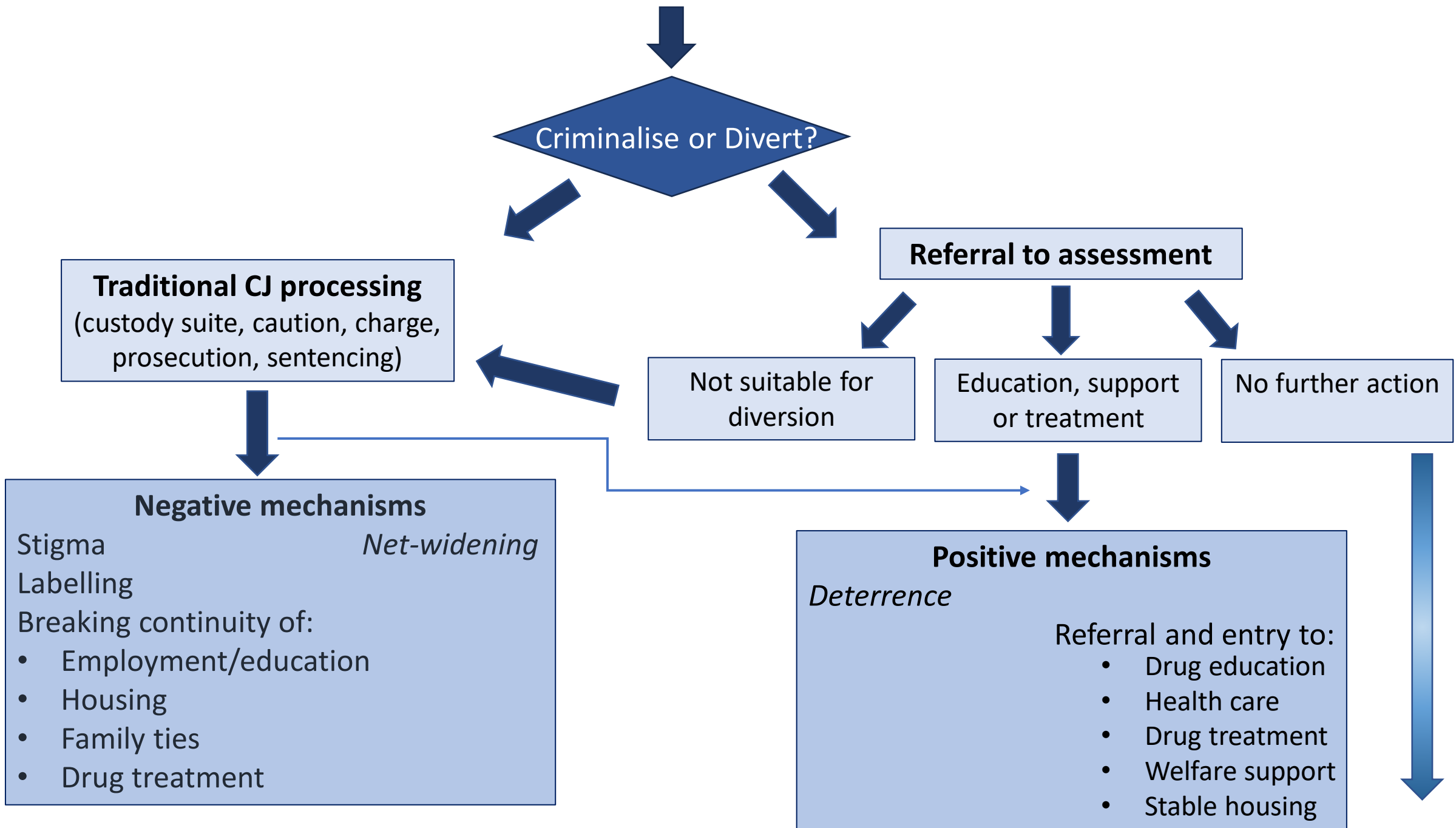# Theory of Change informed by Stevens et al. (2022)

Contexts

Area: health inequalities, crime opportunities, available treatment, urban/rural

Health service and CJS: primary care, drug treatment, policing, sentencing

Individual: poverty, trauma/ACE, previous experiences of substance use and policing

People who use drugs

People who use heroin and crack

Criminalise or Divert?

