

YEF review of evidence-based practice in policing

Summary

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of evidence-based practice (EBP) in policing, in order to drive change in the sector. This review will explore how specific interventions are delivered, funded and commissioned, and the conditions under which EBP is embedded. We want to understand how best to improve the frequency, quality and maturity of EBP in policing to keep children safe.
- The study will inform YEF's recommendations for the policing 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 full draft report is 20th February 2026. The deadline for proposals is 3rd June 2025. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 18th July 2025.

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 policing sector is one such system that supports children.

YEF's policing sector work

In 2026 YEF will publish recommendations for how the policing 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 policing sector, including:

- Projects YEF has funded and evaluated in the sector (such as evaluating [police in classrooms](#) and secondary data analysis on the use of [diversion](#))

- Relevant sections of the YEF [Toolkit](#) (e.g. hot spots policing, stop and search, and focused deterrence)
- Our annual [Children, Violence and Vulnerability survey](#) of young people

In addition, YEF is currently commissioning two other research projects which explore policing's role in safeguarding and child protection, and on tackling drug markets, exploitation and violence involving children. 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 how, and whether, police are using EBP to address violence involving children. We do not know how decisions around practice are approached, who influences these decisions, what is delivered or how it is being delivered. We also do not know how best to get the practices we want to see embedded at the operational and strategic level.

For frontline police officers and staff, policing leaders, commissioners and governing bodies with national level influence over policing, we believe that EBP should be at the heart of prevention and response to violence involving children. However, current practices may not align with the evidence-base on what works and may instead show a tendency towards practices which are largely un-evidenced or inconsistent. For example, we understand that knife crime education programmes, police in schools, and media campaigns are widely delivered, all of which lack an evidence-base to support their use to reduce violence.

This project aims to examine EBP in policing, with a specific focus on the evidence base for keeping children safe from violence. We want to understand how knowledgeable police and policing stakeholders are, and explore the funding and delivery of EBP alongside the influencing factors and successful conditions under which EBP is embedded. This project will help us understand how practice leaders and commissioners consider, direct and monitor EBP, how those on the frontline understand and deliver EBP, and how key system stakeholders (including the Home Office and HMICFRS) can support EBP in policing. We want to generate specific, actionable insights to help drive EBP in policing to keep children safe from violence.

Race equity

There are significant racial disparities in children's experience of violence, policing and youth justice. 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).¹

Racial disparities in the justice system are particularly pronounced for Black children, who continue to be over-represented across stop and search, arrest, youth cautions, first-time entrants, children in custody and reoffending rates.² Black children make up 6% of all 10–17-year-olds, but in 2022/23, they accounted

¹ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2023/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2023-to-2024/youth-justice-statistics-2023-to-2024#gateway-to-the-youth-justice-system>

for 26% of children in custody. Other communities are also overrepresented. For instance, Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children make up less than 1% of children; yet a self-reported 7% of children in custody are from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds – over 7 times their population share.³

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.

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.

1. **Practice.** To what extent is EBP (or un-evidenced practice) delivered in policing across England and Wales when aiming to reduce children's involvement in violence? Interventions we're interested in include: hot spots policing, problem-oriented policing, police in schools, knife crime awareness programmes and stop and search. We are also interested in whether the police are delivering any other intervention included in the YEF Toolkit.
2. **Race Equity.** To what extent are police in England and Wales delivering EBP which supports children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children? In addition, specifically:
 - How is race equity considered in the delivery of stop and search and hot spots policing?
 - How can the police better support children from Black, Asian and minority backgrounds with EBP?
3. **Funding.** To what extent is EBP funded by the Home Office or Police and Crime Commissioners?
4. **Knowledge.** To what extent do those commissioning and leading policing practice, and police officers on the frontline, know what works to reduce children's involvement in violence? In addition:
 - What influences the knowledge and decision making of commissioners, leaders and police officers when delivering practice?⁴
5. **Policy and practice change.**
 - What changes could be made to everyday policing practice to ensure that EBP is delivered in response to children's involvement in violence?
 - What system changes (to law, regulation, guidance, training, funding and/or inspection) could be made to ensure that EBP is delivered in response to children's involvement in violence?

Required outputs and suggested methodology

To answer the research questions, we would expect to see a detailed written discussion that may draw from a range of methods, including:

³ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/racial-disproportionality/>

⁴ For example, is this influenced by government policy and guidance, inspection requirements, College of Policing guidance, funding, training, or peer knowledge.

- a. Desk based research and a review of existing literature.
- b. A large-scale survey of police forces in England and Wales, at the frontline and senior leadership level, to understand the national picture of practice across a range of interventions (including those which are evidenced, and those which are not).
- c. Case studies of 3 – 5 forces, likely to include interviews, observations, analysing internal systems and policies – focussed on the interventions we have evidence to support practice of (e.g. hot spots policing and problem-oriented policing).
- d. Interviews with experts in the policing field, including practitioners and policy makers
- e. Any data analysis that the review team deem possible.
- f. Additional resources suggested by the research team.

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 insights 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 12pm on 3rd June 2025. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 18th July 2025. The deadline for the full draft report is 20th February 2026 after which a peer review process will take place.

Budget

We expect the project to cost approximately £75-110k. However, we have some flexibility here, and will be judging bids on value for money rather than absolute cost. This range gives an indication of the scale of budgets we envisage – we will consistently prioritise proposals that give good value for money and strongly discourage research teams using these figures as the sole driver of their costs.

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 policing, specifically evidence-based practice in policing and achieving change in policing?

- **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 methodology, 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 leanne.robinson@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 12pm on 3rd June 2025. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to leanne.robinson@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 5pm on 23rd May 2025.