Secondary Data Analysis Projects

Call for Proposals

Summary

The Youth Endowment Fund is a charity with a mission that matters. We're here to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

We're committed to delivering the highest quality evidence for young people. We want to learn about young people's experiences of violence, the drivers and what works to prevent it. To support this, we're launching a £500,000 research round.

We're asking for proposals that exploit existing secondary data sources that address key questions for policy and practice. In this call we're asking for research proposals that fit with the themes of our current funding rounds:

- [Diversion from the criminal justice system](#);
- [A supportive home](#);
- [A safe, positive place to learn](#).

We expect to approve around 2-5 projects that deliver outputs within 12-18 months of being commissioned. We're interested in proposals which use national datasets as well as those that may be held locally. We'd welcome bids from researchers and data owners who have existing research partnerships (such as police forces, VRUs, local authorities etc) who want to get the most out of their data.

The remainder of this document provides further details on the round, the types of research we're looking for and how to apply. Applications open on Monday 30th May and close at **5pm Friday 24th June 2022** for initial expressions of interest. Successful applications will be asked to submit full proposals, and shortlisted proposals will then be invited to interview. Successful teams will be informed by early September.

About the round

Why are we doing it?

To date, the YEF has focused on funding programmes and conducting impact evaluations, through our [themed](#), [place-based](#) and [target projects](#) funding rounds. We've also conducted evidence synthesis, to inform our [Toolkit](#) and [Evidence and Gap Map](#).

However, there are important wider questions about the drivers of violence and the effectiveness of policies and approaches that require alternative research methods. Some of these questions can be answered using existing datasets. That's why we're

launching our call for secondary data analysis research proposals, to address some of these evidence gaps.

What questions are we looking to address?

In this call we're asking for research proposals that fit with the themes of the YEF's first three fundings rounds:

- Diversion from the criminal justice system;
- A supportive home; and,
- A safe, positive place to learn.

For each, below we set out the scope of each theme and several potential research questions. The research questions are provided to give an indication of the sorts of projects we might fund. We welcome applications that propose research questions that go beyond these, as long as they address one of our themes and address a known evidence gap.

We will give particular weight to research proposals that explore the drivers of violent offending specifically (e.g. homicide, violence against the person and robbery). We will also consider proposals that look at closely related outcomes (such as drug use and supply or weapons possession), or outcomes which are well-evidenced predictors of violent offending.

Throughout all themes, we are interested in hearing from proposals which explore the drivers and impacts of racial and other disproportionalities.

Pre-court diversions

> We consider pre-court diversions as any alternative to formal criminal justice proceedings; these might be out-of-court disposals (OOCDs), including community resolutions and youth cautions, or diversion by referral to a youth offending team (YOT) at the point of arrest. Diversions can also involve identifying and supporting those children at the highest risk of offending before they formally offend.

The use of diversionary schemes has increased significantly over the last 20 years, with a particularly marked increase over the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2019 and 2020, community resolutions and educational or intervention activity increased by 9% and 156% respectively in England and Wales (CREST 2022).[1] Existing evidence shows that individual

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[1] Shaw, D. et al (CREST 2022). Making the criminal justice system work better: how to improve out-of-court disposals and diversion schemes. (here).

diversionary programmes can reduce reoffending significantly. One review found point-of-arrest diversion and OOCDs resulted in an average 13% reduction in reoffending compared to formal criminal justice processing (Campbell Collaboration 2021).[2]

However, data on the use of diversions is not routinely collected at a national level and local level data collection is patchy (CREST 2022).[3] This means we know little about how practice varies in-terms of who is and isn't diverted. There is a lack of evidence on the prevalence of different types of activities, which children receive each type and effects on moderate or high-risk offenders. We also don't know much about the relative effectiveness of different types of activity on reoffending or the effects on timing (i.e. the length of time between being diverted and reoffence) or the impact on offence severity.

Some of the important evidence gaps we've identified are:
- Which children are diverted? How does this vary across locations, and what racial and other disproportionalities exist?
- How are they diverted? How are decisions made for different types of diversion, and are the right young people diverted?
- How do diversions affect future offending outcomes including frequency and severity? What is the impact of local variation in implementation of diversion and other policy reforms?

