

## YEF Youth Clubs Review

### Summary

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of youth clubs' role in supporting children at risk of or involved in violence in England and Wales.
- The study will inform YEF's recommendations for the youth sector on how to reduce violence amongst children and young people (which will draw on a range of ongoing and completed research work).
- The deadline for the final report is May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The deadline for proposals is 10am, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

### 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 evaluations 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 reduce serious violence amongst children and young people. 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.

The youth sector is one such system that supports children.

### YEF's youth sector work

In late 2025, YEF will publish a set of recommendations for how the youth sector across England and Wales can support the reduction of serious violence amongst children and young people. These recommendations will draw upon YEF's existing work in the youth sector, including:

- Projects YEF has funded and evaluated within the sector (such as multi-site trials of [mentoring](#) and [detached youth work](#))
- Relevant sections of the YEF [Toolkit](#) (e.g. sports programmes, arts programmes, mentoring, and A&E navigators).
- Our extensive work understanding the lives of young people with the [Peer Action Collective](#)
- Our annual [Children Violence and Vulnerability survey](#) of young people.

In addition, YEF is currently commissioning three other reviews of practice, covering A&E navigator programmes, youth workers' role in safeguarding, and youth sector provision, commissioning, and funding. We are open to teams applying for more than one project, particularly if efficiencies can be achieved through combining methods or reporting.

## The aim of this project

We want to know more about the role that open-access youth clubs and youth centres play in supporting children and young people involved in or at risk of violence. With significant cuts to government funding of youth provision since 2010, there has been a shift from universal to targeted youth provision in both England and Wales.<sup>1,2</sup>

In England, DCMS research found that whilst both types of youth work have seen cuts, between 2014 and 2021, funding for targeted provision was reduced by a third whereas universal provision was reduced by half.<sup>3</sup> The number of youth clubs supported by local authorities almost halved between 2011/12 and 2018/19, with the average number of clubs funded by a given local authority falling from 14 to 8.

Although prioritising targeted over universal provision would seem to be prudent from a violence prevention perspective, emerging research indicates that youth clubs may play a role in reducing crime. A new working paper, by Carmen Villa, assesses the impact of youth club closures in London on crime, finding an increase in offending amongst young people living in areas where all local youth clubs closed.<sup>4</sup>

Through this project, we want to explore the formal and informal support that youth clubs provide to children and young people who are at risk of or involved in violence. We want to understand the barriers and facilitators for youth clubs providing effective support for vulnerable children. We understand 'youth clubs' to refer to open-access settings that children may attend for free or for a nominal fee. This includes clubs that run in different locations on different days of the week.

## Race equity

There are significant racial disparities in children's experience of violence and youth justice. For instance, 26% of children in Youth Custody are Black, compared to 6% in the population in England and Wales aged 10–18.<sup>5</sup> Our 2023 survey of 7,500 children found that while the majority of violence was committed by White children (70%) and the majority of victims were White (72%), Black teenage children were, on average, more likely to be vulnerable as both victims (21%) and perpetrators (22%) compared to White children (16% and 14%, respectively).<sup>6</sup>

The Youth Endowment Fund's mission is to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence. We can't achieve this mission if we do not challenge this racial inequity. Addressing these

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *Youth Provision and Life Outcomes: A Study of the Local Impact of Youth Clubs*.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce41c3423931001bb7b8b7/Local\\_Areas\\_-\\_Report\\_-\\_Youth\\_Evidence\\_Base-accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce41c3423931001bb7b8b7/Local_Areas_-_Report_-_Youth_Evidence_Base-accessible.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10870/cr-ld10870-e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Exact figures 35% and 51% respectively.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/obrlmdn9db9s4e0q40n32/Villa\\_FALE.pdf?rlkey=bkzrjwnxnrntz7f72ii28zkh&e=1&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/obrlmdn9db9s4e0q40n32/Villa_FALE.pdf?rlkey=bkzrjwnxnrntz7f72ii28zkh&e=1&dl=0)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2022-to-2023/youth-justice-statistics-2022-to-2023-accessible-version#children-in-youth-custody>

<sup>6</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2023/>

disparities is an important aspect of our work, and race features in the research questions posed in this call for proposals.

## Research questions

These research questions are only indicative, and we encourage bidding teams to propose amendments to them and/or additional questions that they think could help meet the aims of the project. We would expect to finalise the detailed research questions and methods with the appointed team.

This project has 4 proposed research questions.

