

## YEF Children's Services Consultancy Call

### Summary

- YEF is seeking an external consultant to produce a report that answers the following questions:
  1. When providing guidance to Directors of Children's Services on how they can protect children from involvement in violence, what areas should YEF prioritise? Has YEF currently prioritised the correct areas?
  2. What new research should YEF commission to better understand how children in care can be supported to reduce their risk of involvement in violence?
  3. What new research should YEF commission to better understand how parenting programmes and family therapy may be used to reduce children's involvement in violence?
- YEF will use the report to commission research in January 2025, that will aim to conclude in December 2025. This research will then be used to write guidance for Directors of Children's Services and policy makers on how Children's Services can best protect children from involvement in violence
- We expect the work to take a consultant or consultancy team 15 days, and to be undertaken between October and December 2024. We can pay a day rate of £650. The work will be contracted in stages (with an initial 5 days focused on question 1).

### Background

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. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

Children and young people at risk of becoming involved in violence deserve services that give them the best chance of a positive future. To make sure that happens, we fund promising projects and then use the very best evaluation to find out what works. We also synthesise the best available evidence from across the world, and then aim to mobilise what we learn across various sectors to make a change to the lives of children.

It is also imperative that YEF fully understands the context in which children live, and in which services operate to support them. Only then can we make evidence-based recommendations on how best to protect children from involvement in violence. Alongside our [programme funding](#), and [evidence synthesis](#) work, we fund a wide range of research projects (including data analysis, youth understanding work, and practice reviews) to better understand young people's lives, and the systems and services that surround them. We then use this research to write and publish guidance on how to improve that system.

Children's services is one such system that we intend to provide guidance on.

## The Children's Services sector

Children's Services are the range of services delivered by local authorities that aim to support children and protect vulnerable families. In this project, YEF is especially interested in the following services:

- **Early Help.** Support aimed at improving outcomes and preventing escalating need. This could include parenting support services, play and activity groups, or communication and language support.
- **Children's social care.** Supports families who need additional help to protect children and young people from harm. Its main aim is to keep families together, but when this isn't possible, the system provides an alternative home to children.
- **Child protection services.** Services provided by social workers that aim to safeguard and protect children, making enquiries where there are concerns (and a referral), determining children's welfare and establishing strategies for future action, liaising with services and families, and outlining a child protection plan where appropriate.
- **Children's Safeguarding Partnerships.** Every local authority area has a Children's Safeguarding Partnership. The three mandatory partners are the local authority, the police, and health. However, the partnership will also include other statutory & voluntary and community sector partners. It is the responsibility of the partnership to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements which bring agencies together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- **Child in Need services.** Support provided to children who have been assessed by a social worker and found to need help and protection because of risks to their development or health, such as neglect, domestic abuse in the family, or because they are disabled.
- **Child exploitation services.** Specific support services for children at risk of exploitation.
- **Edge of care services.** Specific support for children and families who are at risk of entering the care system.

Children's services also include Youth Justice, Health and Education, but these services are not included in this work as YEF is considering them elsewhere in our work.

## YEF's Children's Services work

In 2026, YEF will publish a set of recommendations for how the Children's Services system across England and Wales can support the reduction of serious youth violence. These recommendations will draw upon YEF's existing work in Children's Services, including:

- Evaluations of projects within Children's Services (such as [Fostering Connections](#), [the Transition Hub for Looked After children](#), and [mentalisation based therapy](#) for parents).

- Three relevant YEF Toolkit Strands (parenting programmes, multi-systemic therapy, and functional family therapy, all of which are delivered by Children’s Services)
- Our extensive work understanding the lives of young people with the [Peer Action Collective](#)

In addition, YEF intends to fund a range of work to better understand child criminal exploitation.

## This consultancy project

In 2026 YEF will publish the aforementioned recommendations in two guidance reports for the Children’s Service sector:

- A. Practice guidance, targeted at Directors of Children’s Services.** This will aim to advise on how they can lead the delivery of services in a way that protects children from involvement in violence. For an example of such guidance from another sector, see our recently published [education practice guidance](#).
- B. Systems guidance, targeted at policy makers.** This will aim to advise on the policy changes required to ensure Children’s Services can protect children from violence. For an example of such guidance, see our recently published [Youth Justice systems guidance](#).

Both guidance reports will be underpinned by research commissioned by YEF. Before commissioning this work, we need to define the scope of the guidance. Of course, all functions of the Children’s Services sector are important and have relevance for violence prevention. For example, the early help team will provide a wide range of services that could prevent children experiencing harm that could put them at greater risk of involvement in violence. However, it is likely unrealistic and undesirable that YEF focuses on the whole of the Children’s Services sector when writing guidance. The scope quickly becomes unmanageable without any focus.

YEF, therefore, have suggested a narrowed scope to include:

- **Extra-familial harm and child criminal exploitation.** This is a priority due to this group of children being at higher risk of involvement in violence. Children’s Services are now required to address exploitation and serious violence within a safeguarding framework, a part of the system that has the most direct link to violence prevention.
- **Children in care and the services they receive.** This is a priority due to the heightened risk of involvement in violence and offending faced by children in care.
- **Family therapy and parenting programmes.** This is a priority due to the evidence on both [family therapy](#) and [parenting programmes](#) that shows these interventions have potential to reduce violence.

We have set out a range of research projects that we intend to commission on Child Criminal Exploitation. However, we need to fully scope potential research projects for children in care and family therapy and parenting programmes.

YEF is, therefore, seeking an external consultant to produce a report that answers the following questions:

1. When providing guidance to Directors of Children's services on how they can protect children from involvement in violence, what areas should YEF prioritise? Has YEF currently prioritised the correct areas?
2. What new research should YEF commission to better understand how children in care can be supported to reduce their risk of involvement in violence?
3. What new research should YEF commission to better understand how parenting programmes and family therapy may be used to reduce children's involvement in violence?

Before embarking on the work, YEF would meet with the consultant/consultancy team and provide a more detailed description of our current work.

We expect the work to take a consultant or consultancy team 15 days, and to be undertaken between October and December 2024. We can pay a day rate of £650. The work will be contracted in stages (with an initial 5 days focused on question 1).

## **Application process**

To apply, please provide no more than 1,500 words that answer:

1. Why do you want to conduct this consultancy work?
2. What experience do you or your team have with regards to the Children's Services sector?
3. What is your experience of identifying evidence gaps and opportunities for robust research that can drive policy and practice changes?

Applications will be scored on:

1. Commitment to YEF's mission
2. Experience and expertise on Children's Services
3. Experience and expertise on identifying evidence gaps.

You may also provide yours/your teams' CVs; these will not be included in the wordcount.

**Please email your 1,500 words to [joe.collin@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:joe.collin@youthendowmentfund.org.uk) by 9am on 30<sup>th</sup> September.**