

Learning Partner for YEF's Change work: Call for proposals

Introduction

Purpose

The Youth Endowment Fund is seeking to appoint a Learning Partner to provide support to Change initiatives led by YEF's Change Team.

The Learning Partner will provide direct support to the Change team, support learning across projects led by YEF and our partners that aim to change practices, and scope future impact studies. We aim to quickly test, learn and adapt our work while identifying achievements.

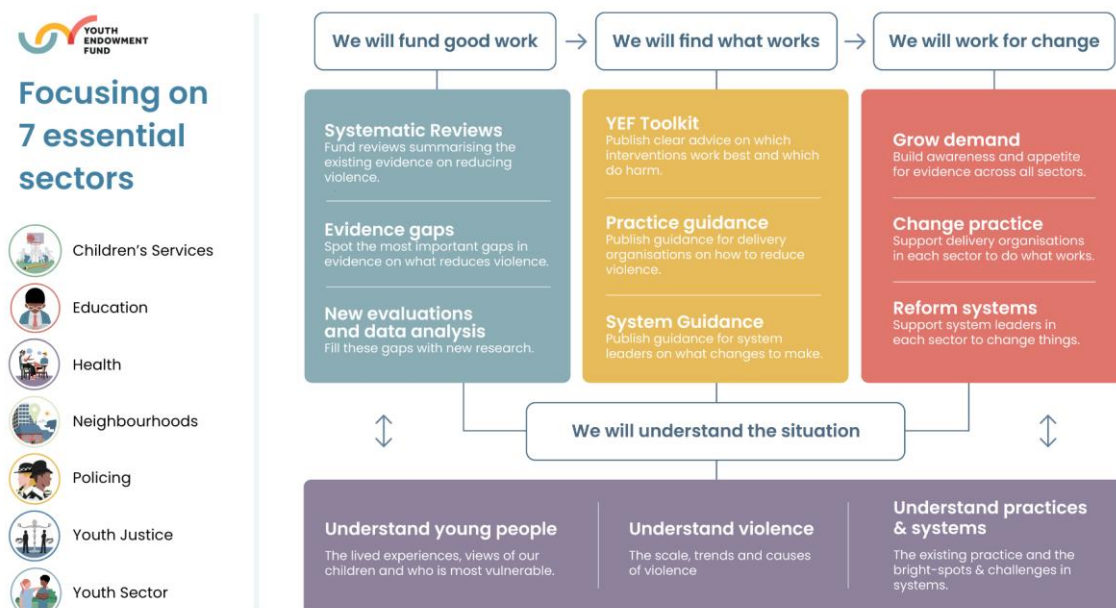
We anticipate that learning support will commence in Spring/Summer 2025, be covered under a two-year grant agreement, with a review after 12 months with the option to expand the scope of work by mutual agreement. A further review will take place 3 months before the end of the two-year agreement, with a view to scope requirements for further support.

About The Youth Endowment Fund

The Youth Endowment Fund is a charity with a mission that matters – we're here to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. Through our strategy, we do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

How we're working to prevent youth violence

To make a lasting difference we must do more than just fund and evaluate promising programmes to prevent youth violence. We have to make change happen – changing policy and practice – so that children are better supported and violence reduces. The graphic below illustrates our strategy, showing you what we do to deliver on our mission. You can find a more detailed description [here](#).



About YEF's Change work and Change projects

Background: YEF's Change work

Our strategy is to fund research and evaluations to find out what works, translate that into accessible, easy-to-understand tools and guidance, then work to build a movement to put that evidence into practice across seven essential sectors.

Our Change work focuses on three strands of activity:

- **Grow Demand:** We engage thousands of decision-makers through targeted events that raise awareness and promote the use of evidence. We track reach, satisfaction and improvements in understanding.
- **Change Practice:** We support frontline services in high-violence areas, such as police, youth justice services and schools – to adopt our Practice Guidance through training and tailored support. We monitor engagement and self-reported shifts in knowledge and practice. An example of our Practice Guidance is [here](#).
- **Reform systems:** We work with national leaders to drive policy, funding, inspection, and training changes set out in our Systems Guidance that create the conditions for safer outcomes. We track delivery of specific, structural reforms. An example of our Systems Guidance is [here](#).

