

# **YEF review of how the care system can protect children from involvement in violence**

## **Summary**

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of how the care system can protect children and young people from involvement in violence.
- The study will inform YEF's recommendations for the children's services 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 proposals is 5pm 29th of May 2025. We intend to conduct interviews the weeks beginning 16<sup>th</sup> of June and to appoint the successful team by the end of June 2025.
- The deadline for the full draft report is 12<sup>th</sup> December 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 children's services sector is one such system that supports children.

## **YEF's children services sector work**

In 2026, YEF will publish a set of recommendations on how the children's services 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 children's services sector, including:

- Projects YEF has funded and evaluated in the sector (such as [Mentalisation-Based Therapy](#), [Parents Under Pressure](#), [Standard Teen Triple P](#), [Functional Family Therapy - Gangs](#), [RISE](#)

[Child/Adolescent to Parent Violence & Abuse \(RISE CAPVA\)](#), [Multisystemic Therapy – Child Abuse and Neglect](#), [Agency Collaboration Fund: A supportive home](#), and [Fostering Connection](#)).

- Relevant sections of the YEF [Toolkit](#) (e.g. parenting programmes, functional family therapy and multisystemic therapy).
- Our extensive work understanding the lives of young people with the [Peer Action Collective](#).
- Our annual [Children, Violence and Vulnerability survey](#) of young people.
- Our Area Leaders Programme (ALP) which aims to transform how local authority multi-agency partnerships identify and support children, young people and places most vulnerable to violence; collaborate effectively; and deliver impactful interventions to better protect children from being drawn into violence.
- The changemakers programme commissioned by Foundations, on behalf of the Department of Education, which aims to address the gap between what we know is effective from research, and the application of that knowledge, in sustained ways, to inform local service design and practice. The programme is working with four local authority Family Hubs to support local evidence leadership to introduce and sustain evidence-based parenting programmes.
- Our partnership with Durham University's Contextual Safeguarding Team supporting local authorities to apply insights from the Department for Education's Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) pilot to strengthen local responses to extra-familial harm and enhance our understanding of how different areas approach its management.

In addition, YEF is currently commissioning three other reviews of policy and practice, covering Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panels, a review of local safeguarding partnerships response to child criminal exploitation and extra familial harm, and a review of parenting programmes and family therapy provision. 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**

The care system in England and Wales is intended to protect children from harm, but children with care experience are much more vulnerable to involvement in violence. Approximately 33% of care-experienced children receive a youth caution or conviction between the ages of 10 and 17, compared to just 4% of children who have never been in care.<sup>1</sup> These disparities are even greater for Black and Mixed ethnicity children with care experience, who are almost twice as likely to receive custodial sentences as their White counterparts.

Children in care are often highly vulnerable, typically entering the system due to experiences of abuse, neglect, or other significant adversity. These early challenges can increase the likelihood of involvement in crime and violence. However, the care system itself may also contribute to this vulnerability or miss opportunities to protect children. Previous work has cited factors such as exposure to negative peer

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<sup>1</sup> [Understanding the intersections between care experience, ethnicity and youth justice involvement – ADR UK](#)

influences<sup>2</sup> and exploitation,<sup>3</sup> criminalisation of behaviour,<sup>4</sup> insufficient support,<sup>5</sup> discriminatory practices surrounding the provision of services to Black children,<sup>6</sup> and placement instability.<sup>7</sup>

Adding to this challenge, recent research suggests that a growing proportion of teenagers entering care are affected by extra-familial harm, including serious violence, placing further strain on an already pressured system.<sup>8</sup> Yet, despite these shifts, existing policies, practices, and support structures may not have been sufficiently adapted to meet the evolving needs of these children.<sup>9</sup>

Through this project we want to understand the main mechanisms through which the care system influences children's risk of involvement in violence – focusing both on the factors that exacerbate existing vulnerability and on opportunities to strengthen support. It will identify examples of best practice where care settings are successfully protecting children from involvement in violence and assess the nature and effectiveness of current support, including approaches that better meet the needs of children from Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority backgrounds. Ultimately, the aim is to understand what changes to practice, funding, regulation, inspection, and guidance are needed to better protect children in care.