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                              ┌──────────────────┐
                              │ Criminalise or   │
                              │    Divert?       │
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Criminalise or Divert?

Traditional CJ processing
(custody suite, caution, charge, prosecution, sentencing)

Referral to assessment

Not suitable for diversion

Education, support or treatment

No further action

Negative mechanisms

Stigma   *Net-widening*
Labelling
Breaking continuity of:
- Employment/education
- Housing
- Family ties
- Drug treatment

Positive mechanisms

Deterrence

Referral and entry to:
- Drug education
- Health care
- Drug treatment
- Welfare support
- Stable housing

CJ processing

Negative mechanisms

Referral to assessment

Positive mechanisms

No further action

Moderators
Adherence/fidelity by police officers and other staff
Swiftness/certainty of sanction   Quality of services provided
Availability of housing and employment

Outcomes
Health (life/death, physical morbidity, mental health)
Crime (frequency, severity)

Costs
Health services (ambulance, drug treatment, GPs, hospitals)
CJS (police, CPS, courts, prison, probation)
Tax and benefits (tax income, benefits expenditure)
Costs and crime to victims (tangible and intangible)

Literature review
(Stevens et al., 2022)

Updated review (Stevens
& Glasspoole-Bird, 2023)
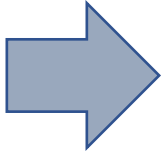
Workshops in each of the
three Police force areas

REFINING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Informs other work packages

Provides a working theory which
will be refined again at the end of
the research project

Theory of Change – revised

Contexts

Area: health inequalities, crime opportunities **drug markets,** available treatment, urban/rural
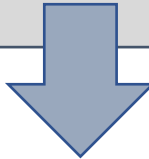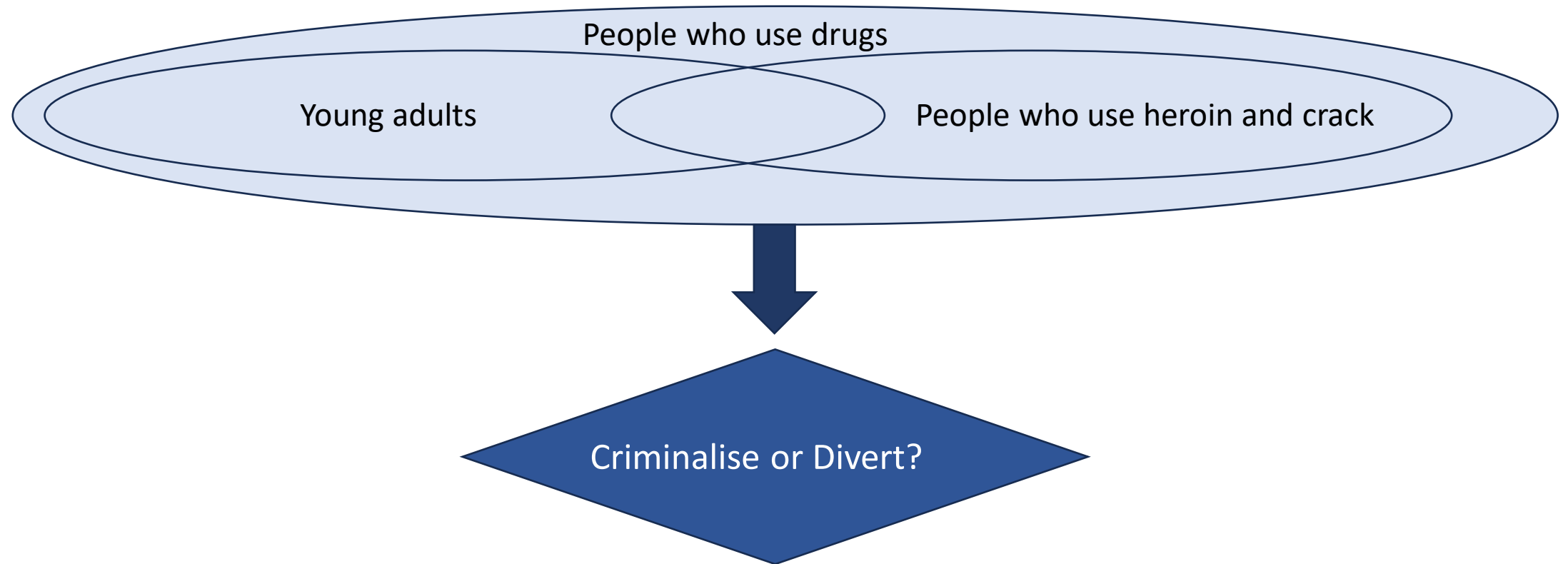
Health service: primary care, drug treatment

