

YEF Review of Youth Sector Provision, Commissioning, and Funding

Summary

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of current practice for determining youth provision 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 30th, 2025. The deadline for proposals is 10am, 4th November 2024. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 16th 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 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 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 youth clubs, A&E navigator programmes, and youth workers' role in safeguarding. 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 know very little about current commissioning practices in the youth sector, or the funding of the youth sector more broadly. In local authority data, VCS spend represents only 4% of all spending reported, and local authority spend dominates at over 85%.¹ However, other research estimates that the total expenditure of the youth sector is £2.0bn, with only a quarter of that funding coming from the government.²

In the case of local authorities, there is substantial regional variation in funding of youth provision. Between 2011-2021, 95% of local authorities in England reduced their spending on youth provision by at least a quarter, but one third of local authorities reduced their spending by more than three quarters.³ Additionally, it is not clear, how much discretion commissioners have over their funding of youth provision, nor how they are considering violence prevention in their decision-making. Crucially, the answers may differ between the types of funders (e.g. local authority commissioners vs charitable trusts).

To inform the recommendations we develop for the sector, we want to identify the key decision-makers who determine local youth provision and understand their budgets and thought-processes. These decision-makers may include local authority commissioners, metro mayors, Directors of Children's Services, Police and Crime Commissioners, housing associations, and charitable trusts. In line with our mission, we are interested in the kinds of youth provision which are most likely to prevent children and young people from being drawn into violence. We consider this to be universal provision that is free at the point of access or charges a nominal fee, and targeted provision which supports children and young people who are at risk of or involved in violence.

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 10-18.⁴ 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).⁵

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

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce41c3423931001bb7b8b7/Local_Areas_-_Report_-_Youth_Evidence_Base-accessible.pdf

² <https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Economic-Value-of-Youth-Work-Final-260822-STC-clean75-1.pdf>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce41c3423931001bb7b8b7/Local_Areas_-_Report_-_Youth_Evidence_Base-accessible.pdf

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2022-to-2023/youth-justice-statistics-2022-to-2023-accessible-version#children-in-youth-custody>

⁵ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2023/>

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 are also open to the research team prioritising, honing, and/or combining questions to reduce the number of questions should they feel this is the correct approach. We would expect to finalise the detailed research questions and methods with the appointed team.

This project has 6 proposed research questions.

1. **Key decision-makers.** In England and Wales, who determines how much money is spent on local youth provision and who chooses which services are delivered?
2. **Approach to youth provision.** What are these decision-makers' priorities when thinking about local youth provision? In addition,
 - a. To what extent do they think about youth provision as means of violence prevention?
 - b. How do they think about the distribution and coverage of local services? To what extent do they aim for an equitable coverage of provision for children from ethnic minority backgrounds?
 - c. How do they think about the balance between primary, secondary, and tertiary provision?
 - d. To what extent do they consider and prioritise integration between services?
 - e. How much freedom do they have to change their approach?
 - f. To what extent are their decisions (e.g. about which needs to prioritise, which approaches to fund) informed by research and evidence?
 - g. To what extent are their decisions informed by the perspectives of young people and those with lived experience?
 - h. Do these aspects vary between nations and between different kinds of decision-makers?
3. **Budgets.** What services are budgets for youth provision spent on? In addition,
 - a. How much of the budget is allocated to primary, secondary, and tertiary services?
 - b. What is the duration of funding, and how consistent is the funding for individual organisations over time?
 - c. What proportion of the organisations that receive funding are Black-led?
 - d. How much does the size and allocation of the youth provision budget vary year-to-year?
 - e. Do these aspects vary between nations and between different kinds of decision-makers?
4. **Mentoring.** What mentoring for children and young people is taking place across England and Wales? In addition,
 - a. How prevalent are different types of mentoring (e.g. adult-youth mentoring, peer mentoring, standalone mentoring, mentoring as part of a multi-component programme)?
 - b. What is the duration and intensity of mentoring programmes?
 - c. In what contexts is mentoring delivered?
 - d. Who is offered mentoring, who receives it, and who completes the full programme?
 - e. Who delivers mentoring and what training have they had?
 - f. How much funding is dedicated to mentoring and where does it come from?
5. **Regional variation.** How does local authority funding of youth provision vary across England and Wales? In addition,
 - a. How does this map against the level of violence in the area?

- b. How does this map against population characteristics including age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status?
6. **Policy and practice changes.** Are the current processes for determining local youth provision working well? What changes to these could help to the sector's ability to prevent children and young people from being drawn into violence?

Required outputs and suggested methodology

We recognise the scope of relevant questions is potentially broad. We encourage teams to prioritise questions and methods that focus on generating insights for violence prevention, rather than aiming for a general understanding of youth provision.

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 local commissioners, charitable trusts, local politicians, sector leaders, and delivery providers).
- c. Data analysis.
- d. Additional resources suggested by the research team.

Across all research questions, 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, 4th November 2024. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 16th December 2024. The deadline for the final report is 30th May 2025, after which a peer review process will take place.

Budget

We expect the project to cost approximately c.£50-100k. 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 funding and commissioning of youth provision?
- **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 by 10am on 4th November. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to chloe.lowry@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 25th October.