Cyber Prevent

A descriptive evaluation of cohort reoffending

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Report subject

A whole-programme analysis of proven reoffending for people referred to the National Cyber Prevent Referral Mechanism (NCPRM) from December 2017 to April 2025. It uses Police National Computer (PNC) records available up to the September 2025 data extract (data freeze). Figures are descriptive. This is the first programme-wide, descriptive reoffending read-out for Cyber Prevent, produced to test feasibility and provide an initial performance signal; methods and reporting will be refined in future iterations.

Results are set alongside three benchmark types:

- Ministry of Justice (MoJ) one-year proven reoffending rates (juveniles[1] 32.9%, adults 25.8%; a simple mean 29.35% is shown for the combined cohort)
- The Campbell Collaboration estimate for police-led youth diversion (a 13% relative reduction applied to the MoJ youth baseline → 28.6% expected)
- For cyber-specific outcomes the Millennium Cohort Study youth cyber-persistence rate (1.14%).

1.2 Summarised results

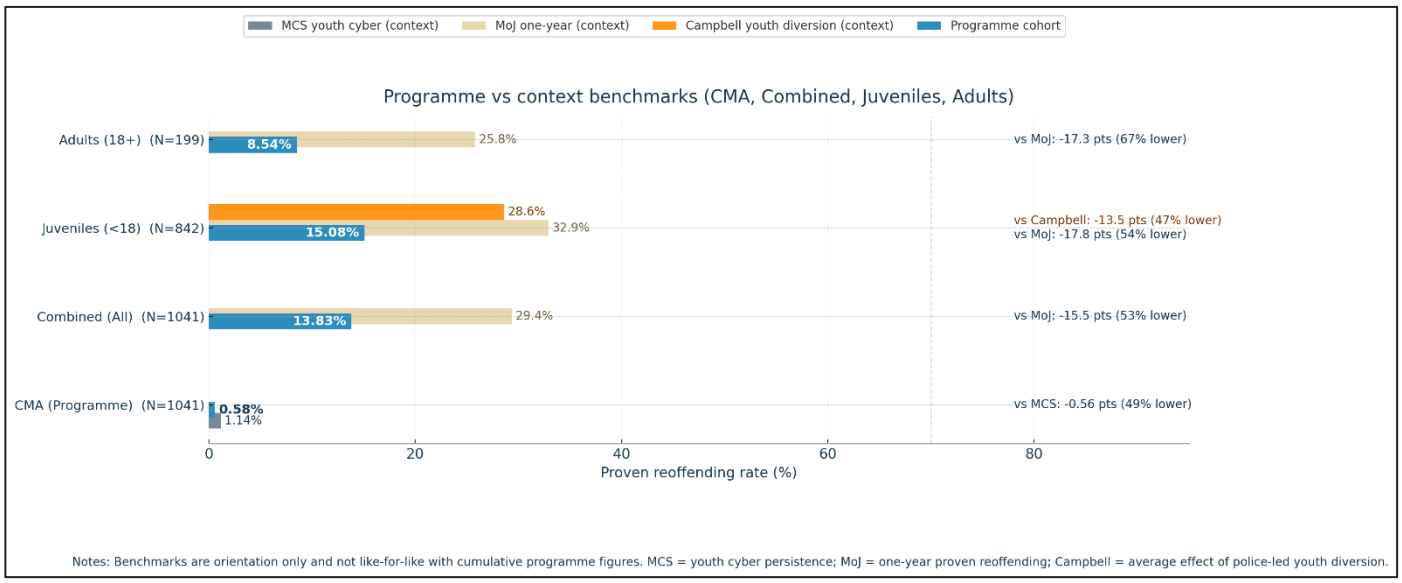


Figure 1. Summarised Analysis Results

[1] MoJ publishes youth proven reoffending for ages 10–17; this is used as the closest available published reference for the small number of participants under 10.

1.3 Summarised findings

Headline Findings:

1. Cyber Prevent participants reoffended in cyber-dependent offences at about half the rate of the benchmark, but real desistance rate is likely higher. (See section 4.1)

2. Overall proven reoffending among Cyber Prevent participants was less than half the rate of the benchmark. (See section 4.2)

Additional findings:

1. Juvenile context comparison: The observed juvenile rate is below the MoJ youth reference rate and below a broad youth-diversion expectation from a Campbell Collaboration meta-analysis. (See section 4.3)

2. Exploratory signals: Unadjusted screens suggest higher observed reoffending among participants with certain prior offence histories (including violence-related priors and some property-damage / fraud-related priors). These patterns are signals for practice consideration. (See section 4.4)

3. Adults remain in scope: Adult observed reoffending is low in this cohort. Adult referrals should continue to be accepted, and delivery adaptations may be considered in future iterations subject to resourcing and operational priorities. (See section 4.5)

For queries: The NCCU Prevent team can be contacted at cyberchoices@nca.gov.uk.

2. Methods

2.1 Study design and overview

The Project Team conducted a retrospective cohort evaluation of proven reoffending among individuals referred to the NCPRM between 2017 and 2025. We analysed all available post-referral PNC data up to the September 2025 analysis extract (the data freeze), without restricting to a fixed follow up period. Follow up length therefore varies by referral year (for example, 2017 referrals have longer observation periods than those from 2025). Outcomes are presented as the proportion of participants with one or more proven reoffences during their available observation. External statistics, for example MoJ one-year proven reoffending rates, are included for context and as a conservative benchmark. Where observation exceeds twelve months, cumulative programme rates can only be the same as or higher than a one-year measure; any favourable difference is a lower-bound indication of effectiveness, not an overstatement. Cases with less than twelve months of follow up pull in the opposite direction. Taken together, and alongside the inclusion of periods not at liberty in denominators, this approach reduces the risk of over-claiming. This is a descriptive analysis; no causal claims are made.