Criminal Justice system: police discretion, training, technologies (e.g. cameras, apps)

Individual: education, housing, trauma/ACE, **exploitation, domestic violence,** previous record
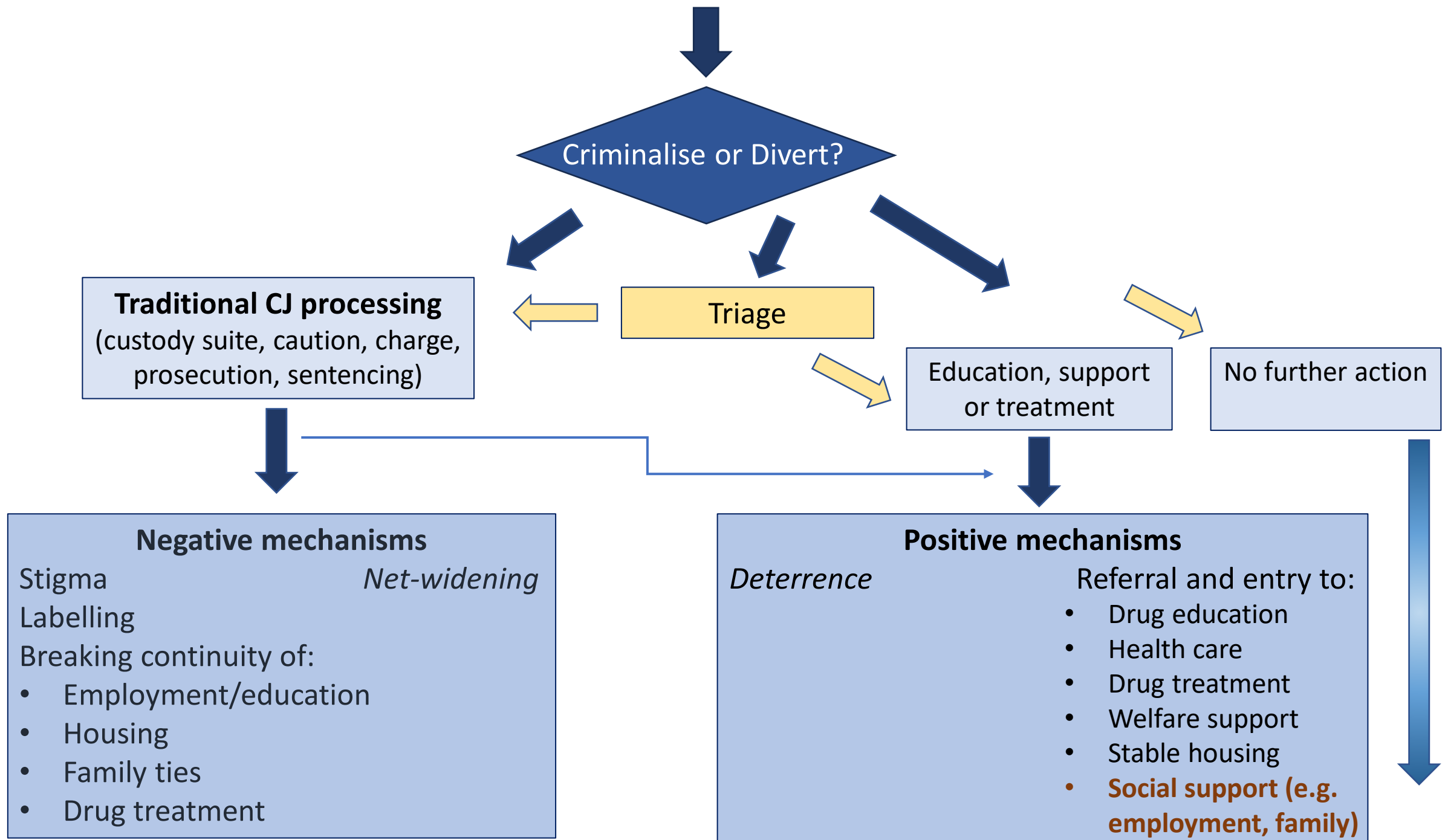
People who use drugs

Young adults

People who use heroin and crack

Criminalise or Divert?