A supportive home

In this area, we are interested in the home and care environments of children at risk of violence. We are concerned with inter-parental and intra-familial conflict, family networks and offending within the family. We are also concerned with looked-after children, including the care system and foster care.

We know a child's home life has significant effects on their long-term outcomes. Children with experiences of care are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system, and children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are more likely to have negative future outcomes (EIF 2020).[4] We know that relationships within the family have a strong correlation with future offending, including intra-familial violence, relationship quality with parents and separation from parents.

[2] Gaffney, H. et al (Campbell Collaboration 2021). Pre-Court Diversion: Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit Technical Report. ([here](#)).

[3] Shaw, D. et al (CREST 2022). Making the criminal justice system work better: how to improve out-of-court disposals and diversion schemes. ([here](#)).

[4] Asmussen, K. et al (Early Intervention Foundation 2020). Adverse childhood experiences: What we know, what we don't know, and what should happen next. ([here](#)).

However, whilst the link between ACEs and a range of negative outcomes is well established, there is less research on specific offending outcomes or how different clusters of ACEs predict offending (EIF 2020).[5] The role inter-parental violence plays in driving future child offending has been researched, but so far, the causal link is unclear. For looked after children, we'd like to know more about how different experiences within the care system and when they happen affects children and young people. And, there is less evidence on the different types of family support or kinship networks and how they protect vulnerable groups.

Some of the potential research questions we've identified are:
- How do ACEs predict specific offending outcomes? How do ACEs cluster and how predictive are they in combination?
- How does the home life of children affect development and future offending? How does exposure to violence in the home affect future offending?
- How do pathways through, and interactions with the care system influence offending trajectories? What is the impact of recent reforms to the care system?

A safe, positive place to learn

> We consider a safe, positive place to learn as children's engagement and presence in schools, children's behaviour (including bullying) and absence from schools (exclusions and truancy). We are also interested in alternative provision from mainstream education (e.g. pupil referral units or provision for SEN pupils).

Previous evidence has shown a child's education and experience at school has significant effects on their future outcomes. We know that receiving both fixed and permanent school exclusions is associated with future offending, whilst positive school attainment can be a protective factor (DfE 2022).[6] In the Department of Education analysis of 1.63 million pupils in England, of those who had been permanently excluded from school, 59% had also been cautioned or sentenced for an offence.[7] We also know that being a perpetrator of bullying is an evidenced predictor for future offending (EPI 2018).[8]

However, the evidence on the link between persistent absenteeism and offending is weak, and we don't know much about the causal relationship between exclusions and offending. We also want to know more about how school practices affect future violence perpetration, this includes the impact of alternative provision (such as pupil referral units),

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[5] ibid.

[6] Department for Education (2022). Education, children's social care and offending: Descriptive Statistics. ([here](#)).

[7] ibid.

[8] Education Policy Institute (2018). Bullying: A review of the evidence. ([here](#)).

or the impact of school behaviour policies and support systems, such as welfare or attendance officers.

Some of the research questions we've identified, are:
- How does attending alternative provision (such as pupil referral units) act as a risk or protective factor for future offending or violence?
- What family and neighbourhood level risk factors predict school exclusions and offending outcomes?
- How do system level reforms to school autonomy and funding affect offending? What is the impact of recent reforms to school support systems?

Our School Choices funding round with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has just closed for expressions of interest. This round invited research proposals looking to evaluate the impact of practices and approaches schools choose to implement without manualised programmes on children's attainment and exclusion. Some of the research interests and methodologies may overlap between both of these funding opportunities, but the key differences are this round's focus on secondary data; large scale practice reforms, and particular weight to proposals with youth violent offending outcomes.

Data and methods

What data might you use?

We are interested in secondary data analysis projects that exploit existing datasets. These could include cohort or longitudinal studies; administrative datasets; or locally held linked data from multiple agencies. Proposals might also consider re-analysis of pre-existing data from previously run evaluations. All data should be on populations in England and Wales only.