This iteration prioritised providing timely, programme wide understanding within the project delivery window. A full MoJ-aligned twelve-month outcome analysis can be undertaken when additional analytical capacity is available. Reporting cumulative outcomes from referral to the data freeze, with transparent disclosure of variable follow up by referral year, provides decision-relevant insight now and remains consistent with academic standards for evaluations using administrative data[2].

2.2 Outcome framework: definition and departures

This evaluation uses the MoJ concept of proven reoffending[3], meaning a reoffence recorded on the PNC within the observation window. For this study the observation window runs from the index date of each referral to the September 2025 data freeze.

Two departures from MoJ publication practice are made and are stated in advance. First, the additional six-month waiting period that MoJ applies after the end of the window is not used. Second, the index date is the date the national team recorded receipt of the referral. Using the referral date as the anchor captures early events that are relevant to programme delivery, supports timely reporting, and avoids inflating effectiveness through technical exclusions. In line with MoJ conventions,

[2] Sutherland, A. (2013). *A Methodology for Reconviction Studies Using Police National Computer (PNC) Data*
[3] Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Technical Guide to Proven Reoffending*

denominators include periods when participants were not at liberty (for example, custody). This choice is transparent and conservative for at liberty risk.

As observation can be longer than one year for earlier referrals, comparisons with one-year MoJ figures are conservative. Extended observation increases the chance of detecting a proven reoffence. Any favourable gap should therefore be read as a lower-bound indication of effectiveness. Where follow up is shorter than one year, the effect is in the opposite direction. Taken together, and alongside the inclusion of periods not at liberty, the approach reduces the risk of over-claiming.

2.3 Cohort, index date and eligibility

The cohort comprised all eligible referrals to the national programme between 2017 and 2025. Each record contained the individual's name and date of birth as supplied by the referring police force or Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU).

The index date was the date the national team recorded receipt of the referral, marking the start of risk-relevant contact. Follow up ran from the index date to the September 2025 data freeze, so exposure varied by referral year.

Eligibility for analysis required sufficient identifiers for matching and a usable PNC return. Where a person appeared in more than one referral, records were deduplicated to a single person-level entry and the earliest referral date was retained as the index. The quality-assurance rules and exclusion counts are set out in Section 2.6.

PNC checks were run in September 2025 and returned each person's full PNC history to that point. Offence dates were used to assign events to the pre-index or post-index period for analysis.

This cohort includes both juveniles and adults. Juveniles are under eighteen and adults are eighteen and over, following MoJ standards.

2.4 Outcomes reported

The programme's primary outcome is cyber specific offending under the Computer Misuse Act (CMA)[4]. Results are presented as the share of participants with at least one proven CMA offence during their available post referral follow up. There is no MoJ series for proven CMA reoffending, so for orientation we use analysis from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)[5] youth cyber offending persistence estimate of 1.14% at ages fourteen to seventeen as a conservative lower bound rather than a like for like comparator. For context, even the lowest MoJ one year proven reoffending

[4] Crown Prosecution Service (2025). *Computer Misuse Act Guidance*
[5] Maras, M-H., Sweiry, A., & Villadsen, A. (2024). *Cyber Offending Predictors and Pathways in Middle Adolescence: Evidence from the UK Millennium Cohort Study*

rates across any offence category during 2017 to 2023 were 11.7% for adults (sexual offences, January to March 2023 cohort[6]) and 7.6% for juveniles (sexual offences, January to March 2020 cohort[7]). Both are many times higher than 1.14%, underscoring how stringent the MCS benchmark is.

To place the CMA result in a whole system frame, a composite all crime outcome is also reported: the share of participants with at least one proven reoffence of any type during available follow up. The composite mirrors MoJ headline practice and helps interpret the CMA pattern alongside overall reoffending. Because follow up length varies by referral year,

these statistics are descriptive and not directly comparable with MoJ one-year rates. CMA offences may be under detected and under prosecuted relative to volume crime, so the CMA figure should be read alongside the composite all crime outcome when considering overall change.

2.5 Data sources

- PNC: Participant level prior history and post referral proven reoffending were obtained via bulk PNC checks. This aligns with MoJ official statistics and with standard UK policing evaluations; for example, DIVERT[8] (deferred prosecution) Durham Checkpoint[9] (deferred prosecution), and Project CARA[10] (conditional cautioning for domestic abuse) each measured proven reoffending using police or PNC records.
- MoJ Proven Reoffending Statistics: National adult and youth series for 2017 to 2023[11] are used as whole system context to frame scale and trends over the same period, including the COVID 19 period and justice system backlogs.
- MCS: A 1.14% youth cyber offending persistence estimate (ages 14 to 17) is used solely as a conservative lower bound for CMA outcomes. It is a self-report measure in the general youth population over multiple years and is not a like for like comparator. Justice system proven rates for specific offence categories are typically higher than general population persistence as it has been found that persistent offenders are more likely to be in justice system samples than the general public[12]. This is also replicated within

[6] Ministry of Justice. (2024). *Proven Reoffending Statistics, January to March 2023*
[7] Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Proven Reoffending Statistics, January to March 2020*
[8] College of Policing (2021) *Evaluation of DIVERT*
[9] Strang, H., Sherman, L. W., & Mayor, R. (2017). *Checkpoint: An Innovative Programme to Reduce the Harm Caused by Offenders and Victims*
[10] Strang, H., Sherman, L. W., Woods, D. J., Bennett, S., & Inkpen, N. (2017). *Project CARA: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Domestic Abuse Intervention in Hampshire Constabulary*
[11] Ministry of Justice. *Proven Reoffending Statistics Collection*
[12] McAra, L. & McVie, S. (2010). *Youth Crime and Justice: Key Messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime*

MoJ data as the lowest MoJ one-year rates observed in the used window was 11.7% for adults (sexual offences, Jan-Mar 2023) and 7.6% for juveniles (sexual offences, Jan-Mar 2020).