This call for proposals is focused on learning within our 'Change Practice' activities, aimed at supporting rapid adaption of these initiatives and surfacing outcomes.

Change projects

YEF's Change projects typically focus on a single sector and aim to support the implementation of YEF's practice guidance in that sector. Projects typically last several years and will include a setup, delivery and evaluation/review phase.

Projects are being developed and rolled out in a staggered manner, that is some will start implementation sooner than others, and over time more projects are likely to be added. Learning support is required for each project for the duration of the project, but to manage agreements and budgets, the work will be managed under a 2-year grant agreement, with review of scope after 12 months (where the scope may be expanded by mutual agreement). A further review will take place three months before the end of the 2-year period, to scope further support required.

The current projects requiring support are:

- Education Catalyst project
- Area Leaders Programme
- Whole Area Model project
- Youth Justice Partnership with CJI
- Youth Sector project

For the sake of simplicity, the terms 'project' is used to cover all of the above.

Brief Project details

Education Catalyst project

In 2024, we collaborated with education leaders, teachers, and young people to create our [Education Practice Guidance](#), which distils global evidence - including our [Toolkit](#) - into five actionable recommendations to reduce violence. While this guidance provides a strong foundation, education leaders tell us they need support, capacity, and time to implement it effectively. The Education Catalyst Pilot Programme will fund 4-6 organisations, in high violence areas, to implement YEF education practice guidance across a range of education settings (approx. 55-70 in total) to prevent children's involvement in violence.

We intend to learn about the barriers and enablers to implementing our practice change recommendations and gather learnings to inform the development of the model for scale up across all high violence areas in England and Wales.

Please see **Annex 2** for further details.

Area Leaders Programme

The Area Leaders Programme (ALP) is a programme for multi-agency violence reduction partnerships in local authority areas. The programme aims to equip area leaders with the knowledge, tools and partnerships needed to deliver effective, evidence-informed violence prevention strategies focused on people, places and practice.

2025-27 Area Leaders Programme: Building on our learning to date, we will recruit 10 new Area Leaders Programme (ALP) sites across England and Wales in Spring 2025, followed by a second cohort of 10 in Spring 2026. Following recruitment, each site will complete a self-assessment framework to identify local strengths and areas for development.

Successful partnerships will take part in a 12-month development programme from September 2025 to August 2026. This will include engaging with a core set of modules for all sites, alongside tailored support to address site-specific priorities identified through the self-assessment. YEF will fund a part-time coordinator for each site and lead an evaluation of the programme's impact.

Please see **Annex 3** for further details.

Whole Area Model

The best available evidence shows that – on average - diverting children from the criminal justice system reduces reoffending and violence. It can also lower the severity of any crimes they do later commit. The greatest impacts are seen when diversion is early (pre-charge), on children who are younger (12-14) and when combined with evidence-based support. Diverting children is also likely to achieve these results for a lower cost than processing through the formal justice system.

In 2025/26, YEF will work with four local partnerships – each covering a police force area – to pilot a new Whole Area Model which aims to improve the use and consistency of out-of-court resolutions (both informal and formal) for children. We will recruit 4 partnerships by the end of May, with the six-month programme of support starting in July 2025.

The four-partnership involved in the Whole Area Model will receive:

1. A review of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to improve your own organisation's and partnership response to arrested children.
2. A programme of support for police forces and youth justice services delivered by a dedicated practice specialist.
3. Funding for the police force (£10,000) and each youth justice service (£5,000) to support involvement in the programme.

Please see **Annex 4** for further details.

Youth Justice Partnership with CJI

In 2024/25 YEF commissioned the Centre for Justice Innovation as part of a youth justice partnership which aims to:

- Build awareness and appetite for evidence across the sector.
- Support Youth Justice Services to improve practice and do what works.
- Support the Youth Endowment Fund to deliver the recommendations set out in our Systems Guidance: [‘Arrested Children: How to keep children safe and reduce reoffending.’](#)

To deliver on these aims, the Centre for Justice Innovation have delivered the following

- Quarterly open access virtual learning events and a bi-monthly newsletter to grow evidence demand
- Provide intensive support for 10 youth justice services to deliver evidence-based diversion

For further details please see **Annex 5**.

