



Diversion evidence review – a call for proposals

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is creating a guidance report which summarises the best available research on youth diversion and makes actionable recommendations for practice and policy. This call for proposals aims to appoint a team to conduct an evidence review to support the writing of this report. We are looking for teams with knowledge of the research literature on youth diversion, and expertise in conducting evidence reviews to high standards.

About the YEF

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is a charity with a mission that matters. We exist to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. The YEF was established in March 2019 by children’s charity Impetus, with a £200m endowment and ten-year mandate from the Home Office.

We know that to make a lasting difference we must do more than just fund and evaluate promising programmes. We need to establish consensus about what works and build a movement around making sure that young people get the very best support possible.

Guidance reports

In June 2021 the YEF published the Toolkit, an online resource which provides an overview of existing knowledge and research on approaches to reducing youth crime and violence. The Toolkit provides an entry point to the evidence base, allowing readers to get an initial sense of the best bets for preventing violence. The Toolkit includes a summary of the research on [pre-court diversion](#).

We are planning to build on the Toolkit by producing a new resource we are calling ‘guidance reports’. Guidance reports will summarise the best available research and thinking on a salient topic and support the YEF audience to introduce changes that will prevent serious youth violence. They will explore the research in more detail than the Toolkit and combine it with stakeholder expertise to create actionable recommendations.¹

¹ A fellow What Whats Centre, the Education Endowment Foundation has published several similar [guidance reports](#) which provide a good indication of what we could produce.

Our first guidance report will focus on diverting children from the criminal justice system. It will focus on activity which diverts children from formal processes and outcomes in the period between initial contact with the police and an appearance at court.

We will develop the guidance report over a four-stage process.

1. Scoping phase. We began with a scoping phase to better understand the audience for the report, their needs and the existing research. We produced a research agenda which sets out gaps in the evidence base and proposes projects for the YEF to fill these gaps. This evidence review is one of those projects. We also appointed an expert panel to provide support and challenge throughout the process of creating guidance.
2. Evidence phase. The YEF will commission new research to inform the guidance. This research includes this evidence review as well as other projects.
3. Writing and recommendations. The YEF will produce an initial draft of guidance recommendations based on the findings from our research. We will refine these recommendations through consultation with our expert panel and other stakeholders.
4. Next steps: campaigning for change. The final guidance report will be published on the YEF website. The YEF will use the guidance report as a foundation for its work to campaign for change.

Why are we commissioning an evidence review?

During the scoping phase, stakeholders frequently asked for more information about effective implementation of diversion schemes and interventions.

There are relatively recent, high-quality systematic reviews on the *impact* of diversion as an overall approach.² These show that on average diversion can be

² Petrosino, A., Petrosino, C., Guckenburg, S., Terrell, J., Fronius, T. A., & Choo, K. (2019). The effects of juvenile system processing on subsequent delinquency outcomes. In D. P. Farrington, L. Kazemian, & A. R., Piquero (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental and Life-course Criminology* (pp. 553 – 575). New York: Oxford University Press.; Wilson, D. B., Brennan, I., & Olaghere, A. (2018). Police-initiated diversion for youth to prevent future delinquent behavior: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 2018: 5. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2018.5>

more effective than formal processing. Some preliminary searches for new studies suggest that it is not worthwhile to fund an update to these reviews.

However, we think there is a gap in the review literature on *how to implement* diversion schemes. We therefore intend to fund a new review to develop insights on *how to implement* diversion effectively. This will be an important resource to support guidance and our efforts to promote change.

We would like a focused review that will complete by March 2023 so that findings can be integrated into the diversion guidance report. We would like the review to be conducted in a modular fashion. We will agree a set of well-defined research questions with the review team for them to work on in sequence. They will deliver a separate 'module' of the review on each question. This enables us to start considering potential guidance materials sooner than if we waited for the review as a single, final document.

We encourage applicants to set out in their proposals 5-10 research questions/modules that they see as priorities for diversion practice and policy, and that are amenable to systematic evidence review in the time available. It is likely that these will need to be tightly defined given the time available. The final set of questions will be agreed between YEF and the review team. Scoping conversations with stakeholders suggest questions could include:

- How important is the speed of referral to diversion schemes?
- How should diversion schemes set eligibility criteria to decide who is diverted?
- How can practitioners ensure equitable access to diversion?
- How should practitioners make decisions about the intensity of interventions offered?
- How can schemes provide procedural fairness (e.g. through the use of multi-agency decision-making panels)?

We expect the review to identify the 'best available' evidence on these questions. We recognise that different questions will be better suited to different types of evidence and there may be some questions where the evidence is significantly weaker. We expect the review to comment on the strength of the evidence available to answer the different questions in a way that is consistent across modules, so that YEF can make judgements about where recommendations are strongly supported, and where they are tentative.

To illustrate what the evidence says, we encourage the review team to identify concrete examples of effective and ineffective practice (including case studies and resources) in relation to each of the questions, ideally from high quality UK evaluations.

Outputs and timeline

The key outputs from this work are:

- A series of short reports (2-4 pages) summarising the best available research on the key research questions we identify. These should be clearly referenced, with comments on the strength of the underlying evidence.
- A final report which combines the reports on individual research questions with an overview of the methodology, and summary.
- Ongoing advice and support for the translation of report findings into actionable guidance.

Date	Activity
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final review module delivered by end of March 2023.
March to May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review team finalises the full report • Review team supports the drafting of actionable recommendations and guidance resources.
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final report for the evidence review is published online, alongside the guidance report.

How to apply

If you would like to apply for this work, please submit an application to peter.henderson@youthendowmentfund.org.uk. Please also get in touch with Peter if you have any questions.

Your application should be no more than 3,000 words and should include:

- A description of the team who will carry out the work and their relevant experience and expertise
- A description of how you will approach the work. This should include:
 - A suggested list of 5-10 well-defined and feasible research questions.
 - A description of your approach to systematically finding and analysing studies.
 - A proposal for how you will critically appraise the quality of the evidence on a particular research question.
- A detailed budget. Please note the 'Research Grants' section below.
- A timeline for the work.

The deadline for applications is 30th September 2022. The YEF is likely to hold interviews with a shortlist of applicants on the 10th October.

Research grants

YEF commissions research grants, not service contracts, in most cases, and this call for proposal is one for a research grant. This is because the research we commission is for the public benefit and is made freely available to the public via our online toolkit, guidance and other reports. Since we commission our research and structure our relationship with researchers as a grant, the activity is not subject to VAT. However, input VAT is the value added tax added to the price when you purchase goods or services that are liable to VAT. If researchers are including equipment or other items in their budget, and those items include input VAT, that input VAT can be charged to YEF and should be included in the budget template. More guidance can be provided on how we've reached this position on request.