2.6 Data collection and quality assurance

The diversion dataset comprised 1,077 referrals received between 2017 and 2025. Referrals (name, date of birth) were submitted for bulk PNC checks in September 2025. Data science functions transformed the returns into an analysis-ready

dataset and maintained an auditable log of exclusions, corrections and deduplication decisions. The unit of analysis was the person, not the referral.

Before PNC submission, a 15% randomised, year-stratified audit of referral entries (n = 162 / 1,077) was checked against the original referral submissions. No discrepancies were found (0 / 162). This step aimed to prevent transcription errors (for example, transposed digits) that could create false matches.

After PNC retrieval, records were removed where validation showed the return did not belong to the referral subject (to avoid distorting reoffending rates). These were done in the following instances:

- Incomplete offence logs: empty logs (n = 27) and undated logs (n = 2) were excluded from analysis while the person record was retained. Entries without dates cannot be classified as pre- or post-referral. Given the very small number of undated logs, the validity gains from exclusion outweighed any loss of information and had negligible impact on totals.
- Missing date of birth: records with missing DOB (n = 36; 3.3%) were excluded in full because identity verification was not possible. Although all 36 searches returned no recorded offences, exclusion prevented possible false negatives.
- Out-of-scope record: one record (n = 1) fell outside the project timeframe and was removed.
- Duplicate referrals: n = 9 individuals had repeat referrals (for example, interrupted delivery during COVID, re-referral after a change in circumstances, or partner requests for updated checks). These were collapsed to a single person-level entry, retaining the earliest referral date as the index; underlying information was preserved in the composite record.

Secondary quality assurance drew a 15% randomised, stratified sample of PNC returns (n = 162), including both positive and negative cases, which were cross-checked against the referral sheets to test identity attribution and prior/post-referral sequencing. Actions taken were:

- Referral date input error: one case corrected; the PNC record itself was accurate and the correction restored the correct offence chronology.
- Implausible date of birth mismatches: n = 8 entire PNC records excluded; for example, referral DOB indicated a child while the PNC record showed an adult; excluded to avoid misattributed records.
- Minor date of birth discrepancies: single-digit or transposition errors where identity remained clear; retained after verification.
- Name mismatches with matching DOB: n = 5 entire PNC records excluded due to insufficient confidence in identity attribution.

These controls are conservative by design. They prioritise correct identity attribution and temporal sequencing over marginal gains in sample size. Exclusions were small relative to the cohort and are unlikely to bias headline estimates. All sampling, rules and decisions are

documented and reproducible, providing assurance that measurement integrity has been prioritised.

After quality assurance, the final analytical cohort comprises 1,041 unique, verifiable participants with usable PNC data - 96.7% of all referrals (1,041 / 1,077).

2.7 Subgroups and benchmarks

- Age groups: Adults (18+); Juveniles (<18).
- Benchmarks: MoJ national adult and youth proven reoffending rates (2017-2023) and the MCS youth cyber-offending persistence estimate (1.14% at ages 14-17) are presented as context. See s2.4 for rationale, caveats, and the lowest observed MoJ rates used to show conservatism.