Criminalise or Divert?

Traditional CJ processing (custody suite, caution, charge, prosecution, sentencing)

Triage

Education, support or treatment

No further action

Negative mechanisms

Stigma

Net-widening

Labelling

Breaking continuity of:
- Employment/education
- Housing
- Family ties
- Drug treatment

Positive mechanisms

Deterrence

Referral and entry to:
- Drug education
- Health care
- Drug treatment
- Welfare support
- Stable housing
- **Social support (e.g. employment, family)**

CJ processing

Negative mechanisms

Diversion

Positive mechanisms

No further action

Moderators

Adherence/fidelity by police officers and other staff
Swiftness/certainty of sanction
Quality of services provided
Housing and employment

Persistence of contact
Motivation of offender
Peer effects

Non-compliance

**Outcomes**
Health (life/death, physical morbidity, mental health)
Crime (frequency, severity)

Costs
Health services (ambulance, drug treatment, GPs, hospitals)
CJS (police, CPS, courts, prison, probation)
Tax and benefits (tax income, benefits expenditure)
Costs and crime to victims (tangible and intangible)

Contexts

Area (health inequalities, crime opportunities, drug markets, available treatment, urban/rural)

Health service (primary care, drug treatment)

Criminal justice system (police discretion, training, technologies [e.g. cameras, apps])

Individual
(education, employment, housing, trauma/ACE, exploitation, domestic violence, previous record)

People who use drugs

Young adults — People who use heroin and crack

Criminalise or Deflect?

Triage — No further action (CR)

'Traditional' CJ processing
(custody suite, caution, charge, prosecution, sentencing)

Education, support, or treatment

Negative mechanisms

- - - → Net-widening

Stigma
Labelling
Breaking continuity of:
-   employment/education
-   housing
-   family ties
-   drug treatment

Positive mechanisms

Deterrence

Referral and entry to:
Drug education
Health care
Drug treatment
Welfare support
Stable housing
Social support (employment, family, etc)

Moderators

Adherence/fidelity by police and other staff   Persistence of contact   Motivation of offender
Swiftness/certainty of sanction   Quality of services provided   Peer effects
Housing and employment

Outcomes

Non-compliance   Crime (frequency, severity)

Health (life/death, physical morbidity, mental health)

