

YEF review of parenting programmes and family therapy provision

Summary

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of the provision of parenting programmes and family therapy programmes.
- 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 22nd of May 2025. We intend to conduct interviews the weeks beginning 9th and 16th of June and to appoint the successful team by the end of June 2025.
- The deadline for the full draft report is 12th 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 two other reviews of policy and practice, covering Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panels, and local safeguarding partnerships' response to child criminal exploitation and extra familial harm. 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

Delivering evidenced based parenting and family therapy programmes can play a role in preventing children's involvement in violence. However, despite robust evidence that parenting programmes can reduce behavioural difficulties¹ (which are linked to later involvement in violence), and that family therapy programmes (such as Functional Family Therapy and Multi-Systemic Therapy) have a moderate impact on violent crime,² we believe these programmes are underutilised across local authorities in England and Wales. While there is already a wealth of evidence on the enablers and barriers to scaling parenting programmes,³ we currently lack a clear picture of their prevalence across local authorities in England and Wales.

We want to understand which local authorities are funding and delivering evidence-based parenting and family therapy programmes, what types are being used, whether local authorities are delivering key components of these programmes 'in house' (without investing in the actual programmes), or whether parenting or family therapy support is being provided through other, non-evidence-based approaches. We also want to explore whether provision is aligned to indicators of family need (and whether those areas most in need are delivering these programmes), identify the barriers to commissioning and identify the changes needed to increase the funding and provision of these programmes.

¹ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/parenting-programmes/>

² <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/functional-family-therapy-fft/>; <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/multi-systemic-therapy-2/>

³ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/enablers-for-effectively-scaling-parenting-interventions/>; See also the forthcoming systematic review of parenting and whole-family interventions for families with multiple and complex needs and children and young people (11–19), due October 2025 (Foundations). <https://foundations.org.uk/our-work/current-projects/systematic-review-parenting-whole-family-interventions-for-families-with-multiple-complex-needs-and-children-young-people-aged-11-19/>

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.

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. **How many local authorities in England and Wales are funding and delivering:**
 - Evidenced-based parenting programmes (and which types)?
 - Evidenced based family therapy programmes (and which types)?
 - Components or practices drawn from these programmes, but delivered 'in-house', without investing in the actual programmes (which components, and how are they delivered – e.g. in-house, informally, or via other service types)?
 - Broader parenting and family support offers not tied to any evidence-based programme?
2. **Are parenting programmes and family therapy programmes delivered in areas where there is the most need, and is the funding and delivery of them racially equitable?**
 - Are programmes being delivered in the right places? Do local authorities with higher numbers of families in need, and/or higher levels of violence fund and deliver these programmes?
 - Are Black-led organisations being funded and supported to deliver these programmes? How are issues of cultural relevance and accessibility being considered in commissioning? Do local authorities monitor the ethnicity of participants, and does this show that families from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities have equitable access to support?
3. **Why are local authorities not funding parenting and family therapy programmes?**
 - What can we learn from previous studies on why local authorities are not commissioning these programmes?
4. **What changes to funding, regulation, inspection and guidance would encourage more local authorities to fund parenting and family therapy programmes?**

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/>

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, interviews, and focus groups with a range of stakeholders (that may include Directors of Children's Services, early help, edge of care and youth justice commissioners, service leads for parenting and family support, data and performance leads, frontline practitioners, and voluntary and community organisations, including Black-led providers).
- c. Any data analysis that the review team deem possible. We would expect some mapping of where programmes are delivered, compared to the where the need for programmes is (in response to research question 2).
- d. 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 5pm on 22nd of May. We intend to have appointed the successful team by the end of June. Interviews will take place the weeks beginning 9th and 16th of June.

The deadline for a full draft report is 12th December 2025, after which a peer review process will take place.

Budget

We expect the project to cost somewhere in the range of £50–£75k. 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 relating to evidence-based parenting and family therapy programmes, children's social care and early help systems, public sector commissioning, and race equity.
- **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 by 5pm on 22nd of May. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to freya.glendinning@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by the 14th of May.