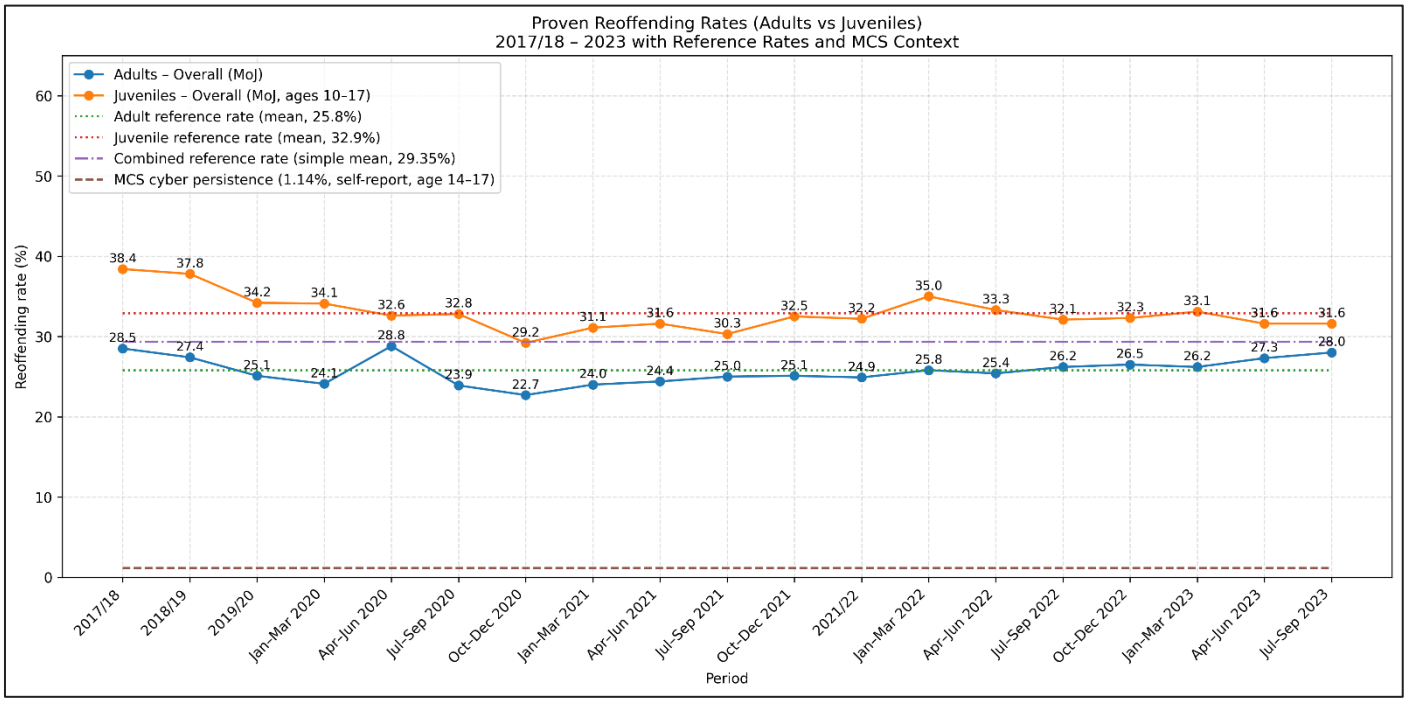


Figure 2. Collective Benchmark Data and Averages

2.8 Analysis plan

- Primary outcome (CMA offences): proportion with at least one proven CMA offence from index date to September 2025; reported overall and, where counts allow, by age group (adult, juvenile).
- Comparator for CMA: MCS youth cyber-offending persistence 1.14% (ages 14-17) used as a conservative lower bound against an all-age cohort (self-report, general population, multi-year; not like-for-like).
- Secondary outcome (all crime): proportion with at least one proven reoffence of any type over the same window; reported overall and by age to situate the CMA result.
- Comparators for all crime: MoJ one-year headline averages 25.8% (adults) and 32.9% (juveniles).
- Exploratory analyses: simple subgroup screens (selected prior-offence indicators; age bands). Unadjusted and clearly labelled descriptive; very small cells aggregated or not reported.

- Uncertainty and presentation: show 95% Wilson confidence intervals[13]; round to one decimal place.

- Identity protection: where small n or combinations of reported results cause potential risk of identification, results have been reported in aggregate or suppressed.

3. Results

3.1. Primary and secondary analysis outcomes

Category	Total subjects	Reoffended (n)	Reoffending rate	95% CI	Comparator (source)	Difference (pts)	Relative gap vs comparator
CMA offending	1,041	6	0.58%	0.3-1.3	1.14% (MCS benchmark)	−0.56 pts	49% lower
Combined (all participants)	1,041	144	13.83%	11.9-16.1	29.35% (simple mean of MoJ adult 25.8% & juvenile 32.9%)	−15.52 pts	53% lower
Juveniles (<18)	842	127	15.08%	12.8-17.7	32.9% (MoJ)	−17.82 pts	54% lower
Adults (18+)	199	17	8.54%	5.4-13.3	25.8% (MoJ)	−17.26 pts	67% lower

MoJ benchmarks 2017-2023 Proven Reoffending Statistics. MCS benchmark Maras et al. (2024) persistent self-reported cyber offending.

[13] UK Government. *Proportions: Basic Public Health Technical Guidance*

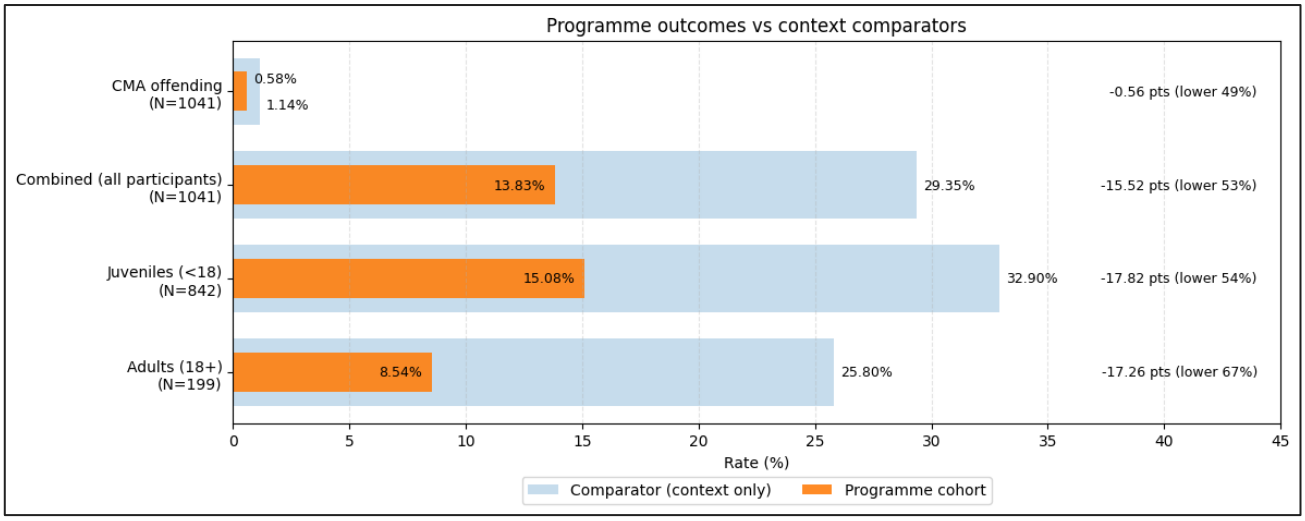


Figure 3. Programme Cohort Proven Reoffending Rates vs MoJ Benchmarks

Cyber-dependent reoffending under the CMA was 0.58% (95% CI 0.3-1.3) across N=1,041, below the MCS youth cyber-persistence benchmark of 1.14% (−0.56 pts; 49% lower, context only).