Youth Sector project

We anticipate that a new project in the Youth Sector will be designed following the development of Youth Sector Guidance in December 2025. The project will support the uptake and implementation of the guidance. We anticipate that the setup phase of this project will take place between December 2025 to March 2026 (Year 1), with delivery starting in March 2026 (Year 2).

Learning Partner Scope of work

We are looking for a Learning Partner to help us clearly articulate what we're trying to achieve through our change work at a directorate-level, sector-level and project-level. We would like support to work out the best ways to track progress and learn from what we're doing, including what to measure and how to measure them. We want to have quick learning cycles to test and learn wherever possible.

There are three key areas of support:

1. Change team support
2. Project-based support
3. Scoping for impact studies (limited to 1 project in the first year)

Change team support

Clarifying aims and key questions

The Learning Partner will work with YEF's Change Team to clarify what we want to achieve through our change work (at a directorate-level and sector-level) and what questions we need answering over the next year to know what's working well and less well, and how to improve.

Theory of Change

Review and refine the existing directorate's Theory of Change.

Monitoring/reporting

The Learning Partner will work with YEF's Change Team to develop a common understanding of and light touch process for tracking progress and reporting achievements (e.g. tangible changes in practice and processes through our funded projects). Once designed, the Learning Partner will oversee the collection and reporting of these metrics or provide support such that it is conducted by the Change team.

Project Learning

The Learning Partner will support YEF and its partners to quickly learn what works in the Change projects, and why, so that the projects can adapt and improve.

Support is anticipated in each phase of each project – during setup, during delivery and after the end of delivery. We anticipate that mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, and learning processes will be needed in this work. While this is likely to have a strong qualitative focus, we anticipate it will also include some relatively straight-forward quantitative analysis – for example analysis of self-assessment questionnaires used within projects.

During project setup, the learning partner will support YEF to:

- Strengthen our project-specific theories of change.
- Design and implement learning processes that apply the overarching Change monitoring framework at the project level, defining key learning questions, indicators, and analytical approaches. Enable rapid learning cycles to test, adapt, and improve in real time.
 - This might include the development and use of pre-post questionnaires, analysis of existing self-assessment tools, other surveys or data collection and analysis as required in each Project.

Anticipated Outputs: A project learning plan which includes clarified research questions, strengthened theories of change, a monitoring and learning framework and associated timeline.

During and after delivery the learning partner will support YEF to:

- Collect and makes sense of all learnings to understand what's working, what's not and why.
- Advise on how to adapt processes and tools as needed, making sure learning stays useful and relevant as things evolve.

- Support YEF and delivery partners to reflect and improve their understanding of how change happens and how to improve the intervention to maximise impact. We anticipate that Projects will draw heavily on this learning to adapt quickly and improve.
- Conduct an evaluation/review: An evaluation* or review is anticipated to bring together findings from learning activities with additional analysis as needed to provide evidence of the success of the project. We are not expecting a wide-ranging complex outcome or impact related evaluation – please see the discussion below. This should include insights and lessons to show what was learned and achieved at a Project level, linking back to the theory of change and learning questions.

Anticipated outputs from during and after delivery:

- Quarterly progress/learning reports.
- End of project evaluation/review and learning report and support to dissemination activities.

**Understanding of 'evaluation' in this context:*

We anticipate that each project will be reviewed or evaluated at the end of the project, typically by bringing together and adding to the analysis and learning conducted during project delivery. In this context by the term 'evaluation' we do not mean an impact evaluation (RCT, QED or other impact study design), which will be scoped for separately. Nor do we anticipate a broad ranging outcome evaluation that may be suitable for larger budgeted projects. We are anticipating an evaluation or review of key project outcomes, typically through analysis of self-assessment questionnaire, through surveys or interviews, and a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Please keep this in mind when proposing your approach to this work.

In the first year the learning partner will deliver learning support covering the pre-delivery setup phases and delivery phases of the Catalyst project, Area Leaders Programme, the Whole Area Model and Youth Justice Partnership with CJI and delivery learning support in the pre-delivery setup phase for the Youth Sector project which will not start delivery until the following year. Given the timing of the start of support from the Learning Partner, and the schedule of the projects – some of which are already in motion – some flexibility will be required by the Learning Partner to best fit the steps outlined above.