Costs
Health services (ambulance, drug treatment, GPs, hospitals)
CJS (police, CPS, courts, prison, probation)
Tax and benefits (tax income, benefits expenditure)
Costs of crime to victims (tangible and intangible)
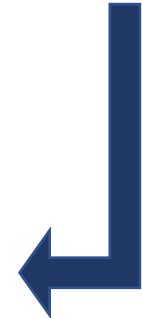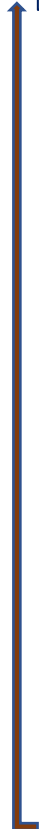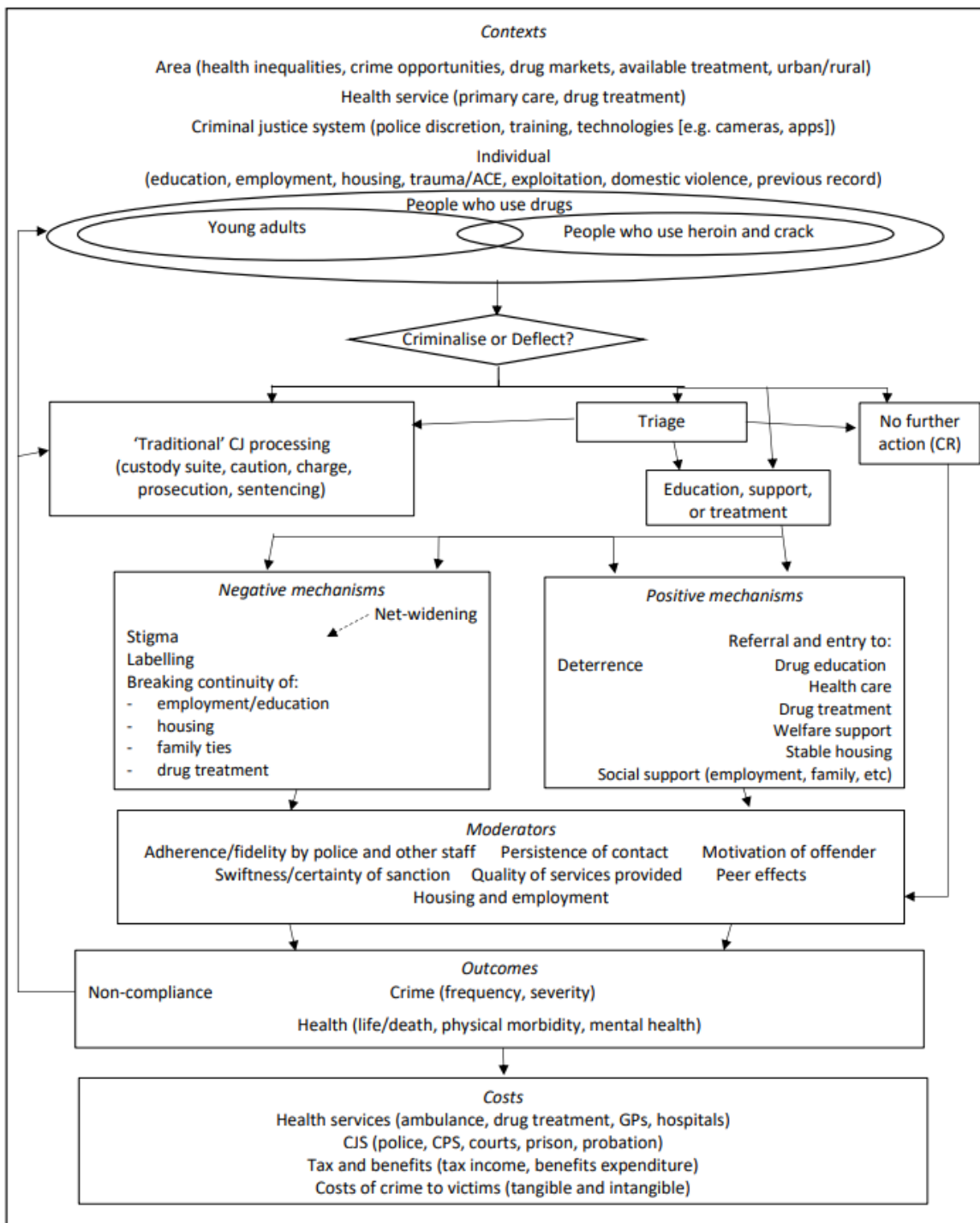
Depenalization, diversion and decriminalization: A realist review and programme theory of alternatives to criminalization for simple drug possession - Alex Stevens, Caitlin Elizabeth Hughes, Shann Hulme, Rebecca Cassidy, 2022 (sagepub.com)

Theory of change of police drug diversion: A revised programme theory - Kent Academic Repository

Evaluating police drug diversion in England: protocol for a realist evaluation | Health & Justice | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)

Where we are now …

Completed

WP1: (finalise addendum)

Underway

WP2: Fieldwork - 225 planned (162 completed so far)
Coding – development of coding map using NVivo
Emerging themes

Workshop to discuss direction of analysis (February 2024)

WP3: Are now receiving police force data (control sites – for data linkage)

WP4- BAU costings and Intervention costs being considered and compiled

Next...

WP5: Aggregate data requests – from March 2024

WP6: Realist synthesis - Final stage

Final Report March 2025

Contact us:

Nadine Hendrie n.hendrie@kent.ac.uk

Dr Helen Glasspoole-Bird helen.glasspoole-bird@open.ac.uk

Prof Alex Stevens a.w.stevens@kent.ac.uk

PDD police-led drug diversion schemes

Questions