Programme-wide all-crime reoffending was 13.83% (95% CI 11.9-16.1). By age, juveniles were 15.08% (12.8-17.7) and adults 8.54% (5.4-13.3).

Against MoJ one-year context rates (32.9% juveniles; 25.8% adults), these correspond to gaps of −17.82 and −17.26% age points (54% and 67% lower).

3.2 Exploratory analyses

These screens surface practice signals only. Follow-up varies by referral year, so figures are not like-for-like with one-year MoJ measures. Rates are unadjusted.

3.2.1 Top prior-offence indicators by reoffending rate *(N with prior ≥ 15)*

Rank	Prior offence (pre-referral)	N with prior	Reoffending with prior	Reoffending without prior	Difference (pts)	Phi
1	Common assault	28	57.1%	12.6%	+44.5	0.210
2	Criminal damage	27	55.6%	12.7%	+42.8	0.200
3	Battery	26	50.0%	12.9%	+37.1	0.170
4	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	17	47.1%	13.3%	+33.8	0.120
5	False representation to make gain	15	40.0%	13.4%	+26.6	0.090

"Reoffending with prior" is the programme-wide post-referral reoffending rate among participants who had that prior; "without prior" is the rate among everyone else. Positive differences indicate markedly higher observed reoffending where that prior was present; phi (0.09-0.21 here) shows small-to-moderate association.

3.2.2 Reoffending by age band

Age is measured at referral. Each band includes the lower bound and excludes the upper (for example, 14 belongs to 14-16; 18 belongs to 18-25). Follow-up varies by referral year.

Age band (years)	N	Reoffended (n)	Rate	95% CI
Under 14	262	26	9.9%	6.9-14.1
14-16	371	72	19.4%	15.7-23.7
16-18	209	29	13.9%	9.8-19.2
18-25	143	17	11.9%	7.6-18.2
25+	56	0	0.0%	0.0-6.4

95% CIs are Wilson intervals for proportions.

4. Discussion

4.1 CMA offending

Result: Proven CMA reoffending was 0.58% (95% CI 0.3-1.3; 6/1,041).
This sits below the MCS youth cyber-persistence benchmark of 1.14% (−0.56% age points; 49% lower). The MCS figure is a general-population, self-report measure over multiple years and is not a like-for-like justice-system rate, which is likely higher.

4.1.1. Findings:

- The observed CMA rate is very low in absolute terms at the scale of this cohort. This is a positive indicator for the programme as the whole.
- It is below a deliberately conservative context benchmark (MCS 1.14%), which is designed to avoid over-claiming. The programme's success is likely higher, but we do not have a MOJ-produced reoffending rate for cyber-dependent offenders nor research with suitable findings to use as a direct comparator.

- The amount of CMA reoffending, whilst positive in being low, does mean analysis on why those subjects reoffended is not feasible with the methodology used.

4.1.2. Potential opportunities for measurement improvement

This report is a first programme-wide, descriptive read-out produced to test feasibility using routinely held administrative data. Future iterations may consider methodological enhancements to improve comparability and learning, subject to analytical capacity, data availability and operational priorities. Examples include presenting a fixed follow-up window (such as a 12-month read-out aligned to published MoJ conventions where feasible) and complementing quantitative results with targeted qualitative learning (for example, structured debriefs following a proven reoffence) to better understand rare events and support continuous improvement.

4.1.3. Possible explanations

- Evidence-based and learning-led: NCCU Prevent tailors' delivery, assessments and materials from established empirical research findings (police-led youth diversion[14], focused deterrence[15], developmental criminology[16], cyber-criminology[17]). This means strong practices are adapted, tested and adopted. Examples of this include use of counter-narratives, choice-based framing and multi-agency approaches.

- Two complementary evidence streams: NCCU Prevent combine external evidence (academia, private sector, published evaluations) with our own programme data (case reviews, practitioner feedback). This keeps content current at a rate academia is unable to keep up with allowing up-to-date target understanding. An example of this is the 'Pathways into Cybercrime'[18] series of intelligence assessments produced by the team.

- Pilot → measure → adopt/retire: NCCU Prevent tests new messages/components at small scale, keep them only if they improve the right indicators, and retire what doesn't. This stops weak or counter-productive practices becoming standard and preserves effectiveness in a fast-moving threat area. An example of this is the piloting of 'Positive Diversions Workshops'[19] as a national capability and assessing its impact,

[14] Wilson, D. B., Brennan, I., & Olaghere, A. (2018). *Police-initiated diversion for youth to prevent future delinquent behavior*
[15] Braga, A. A., Weisburd, D., & Turchan, B. (2018). *Focused Deterrence Strategies to Prevent Crime*
[16] Farrington, D. P. (2003). *Developmental and Life-Course Criminology: Key Theoretical and Empirical Issues*
[17] Loggen, J., Moneva, A., & Leukfeldt, R. (2024). *Pathways Into, Desistance From, and Risk Factors Related to Cyber-Dependent Crime: A Systematic Narrative Review*
[18] National Crime Agency. (2022). *Youth Pathways into Cyber Crime*
[19] BBC News. (2017). *Rehab camp aims to put young cyber-crooks on right track*

before it was implemented as a regional and now international capability[20][21].

- Academic partnership on "what works and why": NCCU builds strong partnerships with academia, facilitating or commissioning products helpful to understanding and preventing cyber-dependent offending. This facilitates understanding deeper than practitioners can design and provides external credibility to practices. An example of this is the Assessing the Aftermath[22] paper by the University of Cambridge assessing a Cyber Prevent Operation.