Schedule of Project activities

The following table shows the staggered setup and delivery phases of the different projects anticipated in the first and second years

Project phases/dates																													
Project	Dates	2025												2026												2027			notes
		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3				
Education Catalyst project,					Setup	Priorities/ToC																							
Area Leaders Programme,					Setup																								
Whole Area Model project,					Setup																								
Youth Justice Partnership with CJI					Setup																								
Youth Sector project																													
Work planning / budgeting period																													
		Year 1												Year 2												Year 3			
		* depending on results of the earlier pilot																											

In your application we would like you to indicate activities to be conducted in Year 1 and Year 2 for each project, along with budget. We would like to see your broad planning through the life of each project.

Please note the following expectations in individual projects:

- **Area Leaders Programme:** A draft self-assessment questionnaire for participants in this programme is currently in development. We anticipate that the Learning Partner will spend a day reviewing this draft tool in discussion with the developer, make any adjustments needed such that the final questionnaire can be used in the programme by mid-late June.
- **Youth Justice Partnership:** The Youth Justice Partnership work is similar in design to the Whole Area Model project and has the advantage that surveys have already been developed for use by project partners. For this reason, the work required on this project may be lighter than that required for others.

Scoping of impact studies

In addition to the learning orientated activities, the Learning Partner will carry out scoping work on the feasibility and design of impact studies (RCTs/ QEDs) for selected change initiatives. In the first year this will be limited to examining if and how an impact study of the Area Leaders Programme could be conducted. This will examine the different possible outcomes used in a RCT or QED study, their feasibility and options for study design. A brief will be shared in due course, we estimate up to 5 FTE days would be required.

Who should apply

Eligibility criteria

1. **Location:** your organisation must be a specialist learning or monitoring and evaluation organisation in England and/or Wales.
2. **Your organisation:** your organisation must
 - be a registered charity, company, statutory body or CIC.
 - have significant expertise and experience in leading learning processes for projects and organisations, ideally in organisational practice change initiatives
 - have contextual knowledge and experience of the sectors and stakeholders covered by YEF's Change initiatives
 - have strong project management experience
 - ideally have experience of using implementation science and/or change management processes

Schedule

If there are any updates to the timeline this will be provided when we invite shortlisted candidate to interview.

Activity	Start	End	Notes
Launch call for Learning Partner	Wk 21 st April		
Deadline for applications		Fri 16 th May	
Assess applications and start interviews	Wk 19 th May		
Complete interviews and decision		Fri 30 th May	
Agreements signed		6 th June	Covering first support period from June 2025 to March 2026
Learning Partner starts activities	Monday 9 th June	13 th June	Initial activities: Kick-off call with YEF; task to review and

			finalise the ALP self-assessment tool
Workplan submitted and agreed		27 th June	Following discussion in the kick off meeting

Application Guidance

Application process

A Learning Partner will be appointed by a competitive tendering process. This will involve submission of a full proposal, followed by interviews for shortlisted applicants only.

Proposal forms should be downloaded and completed in Word Format. It is critical that you adhere to the word limits provided. Alongside the proposal form, you should also submit a risk register, timeline and budget (links to YEF templates included in the proposal form and [here](#)).

Deadline & submission

The deadline for submitting proposals will be **5pm Friday 16th May 2025**

Submissions should include:

- Completed proposal form (including eligibility check)
- Completed indicative timeline
- Completed budget
- Completed risk register

Full proposals should be sent to grants@youthendowmentfund.org.uk. Please ensure the title in the subject line of your email is: **Learning Partner for Change- Proposal**

Partnership applications

The YEF is interested in proposals from single organisations and from consortia with complementary expertise, and where the consortium can demonstrate that they will work well together to ensure the delivery is well-integrated. It's key that consortia applications have a lead organisation and work as one entity. The lead organisation will act as the YEF point of contact (and overall project manager who takes ultimate responsibility for adhering to the terms of the grant if successful).