## 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>10</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>11</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 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.

We also recognise that some of our questions are relatively broad in scope. We are open to teams suggesting a more specific focus within the care system, that still meets the suggested aims of our project.

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<sup>2</sup> [In Care, Out of Trouble: Summary report | Prison Reform Trust](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Child of the North 2024/25 Campaign – Report II – N8 Research Partnership](#)

<sup>4</sup> <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Ending-the-criminalisation-of-children-in-residential-care-Briefing-one.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [Children in most need of specialist mental health support often turned away because their situation is too unstable](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Double Discrimination: Black care-experienced children in the criminal justice system](#)

<sup>7</sup> [In Care, Out of Trouble: Summary report | Prison Reform Trust](#)

<sup>8</sup> [The Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children | Action For Children](#)

<sup>9</sup> [The Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children | Action For Children](#)

<sup>10</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>11</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2023/>

## **Part 1: Does the care system exacerbate children's risk of involvement in violence, and why?**

**RQ1.** To what extent does the care system in England and Wales contribute to an increased risk of children becoming involved in serious violence?

**RQ2.** What are the main factors that help explain this increased risk? Specifically, to what extent is it influenced by:

- placement type (e.g., foster care, residential care, out-of-area placements)
- placement instability
- exposure to negative peer influences and exploitation (e.g. through local crime networks)
- systemic racism (e.g. in decision-making, access to support, or criminalisation)
- diminished funding for specialist support
- other factors

## **Part 2: How effective is current practice?**

**RQ3.** What types of support are currently provided to children in care to reduce their risk of involvement in violence? For instance, what training and resources do foster carers, social workers, and residential workers receive to support these children effectively?

**RQ4.** How effective are current practices, policies, and legislation in protecting children in care from involvement in violence? In addition, specifically, to what extent do these practice, policies and legislation protect children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities?

**RQ5.** Which local authorities and care settings are more successful in keeping care-experienced children safe, and what practices contribute to their success?

## **Part 3: What practice and policy changes in the care system would better protect children from involvement in violence?**

**RQ6.** What changes to practice could improve the care system's ability to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence? In addition, specifically, what changes to practice will better protect children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities?

**RQ7.** What changes to funding, regulation, inspection, training and guidance are needed to better protect children in care from involvement in violence? In addition, specifically, what changes to the system will better protect children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities?

## **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 (e.g., a rapid review of existing evidence).
- b. Surveys and interviews, with a range of stakeholders (such as children's services, social workers, looked-after children's teams, voluntary sector organisations supporting care-experienced

children, advocacy services, residential care workers, foster carers, children and young people currently or previously in care as well as their parents or carers).

- c. Case studies of effective practice
- d. Any data analysis that the review team deem possible.
- e. Additional methods 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 the 29<sup>th</sup> of May. We intend to have appointed the successful team by the end of June. Interviews will take place the weeks beginning 16<sup>th</sup> of June.

The deadline for the final report is 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025, after which a peer review process will take place.

## Budget

We expect the project to cost somewhere in the range of £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 evaluators 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 in relation to the care system and the services provided to children in care, including the roles of local authority children's services, foster care, residential care, and looked-after children's teams? To what extent do they also demonstrate expertise in serious violence and race equity, and their relevance to the experiences and outcomes of children in care?

- **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? Does the proposed approach demonstrate an understanding of how to embed race equity throughout the research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting?
- **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 [freya.glendinning@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:freya.glendinning@youthendowmentfund.org.uk) by 5pm 29<sup>th</sup> of May. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to [freya.glendinning@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:freya.glendinning@youthendowmentfund.org.uk) by the 21<sup>st</sup> of May.**