4.2 Wider offending (all-crime)

Result:

- Combined (all participants): N=1,041; reoffended 144; 13.83% (95% CI 11.9-16.1); comparator 29.35% *(simple mean of MoJ adult 25.8% & juvenile 32.9%)*; −15.52 pts; 53% lower.

- Juveniles (<18): N=842; reoffended 127; 15.08% (95% CI 12.8-17.7); comparator 32.9% *(MoJ)*; −17.82 pts; 54% lower.

- Adults (18+): N=199; reoffended 17; 8.54% (95% CI 5.4-13.3); comparator 25.8% *(MoJ)*; −17.26 pts; 67% lower.

4.2.1 Findings

- Observed all-crime rates are lower than context benchmarks across combined, juvenile and adult groups.
- Adults show lower reoffending than juveniles within the cohort; this pattern is consistent with national age-crime trends and shouldn't be attributed to the programme alone.

4.2.2 Possible explanations

- Root-cause design can produce a 'halo': Cyber Prevent Officers target general drivers of offending (identified via bespoke cyber risk assessment and, where needed, multi-agency input) rather than symptoms. They build protective factors[23] (prosocial identity, family/safeguarding support) and where possible remove or mitigate risk factors. Reducing these broader

[20] The Daily Swig. (2020). *Hack_Right: Dutch cybercrime prevention program comes of age*
[21] Australian Federal Police (2024). *re_B00TCMP inspires next generation of cyber champions*
[22] Vu, A. V., Collier, B., Thomas, D. R., Kristoff, J., Clayton, R., & Hutchings, A. (2025). *Assessing the Aftermath: the Effects of a Global Takedown against DDoS-for-hire Services*
[23] Zúñiga, D., Carretta, F., Contreras, M., Cornejo, E., Gallardo, C., Guichapani, I., & Muñoz, C. (2024). *Systematic Review of Psychosocial Risk and Protective Factors in Childhood and Their Links to Antisocial Behavior*

risks can lower non-cyber offending as a side-effect, even though cyber is the primary aim.

- Individualised interventions: Whilst root-cause identification facilitates it, each intervention plan in individualised in resourcing and type to the subject and their risk level. A database of resources and interventions allow practitioners to share helpful resources and map it to an area of risk from the risk assessment, such as a charity, online resource or education opportunity. Individualised desistance plans have been shown to generate cross-crime type reductions in reoffending[24].
- Channelling technical interest: Structured, legitimate routes for technical skills (education, competitions, projects, employment) replace idle opportunity and shift identity towards lawful achievement, which can reduce wider reoffending as routines change. Similar effects have been demonstrated in skill-based rehabilitation and mentorship programmes within other crime types[25].
- Guardianship effects: Interventions can often include those with a responsibility for the subject. Practical changes around the person (home/school awareness, partner oversight) increase everyday supervision and reduce opportunities for wider offending[26], not only CMA.

4.3 Additional juvenile benchmark comparison

Context: The Campbell Collaboration meta-analysis of police-led youth diversion[27] reports an average 13% relative reduction in youth reoffending compared with traditional criminal-justice processing.

Result:

- MoJ juvenile benchmark: 32.9%
- Campbell expectation (13% relative reduction): 28.6%

[24] Bonta, J., Bourgon, G., Rugge, T., Scott, T.-L., Yessine, A. K., Gutierrez, L., & Li, J. (2021). *A System-Wide Implementation and Evaluation of the Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS)*
[25] Tolan, P. H., Henry, D., Schoeny, M., & Bass, A. (2013). *Mentoring Programs to Affect Delinquency and Associated Outcomes of Youth At-Risk: A Comprehensive Meta-Analytic Review*
[26] Mohammad, T., & Nooraini, I. (2020). *Routine Activity Theory and Juvenile Delinquency: The Roles of Peers and Family Monitoring*
[27] Wilson, D. B., Brennan, I., & Olaghere, A. (2018). *Police-initiated diversion for youth to prevent future delinquent behavior*

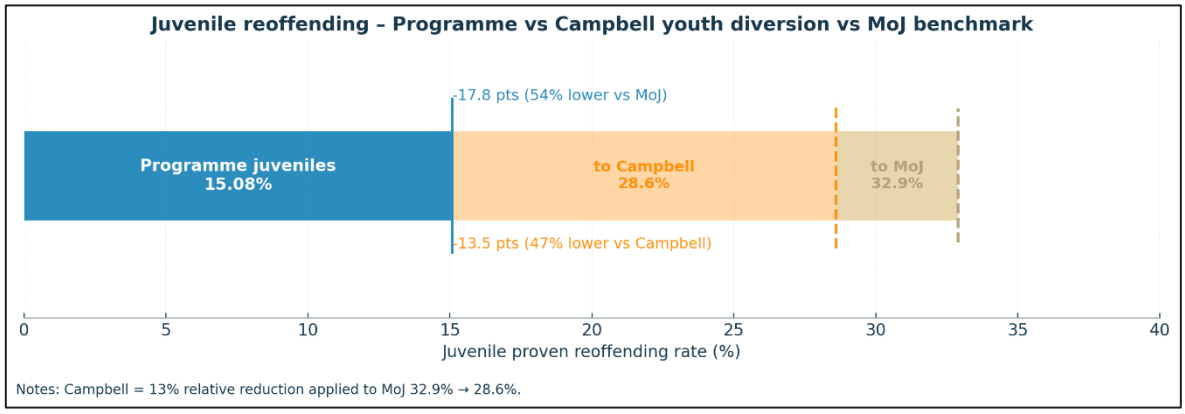


Figure 4. Juvenile reoffending - Programme vs Campbell youth diversion vs MoJ benchmark

Findings:

- The programme's juvenile reoffending rate sits well below both benchmarks: On this orientation view, the programme's juvenile rate is substantially lower than the MoJ benchmark and the Campbell youth-diversion expectation. This suggests performance at least in line with, and possibly better than, typical police-led diversion. However, the current design of this analysis does not allow direct comparison or causal inference.