Our commitment to equality

While most children and young people in the youth justice system are white, those from marginalized backgrounds (including from Black- particularly Black Caribbean, and White Gypsy or Irish Traveler ethnic backgrounds, as well as those who've been in care) are significantly overrepresented. If we truly are going to make a difference, we need to make sure that our funding is used in a way that reaches and represents the children we are here to serve. We're particularly interested in receiving proposals from organisations that are either led by leaders from Black, Asian or other minority backgrounds, and/or whose work has a particular focus on ultimately benefitting young people from Black, Asian and other minority backgrounds through their own work or through their partnerships with other relevant organisations and agencies (e.g., consortium members, employers).

How we'll assess your application

We'll have a team of assessors who'll review your proposal and score it based on the criteria in Appendix 1. We'll use these scores to shortlist applicants and invite only shortlisted applicants to interview.

It will help us to assess your application if you provide explanation and rationale for the suggestions you've made in your proposed approach.

Data and privacy

If you want to know how we store and use the data in your form, you can read our data privacy policy. If you want to learn more about data sharing between grantees and evaluators, you can read the guidance on our secure data archive.

Get in touch

If you have any further questions, please get in touch. Email Philip.Horgan@youthendowmentfund.org.uk, specifying 'Learning Partner for Change' in the subject line of your email.

What happens next

Assessment & interview

We'll begin assessing applications as soon as they are received. We therefore encourage you to submit your application as soon as you're ready, rather than waiting until the deadline. Our assessment team will be tasked with developing a shortlist of applications, and shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview. We may come back to you outside of this schedule to request more information to support our decision if necessary. After all interviews, an internal decision meeting will be held to decide on the successful applicant.

Finalise workplan

We anticipate that shortly after the work has been awarded, the Learning Partner and YEF colleagues will meet to discuss the proposed project activities and timeline with a view to finalise a work plan.

Annex

Annex 1: Assessment Criteria

1. Ability to deliver as planned

We're asking ourselves three main things:

- Have you demonstrated an excellent understanding for what the different components of work will entail, with a clear strategy of how your organisation will successfully coordinate and oversee delivery of learning activities with YEF and partners?
- How likely it is you'll be able to work with YEF and partners to deliver the learning activities in the given timeframe. To do this, we'll look at your previous experience, expertise, and how you plan to use these to deliver the work.
- Whether sufficient consideration has been given to the possible risks to project learning, impact study scoping and monitoring & reporting and whether mitigations proposed are adequate.

2. Ability to deliver at the required scale

We're trying to assess whether you have a strong understanding of the scale of resources that you will need to delivery across the different Change projects and the components of work. It's important for us to be able to assess whether your proposed approach will enable learning across the scope of this work.

3. Ability to appropriately consider race, equality, diversity and inclusion issues relevant to the Change Projects

We are trying to assess whether you have given adequate consideration to how race equity, diversity and inclusion considerations will be embedded into the design and delivery of the learning work.

To do this we will want to see that you have considered how you will ensure that the learning processes will be able to identify learning related to support that is provided to children and young people from marginalized backgrounds.

Scoring	
0	Totally fails to meet the requirement - information not available
1	Meets some of the requirements with limited supporting information
2	Meets some of the requirements with reasonable explanation
3	Fully meets the requirements with detailed explanation and evidence
4	Exceeds the requirements with extensive explanation and evidence

Annex 2. Further information on the Education Catalyst Programme

In 2024, we collaborated with education leaders, teachers, and young people to create our [Education Practice Guidance](#), which distils global evidence - including our [Toolkit](#) - into five actionable recommendations to reduce violence. While this guidance provides a strong foundation, education leaders tell us they need support, capacity, and time to implement it effectively. The Education Catalyst Pilot Programme will fund 4-6 organisations, in high violence areas, to implement YEF education practice guidance across a range of education settings (approx. 55-70 in total) to prevent children's involvement in violence.

We intend to learn about the barriers and enablers to implementing our practice change recommendations and gather learnings to inform the development of the model for scale up across all high violence areas in England and Wales.

The role of the learning partner

During this programme we are particularly keen to explore:

- Stakeholder perceptions
- Barriers and facilitators of implementation
- Adaptations and resources for improved implementation
- Any resulting changes to practice
- Implications for national policy, practice, and scalability.