1. **Set up and operation.** How well are youth clubs in England and Wales structured and operated to prevent violence amongst children and young people? In addition,
  - a. Are youth clubs available to children in areas with high levels of violence?
  - b. Are youth clubs open at times during which violence is known to occur amongst children?
  - c. Do youth clubs enable children to take part in positive activities (e.g. arts, sports), social skills training, or psychological therapy?
  - d. How much variation is there in these aspects (between different clubs, regions, or nations), and what explains that variation?
  - e. What are the barriers and facilitators for youth clubs operating in ways that reduce violence?
2. **Attendance and engagement.** What characteristics of youth clubs encourage children at risk of/involved in violence to attend them, and what characteristics facilitate meaningful engagement amongst those children? In addition,
  - a. To what extent do children who attend youth clubs engage with develop trusting relationships with staff (whether volunteers or professionals)?
  - b. What are the barriers and facilitators for staff to develop trusting relationships with attendees?
  - c. What characteristics of youth clubs encourage children from minority ethnic backgrounds to attend them, and what facilitates them to engage meaningfully?
3. **Support for children at risk.** To what extent do youth clubs provide support to children who are at risk of or involved in violence and what kinds of support (both formal and informal) do they provide? In addition,
  - a. How, if at all, do youth clubs identify children at risk of/involved in violence?
  - b. How commonly does violence occur on youth club premises and how is this handled?
  - c. What training do staff (volunteers or professionals) have that is relevant to supporting children at risk of or involved in violence?
  - d. What are the barriers and facilitators for youth clubs providing effective formal and informal support to children at risk of or involved in violence?
4. **Policy and practice changes.** What policy and practice changes could improve youth clubs' ability to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence? Are there specific models/examples of best practice that could be adopted more widely?

## Required outputs and suggested methodology

To answer the research questions, we would expect to see a detailed written discussion, that draws from:

- a. Desk based research.
- b. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups with a range of stakeholders (which may include youth workers, youth work volunteers, sector leaders, parents, carers and young people).
- c. Any data analysis that the review team deem possible.
- d. Additional resources suggested by the research team.

We encourage teams to consider how input from stakeholders can be combined with quantitative analysis (from existing or new research) to describe current practice and identify opportunities for change.

At the end of the study, we would expect all these outputs to be drawn together in a written report, comprising:

- a. An executive summary
- b. An introduction
- c. Methodology
- d. Findings (written discussion of each of the research questions in turn)
- e. Conclusion and recommendations for policy and practice

Upon sharing the final report with us, we would expect the research team to provide a short presentation to the YEF team on the study's findings. YEF will pay for the peer review of the report.

## Timeline

The deadline for proposals is 10am, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024. The deadline for the final report is 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025, after which a peer review process will take place.

## Budget

We expect the project to cost approximately c.£50-75k. However, we have some flexibility here, and will be judging bids on value for money rather than absolute cost. We would not expect VAT to be included in teams' budgets. Pass through VAT via sub-granting work to other organisations may in some circumstances be included. However, it is up to the bidding team to decide if they need to include VAT and any charges must be covered within the total grant amount.

We do not require budgets to use a specific template in proposals. Any approach that enables us to see total cost, the cost of project components, day rates, and number of days assigned to each team member is sufficient.

## How to apply

YEF will judge research applications using the following criteria:

- **Subject expertise (20%).** How much expertise does the team have relating to youth clubs and violence prevention?
- **Research experience (20%).** How much experience does the team have in delivering similar research projects? Does the team have expertise and experience in delivering research projects that aim to understand racial disparities?
- **Proposed methodological approach (40%).** What methodology has the team suggested, and does it match our needs?
- **Value for money (20%).** Does the bid represent value for money?

Where teams may be weak in any of the above areas, we encourage applicants to seek expert consultants and partnerships to supplement their bid.

Proposals should be no longer than 2,500 words, and should set out the team's expertise, experience, methodological approach, and budget. You may attach relevant documents to support your application – this will not be included in the word count.

As noted above, we are open to research teams suggesting their own research questions, and/or suggesting improvements and amendments to our own. Teams are welcome to apply for multiple projects, particularly if there are opportunities to streamline methods or reporting for greater efficiency.

**Please email your application to [chloe.lowry@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:chloe.lowry@youthendowmentfund.org.uk) by 10am on 4<sup>th</sup> November. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to [chloe.lowry@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:chloe.lowry@youthendowmentfund.org.uk) by 25<sup>th</sup> October.**