4.4 Prior-offence signals

Results (top five by reoffending rate; priors with N ≥ 15):

- Common assault: N with prior 28; reoffending 57.1%; without 12.6%; +44.5 pts; phi 0.210
- Criminal damage: N with prior 27; reoffending 55.6%; without 12.7%; +42.8 pts; phi 0.200
- Battery: N with prior 26; reoffending 50.0%; without prior 12.9%; +37.1 pts; phi 0.170.
- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm: N with prior 17; reoffending 47.1%; without prior 13.3%; +33.8 pts; phi 0.120.
- False representation to make gain: N with prior 15; reoffending 40.0%; without prior 13.4%; +26.6 pts; phi 0.090.

4.4.1 Findings

- Violence and property damage feature most strongly. Prior markers such as common assault, battery, ABH and criminal damage appear among the top

signals for subsequent reoffending.

- Financial-gain cue is elevated. “False representation to make gain” also shows a higher reoffending rate among those with that prior than those without it.

- Both do have low N counts so interpretation should be careful but do support practitioner-reported experiences.

4.4.2 Possible explanations

Impulse-control and emotion-regulation: The violence pattern could point to issues with impulse-control whether that be in emotionally charged or opportunistic situations. It may be worth exploring impulse-control based intervention effect amongst this cohort to see whether such holistic interventions reduce risk of cyber reoffending among general reoffending. Tools such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and other self-regulatory principles have shown promise in achieving desistance from such behaviours[28].

Gain-based motivation: A gain-based crime existing as a top feature under this analysis would support practitioner assertions that financially motivated cyber criminals require different interventions than currently exist within the programme. The NCA has also found that financial motivation is indicative of further progression down an offending pathway[29], something which is supported by cyber-dependent motivation academic literature[30]. Consideration could be given for developing a tailored track for gain-motivated cases (clear ethics/sanctions messaging, supervised legitimate earning routes, firmer guardianship), while continuing the existing pathway for curiosity-led cases.

4.5 Age analysis

Result:

- Under 14: N=262; reoffended 26; 9.9% (95% CI 6.9-14.1).
- 14-16: N=371; reoffended 72; 19.4% (95% CI 15.7-23.7).
- 16-18: N=209; reoffended 29; 13.9% (95% CI 9.8-19.2).
- 18-25: N=143; reoffended 17; 11.9% (95% CI 7.6-18.2).

[28] Smith, A., Roberts, A., Krzemieniewska-Nandwani, K., Eggins, E., Cook, W., Fox, C., Maruna, S., Wallace, S., & Szifris, K. (2024). *Revisiting the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural therapy for reducing reoffending in the criminal justice system: A systematic review*

[29] National Crime Agency & CREST. *Identify, Intervene, Inspire: Helping young people to pursue careers in cybersecurity, not cybercrime*

[30] Martineau, M., & Wall, D. (2024). *Protective Factors and Pathways in Youth Cybercrime: Towards a Positive Intervention Framework*

- 25+: N=56; reoffended 0; 0.0% (95% CI 0.0-6.4).
- Continuous-age statistics: Pearson r = −0.059; Spearman ρ = 0.001 (near-null).

4.5.1 Findings

- Rates are highest in 14-16, lower in under 14 and 16-18, and lower again in adult bands.
- Adults (18+) record a lower rate than juveniles (<18) within the cohort.
- The 25+ band has no observed events but a wide upper CI, reflecting small N.
- The continuous-age correlations are near-null, consistent with a non-linear banded pattern.

4.5.2 Possible explanations

- Age-crime curve alignment: The pattern (higher rates in mid-teens; lower in adults) mirrors the established age-crime curve[31] and matches MoJ proven reoffending statistics where juveniles reoffend more than adults. This suggests the age differences observed here are broadly expected in curve, however at a lower persistence rate.
- Adult effectiveness and delivery fit: The results do not indicate that the model is less effective for adults; adult rates are lower, and context-only gaps are of a similar order to those for juveniles. It suggests that adult referrals should not be deprioritised. In line with the programme's ethos, an adult track (employment-linked pathways, stronger deterrence messaging and more detailed education) could also be considered by building on the existing 18+ framed resources.

5. Limitations

5.1. Scope and comparability

- Variable follow-up (referral → Sept 2025): Exposure differs by referral year; estimates are cumulative proportions and not like-for-like with one-year national statistics. Where exposure exceeds 12 months, any favourable gap is a lower-bound indication, not an effect.

[31] Farrington, D. P. (1986). *Age and Crime.* Crime and Justice

- Departure from MoJ timing: The additional six-month post-window wait was not applied; the index is referral receipt. This improves timeliness but reduces strict comparability with MoJ publications.
- Benchmarks are orientation only: MoJ rates (one-year, all crime) and the MCS 1.14% persistence line (self-report, general population, multi-year) frame scale and are not direct comparators for this cohort. The Campbell youth-diversion "13% relative reduction" is a meta-analytic average used only as an orientation line.
- Proven outcomes only: Results reflect offences recorded on the PNC; undetected or unprosecuted behaviour is outside scope. CMA detection/charging may be lower than for volume crime.
- Denominators include custody: Months not at liberty remain in denominators, which can understate rates among those at liberty.
- No counterfactual; no adjustment: There is no matched comparison group in this phase and no risk adjustment; observed differences are associations, not effects.