Activities are expected to include the following, but please use your expertise to propose alternative activities where appropriate:

- 4-5 touch points with the participating catalyst organisations – including at start, middle and end, to collect info and insights through 1-1 discussions and surveying.
- Reporting barriers and enablers to implementation and lessons learned about how funding from YEF and implementation approaches helped overcome barriers. Learning partner to also attend 5x termly collaboration calls with YEF/catalyst orgs. Reference to implementation science and behaviour science frameworks useful.
- Surveying the 55-70 education settings involved in the programme
- Final write-up
- Learning and evaluation activities should pay close attention to capturing the impact on and inclusion of children from different demographic groups to inform future policy and programme adaptations.

Catalyst organisations will be required to:

- Support implementation across a minimum of 10 education settings.
- Improve education leaders' engagement, understanding and use of evidence.
- Support school/alternative provision/college practice alignment with YEF's Practice Guidance.
- Find a way for practice and support to be sustained after the Catalyst programme funding ends.

Who Can Apply?

- **Local area catalysts** – Supporting settings within a local authority / geographical area to review practice, plan improvements and implement change. Ideal catalyst organisations would be:
 - Local Authorities

- o Multi-academy Trusts / College groups
 - o School Improvement Organisations
 - o Third Sector Organisations
- **Group catalysts** – Supporting settings within a multi-academy trust, college group, cluster of schools or similar, to review practice, plan improvements and implement change. Ideal catalyst organisations include:
 - o Multi-academy Trusts
 - o School networks
 - o College groups

Extract from draft theory of change

Why? Education settings play a critical role in preventing children’s involvement in violence, but many lack the resources, expertise, and structured support to implement evidence-based interventions effectively.

Who? This programme is designed to support leaders in high violence areas who are responsible for budget and resource allocation, practice across education setting and leading change that supports and protects children.

Programme timeline

Phase	Dates	Duration	Focus
Setup and self-assessment	July – Sept 2025	4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build strong relationships between catalyst organisation, YEF, settings and the learning partner. • All settings complete EPIC self-assessment baseline
Change priorities and Theory of Change development	Sept – Oct 2025		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore common themes and agree priorities for practice development • Develop a theory of change
Implementation delivery and learning	Nov 2025 – Oct 2026	12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyst organisations and settings work on implementation • Testing and learning what works, identifying challenges and sharing learnings with YEF, fellow catalyst organisations and the learning partner.
Evaluation & Sustainability Planning	Nov – Dec 2026	2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete EPIC endline, reflect on changes, co-create sustainability plans, and contribute to programme learning

Annex 3. Further information on the Area Leaders Programme

The Area Leaders Programme (ALP) is a programme for multi-agency violence reduction partnerships in local authority areas. The programme aims to equip area leaders with the

knowledge, tools and partnerships needed to deliver effective, evidence-informed violence prevention strategies focused on people, places and practice.

2025-27 Area Leaders Programme: Building on our learning to date, we will recruit 10 new Area Leaders Programme (ALP) sites across England and Wales in Spring 2025, followed by a second cohort of 10 in Spring 2026. Following recruitment, each site will complete a self-assessment framework to identify local strengths and areas for development.

Successful partnerships will take part in a 12-month development programme from September 2025 to August 2026. This will include engaging with a core set of modules for all sites (see Appendix A), alongside tailored support to address site-specific priorities identified through the self-assessment. YEF will fund a part-time coordinator for each site and lead an evaluation of the programme's impact.

High-level theory of change

By delivering high-quality and locally relevant workshops and providing practical tools, guidance and support, ALP will support leaders to:

- Have a shared understanding of the violence problem and their strategy to reduce it.
- Better target efforts at the people and places most vulnerable to violence.
- Put children and their needs at the centre, making sure systems, processes and partnerships work to serve and support them effectively.
- Increase the use of research evidence in decisions and commissioning related to violence prevention.
- Have measurable violence reduction plans (with agreed mechanisms to hold everyone to account) to:
 - Make places and people safer.
 - Improve violence reduction practice across all partner agencies.

These changes will lead to more successful interventions being delivered to the right children, at the right time, leading to reductions in violence.

Why is ALP needed?