Data Type	Potential datasets
Administrative datasets	- Police National Computer (NPC) - NHS hospital admission data - DfE National Pupil Database (NPD) - Linked datasets including the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) & NPD and the NPD & PNC.
Cohort studies	- Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) - Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children - Understanding Society
Locally held data	- Local VRU datasets (e.g. linked individual police, care and schools data) - YOT data and case notes - Local authority data (e.g. children's services or housing statistics)

Whilst the focus is secondary data analysis, we will consider proposals that link existing datasets with primary data collected as part of the project where this enables novel insights. However, we would not expect primary data collection to form a substantial part of the budget. We are also interested in hearing from proposals which plan to perform new linking between existing data. In both cases, the feasibility, cost and timeline implications will need to be justified in light of the insights it will bring.

<u>What research methods and approaches will we fund?</u>

The types of methodologies we'd expect to see include:
- **Descriptive analysis -** particular interest in cohorts or issues which haven't been explored before, a key example would be issues of racial or other disproportionalities.
- **Relationship testing -** for example simple linear regressions or multi-level modelling that look to test for the existence of relationships to offending outcomes.
- **Impact -**Quasi-experimental methods that exploit variations in policy or practice to establish casual relationships with offending and other violence related outcomes.

Route to impact

We want to fund research projects which have a clear route to impact and that can demonstrate potential for change. This could be through filling evidence gaps to answer nationally relevant policy or practice questions. Or, it could be through the analysis of locally held data, based on the relationship between data owners and researchers who want to get more out of their data to inform operational decisions. Any research plans that use local data should also have relevant outcomes for the wider population.

Outputs

Following the research project, we expect the first publication of results to be a report on our website. All outputs will be peer reviewed prior to publication. For quasi-experimental studies, we would expect to publish a pre-specification of the proposed methodology through a study plan.

Application considerations

Initial applications should be a brief expression of interest, we will then request full proposals from successful applicants. Shortlisted proposals will then be invited for interview.

We will work with successful teams to refine proposals from Autumn 2022 before final plans are agreed.

<u>Budgets and Timeline</u>

We are looking to fund 2-5 projects. The final budget will be decided after research plans are confirmed, and following an iterative design period between YEF and the research team. We expect the number of projects we fund and their budgets to vary according to research complexity, design and timeline.

For expressions of interest do not include VAT in budgeting, but we will provide our full budget template for all research teams at full proposal stage.

We expect most projects to be delivered over 12-18 months from initial commissioning. Some project may take less time, particularly for more descriptive or exploratory projects. Full proposals should include a consideration of potential delays to the data access process and include mitigations within the timeline.

<u>Other considerations</u>

When reviewing applications, we will put particular emphasis on plans around data risks. The best applications will already have experience of accessing and analysing the data, and have pre-existing relationships with data owners. Applications should be clear on how issues with data access might influence the project.

Any applications proposing the linkage of existing datasets should include a detailed plan for doing so, and consider how data sharing and storing could impact the timeline, risks and budget for the project.

<u>How to apply</u>

If interested in undertaking this work, please send an expression of interest copying in data@youthendowmentfund.org.uk and Lottie Louette: lottie.louette@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by **5pm Friday 24ᵗʰ June 2022** (1,500- 2,000 words) setting out:
- Which research topic you're interested in and the proposed research question(s);
- Rationale for why this matters (including evidence of gap and impact of results);
- The methodology and techniques proposed to address the question;
- A brief description of the data you plan to use, how you'll get access and demonstrate what you propose is feasible;
- Indicative timeline and budget;
- Brief background on project team and experience.

What happens next

Following this, we will invite successful applications to submit a full proposal (no more than 4,000 words). Shortlisted full proposals will then be invited to interview. Full proposals should include:

- Proposed research question(s);
- Rationale for why this matters;
- Methodology/techniques and full description of approach;
- Data access plans, timeline and understanding of data privacy/anonymisation requirements under UK-GDPR (ethical risks should be carefully mitigated);
- Detailed timeline and budget;
- Project team and relevant experience.

Applications will be scored with the following weightings:

- 25% research questions and potential to influence;
- 20% methodology and feasibility of addressing research question;
- 20% data and access plans;
- 10% plans to address potential bias or disproportionality in data;
- 10% timeline and budget;
- 15% project team and relevant experience.

We plan to confirm which projects we'll take forward by early September.

For any questions please email data@youthendowmentfund.org.uk and copy in Lottie Louette lottie.louette@youthendowmentfund.org.uk