5.2. Subgroups and statistical precision

- Small-N imprecision: Some subgroups have wide confidence intervals; a single case could materially change the estimates. Zero events ≠ zero risk.
- Exploratory screens: Prior-offence and age-band screens are unadjusted and based on variable exposure; results are triage signals, not proof.

5.3. Data quality, identity matching and cleaning limitations

- Identity attribution relies on names/DOB and offence-date sequencing; mis-matches and timing errors are possible (e.g., common names, incomplete identifiers).
- PNC outputs can include empty/undated logs and legacy items outside scope unless filtered.
- Duplicate referrals can inflate person-level counts unless collapsed.

Controls applied:

- Two independent 15% audits.
  - Pre-PNC input verification: 162/1,077 referral entries checked against originals; 0/162 discrepancies.
  - Post-PNC output verification: 162 returns cross-checked; 1 referral-date error corrected; 8 implausible DOB mismatches excluded; 5 name-mismatch

cases excluded; minor single-digit DOB discrepancies retained where identity was clear.

- Documented exclusions and deduplication.
  - Missing DOB: n=36 (3.3%) excluded in full (identity could not be verified).
  - Empty/undated offence logs: n=27 empty, n=2 undated removed (person record retained).
  - Out-of-scope record: n=1 removed.
  - Duplicate referrals: n=9 individuals collapsed to a single person-level entry (earliest referral as index).
  - Final analytical cohort: N=1,041 unique, verifiable participants (96.7% of 1,077).

Residual risk after controls:

- Some misattribution or sequencing error may remain despite audits (e.g., difficult name/DOB cases, incomplete identifiers). Decisions and exclusions were logged to ensure traceability and to minimise bias.

5.4. Selection and implementation

- Referral mix and selection: Case-mix may differ from national cohorts (e.g., adult share, violence/property priors), influencing observed rates independently of delivery.
- Implementation heterogeneity: Delivery and partner input may vary by force and over time; fidelity/dosage were not consistently linked to outcomes in this phase.
- Intervention recording (early years): Not all early referrals had centrally held confirmation of delivery; where necessary, "tasked" was treated as delivered, which may misclassify some cases.

5.5. Benchmarking specifics

- Combined comparator is illustrative: The 29.35% "combined" line is a simple mean of MoJ adult (25.8%) and juvenile (32.9%) rates; a cohort-weighted comparator would be preferable for precision.
- Campbell youth-diversion line: The "13% relative reduction" is an international average for police-led diversion and remains non-directly comparable to these programme outcomes.

5.6. Mitigations already in place

- Transparent methods and QA: Departures from MoJ practice, cohort construction and all cleaning/QA rules were set out and logged; person-level deduplication was used.
- Conservative benchmarking: External figures are presented as context only; the MCS 1.14% line is treated as a lower-bound.
- Uncertainty shown: Wilson 95% confidence intervals are reported, and small-N cells are flagged.

6. Conclusion

This evaluation provides a clearer picture of proven reoffending among people referred to the NCPRM. Outcomes were drawn from PNC records, calculated from the date of referral to the September 2025 data freeze, and presented alongside national and international figures for context only. Cohort construction and timing choices were set out up front, and data quality was strengthened through two independent random audits, documented exclusions of unusable entries, and person-level deduplication. The final analytical cohort comprised 1,041 unique and verifiable participants.

Two results are central. First, cyber dependent reoffending under the CMA was 0.58% with a 95% confidence interval of 0.3 to 1.3, which sits below a deliberately conservative youth cyber persistence benchmark of 1.14% from the MCS. Second, all crime reoffending for the cohort was 13.83% with a 95% confidence interval of 11.9 to 16.1. By age, juveniles recorded 15.08% with a 95% confidence interval of 12.8 to 17.7 and adults recorded 8.54% with a 95% confidence interval of 5.4 to 13.3. When read as orientation only, these levels sit well below national one-year figures for juveniles and adults. Exploratory screens point to violence related priors and criminal damage as the most consistent practice signals for subsequent offending, and a prior for false representation as a possible indicator of financial motivation differences in programme effectiveness.

There are important limitations. Follow-up varies by referral year, the MoJ six-month post window wait was not applied, denominators include time in custody, and outcomes reflect proven events only. Cyber dependent offending is relatively rare in the data and precision is limited for several subgroups. There is no matched counterfactual or risk adjustment in this phase, and external figures are not comparable with the estimates reported here. These constraints are balanced by conservative quality assurance, clear documentation of exclusions and rules, and consistent presentation of uncertainty.

The practical picture is positive and actionable. The programme records very low cyber dependent reoffending and modest all crime reoffending in context. The model remains aligned to a root cause approach that identifies risks, draws in partners where useful, and builds protective factors. Planning is tailored to the person rather than one size fits all, so practitioners can match credible opportunities to assessed needs. Adults should continue to be accepted for referral, and an adult track can be developed where framing or logistics differ from youth delivery. Violence related priors and property damage are sensible triage cues for closer follow up, while curiosity or learning led profiles can continue to be channelled through skills mentoring, education and employment links.

The next step is to convert encouraging orientation gaps into stronger evidence. A MoJ aligned twelve-month read-out on an eligible cohort and a short qualitative feedback loop after any proven reoffence that records why it happened and what might have prevented it will keep the programme learning led between formal analyses. By refining the methods, it will allow the Cyber Prevent function to maintain momentum, focus effort where it has the greatest effect, and substantiate the early signal that the programme is achieving low cyber dependent reoffending with wider benefits for desistance.

7. Contact Information

This work was undertaken by a project team led by NCCU Prevent. Any questions or enquiries about the contents of this report should be directed to cyberchoices@nca.gov.uk.