In recent years violent crime has risen significantly. Homicides, assaults, robberies and offences involving weapons have all seen sustained growth. We have also seen large increases in violent crime involving young people. This is a tragedy. Every child is an important member of our community, and we have a collective duty to protect them.

Recent national evaluations¹ highlight significant challenges in local violence prevention including inconsistent approaches, poor data access and use, challenges around information sharing and consent, fragmented priorities across partners and unclear governance, roles and responsibilities. There are clear opportunities to improve multi-agency planning and action to improve outcomes.

To explore these issues further, YEF ran workshops, and tested support offers with Violence Reduction Units, Community Safety Partnerships, children's services and youth justice. These highlighted practical blockers - such as long waits, limited programme availability, lack of capacity to change services, and differing views on who or what to prioritise. National reforms like the Serious Violence Duty (2022), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), and the Young Futures Prevention Partnerships and DfE's Families First programmes all reinforce the need for joined-up, evidence-informed leadership.

The Area Leaders Programme aims to support local leaders to meet these expectations through stronger partnership, clearer strategy, and better practice.

In 2024/25, we piloted the programme in four local authority areas. In 2025/26, we will expand to ten more areas to inform potential wider rollout, followed by a second group of ten in Spring 2026. We are seeking an expert organisation to help design and deliver the programme over the next two years.

Our Hypothesis

Areas that are more effective at preventing children's involvement in violence tend to do five things well:

- **Partnerships:** Build strong, accountable partnerships with clear roles, governance, and measurable goals.
- **Profile:** Understand the local drivers, context, and patterns of serious violence.
- **People:** Identify the children most at risk and ensure they get the right support at the right time.
- **Places:** Pinpoint high-risk locations and take action to make them safer.
- **Practice:** Share and apply best practice consistently across all key agencies.

Through high-quality, locally tailored workshops and practical tools, guidance and support, ALP will equip leaders to:

- Build a shared understanding of the local violence problem and a clear strategy to address it.
- Better targeted efforts towards the people and places most vulnerable to violence.
- Centre children's needs, ensuring systems, services, and partnerships work together to support them effectively.
- Use research evidence to inform decision-making, commissioning, and service design.
- Develop measurable violence reduction plans with clear accountability to:
 - Make high-risk places and people safer.
 - Strengthen violence prevention practice across all partner agencies.

These changes will enable more timely, effective interventions for the right children—leading to measurable reductions in violence.

Annex 4. Further Information about the Whole Area Model

Overview

The best available evidence shows that – on average - diverting children from the criminal justice system reduces reoffending and violence. It can also lower the severity of any crimes they do later commit. The greatest impacts are seen when diversion is early (pre-charge), on children who are younger (12-14) and when combined with evidence-based support. Diverting children is also likely to achieve these results for a lower cost than processing through the formal justice system.

However, findings from a range of research projects on arrested children, along with learning from the first year of the [Youth Justice Partnership](#) with the Centre for Justice Innovation, shows that there are a range of barriers affecting effective responses to arrested children, including:

- Issues with identifying and appropriately responding to vulnerability and safeguarding concerns.
- Patchy understanding of local diversion schemes among partners.
- Inconsistent eligibility criteria and referral pathways.
- Patchy awareness and use of national guidance and research evidence amongst officers and youth justice workers.
- Patchy understanding of support available to children through the youth justice service or other stakeholders (e.g. OPCC-commissioned services).
- Inconsistent commissioning and delivery of evidence-based interventions and approaches for diverted children.
- Limited monitoring or evaluation of local diversion schemes.

From this research and our Youth Justice Partnership, we now know so much more about the issues and blockers that may prevent local partnerships from aligning their policies, processes and practices more closely with the evidence base. We have also learned a lot about how to support police forces and youth justice services to make evidence-informed changes to their work, including the development of new resources to help local partnerships.

In 2025/26, YEF will work with four local partnerships – each covering a police force area – to pilot a new Whole Area Model which aims to improve the use and consistency of out of court resolutions (both informal and formal) for children.

Our starting hypothesis is that areas need to have at least seven things in place to effectively support arrested children:

1. **A pro-diversion culture for low-level offending amongst all officers and staff:** cover diversion in police training, effectively identifying vulnerabilities, responding in a child-centred, trauma-informed way, embedding feedback loops on outcomes and engagement, providing a dedicated YJ officer.
2. **Clear eligibility criteria:** agreed criteria which is clear and consistent across the partnership, and which avoids net-widening, embedding monitoring of data on who is accessing diversion and taking steps to tackle disproportionality.
3. **Commitment to reducing the use of police custody:** relevant staff trained in child-centred policing and trauma-informed practice, clear policy on when it's absolutely necessary to bring a child into custody, clear process for triaging children which is conducted swiftly, interviewing children outside of custody is prioritised.
4. **A robust decision-making process:** regular joint decision-making panels with representation from the police, youth justice services, social care, education and health, comprehensive information gathering exercise completed (including YJS assessment) before the panel, effective use of the Child Gravity Matrix, swift administration, transparent decision-making and clear process for dealing with non-engagement.
5. **Swift access to evidence-based support:** clear referral pathways are established through a shared protocol and these pathways are known across policing (and other relevant services), referrals are high-quality containing all relevant information, referrals are triaged swiftly and

acted upon, existing service provision is mapped, evidence-based support is commissioned/delivered, staff feel equipped to deliver effective practice, uptake of support is understood, and monitoring and evaluation embedded.

6. **Process for reviewing and closing cases implemented:** Expectations around engagement and potential consequences for non-engagement are clearly explained to children, clear case management approach established including updates for panel where relevant, multi-agency approach to dealing with non-engagement adopted, and clear process for victim engagement is in place.
7. **High standards of delivery maintained:** a robust scrutiny panel for reviewing diversion is in place, relevant data on outcomes, engagement rates, interventions and re-offending rates is shared with the scrutiny panel, senior representatives from each partner agencies routinely attends and contributes to the YJS Management Board.

The four-partnership involved in the Whole Area Model will receive:

1. A review of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to improve your own organisation's and partnership response to arrested children. This will be focused on the Diversion Practice Guidance and the seven recommended actions outlined above.
2. A programme of support for police forces and youth justice services delivered by a dedicated practice specialist. The support is likely to include facilitated workshops, training, evidence-informed resources, document reviews, peer observations, the development of new materials and a new National Diversion Network to help sustain change.
3. Funding for the police force (£10,000) and each youth justice service (£5,000) to support involvement in the programme. We are looking for each organisation to identify a lead who will be actively involved in the programme over the course of six months (e.g. a Team Manager from the YJSs, and an Inspector (or above) who has responsibility for diversion/out of court resolutions and/or children and young people). We are anticipating that leads will devote up to one day a week (0.2FTE) to programme activity.

Annex 5. Further Information about Youth Justice Partnership with CJI

In 2024/25 YEF commissioned the Centre for Justice Innovation as part of a youth justice partnership which aims to:

- Build awareness and appetite for evidence across the sector.
- Support Youth Justice Services to improve practice and do what works.
- Support the Youth Endowment Fund to deliver the recommendations set out in our Systems Guidance: [‘Arrested Children: How to keep children safe and reduce reoffending.’](#)

To deliver on these aims, the Centre for Justice Innovation have delivered the following tiered level of support across the youth justice sector in England and Wales, and will continue to do so in 2025/2026 and 2026/27:

Level of support	Activity per year
1. Grow Demand for Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quarterly open access virtual learning events to build awareness of existing and emerging evidence on approaches, interventions or policy related to arrested children. ▪ Bi-monthly newsletter.
2. Change Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intensive support for ten youth justice services to adopt evidence-based approaches to supporting children at-risk of or involved in violence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This includes document reviews, peer observation, and hands-on support to change practice.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We anticipate this being ten different youth justice services each year, although recognise that some services may require support beyond the first 12 months. ▪ Lighter touch training and support on the effective use of formal and informal out of court disposals for young people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – These run virtually and are based on issues identified by youth justice services and police forces. There are generally 3 – 5 lighter touch training sessions per year.
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The partnership with the Centre for Justice Innovation is already established and they have been delivering the above for nearly a year. The Centre for Justice Innovation will be launching the second call for expressions of interest for the intensive support package (10 YJSs and the corresponding police force) in April 2025.