



Step Together Delivery Partner: Call for Proposals

Purpose

The Youth Endowment Fund is seeking to appoint an umbrella delivery partner for an efficacy study of the **Step Together** initiative.

Step Together is a UK adaption of the Chicago Safe Passage initiative which has demonstrated impact in reducing crime, improving feelings of safety and school attendance by children and young people. YEF and partners' previous pilot study faced challenges due to proximity to the Covid-19 pandemic and unforeseen methodological and operational issues. Given the potential impact of the intervention, and lessons learnt in the pilot phase, YEF is looking to develop and implement an efficacy study to further examine the effects of this initiative in the UK context. The delivery partner will work with an independent evaluator to revise the delivery and evaluation model for the study based on findings from the pilot study, oversee the delivery of Step Together across multiple locations and with multiple local delivery organisations and schools, and work with the evaluator to ensure a robust evaluation of this intervention.

The delivery partner will be involved in planning and co-design from August 2025 and, **subject to our Grants and Evaluation Committee approval**, the setup, delivery and evaluation would be expected to begin in **March 2026**.

About the funder

The Youth Endowment Fund

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. Just as we benefit from robust trials in medicine, children and young people deserve support grounded in the evidence. We build that knowledge through the programmes and evaluations that we fund. Our strategy sets out how we will achieve our mission

About Step Together and the Pilot study

Background

The Step Together project, inspired by Chicago's Safe Passage programme, aims to reduce crime and violence by placing trained adult 'chaperones' on routes used by children walking to and from school in areas identified as having a heightened risk of violence or antisocial behaviour (ASB).

A Step Together pilot study was established in 2021 in the West Midlands, funded by YEF and the Home Office. In the study the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (WMVRP) commissioned 10 local voluntary and community sector organisations to provide youth workers (staff members) and identified 18 routes associated with 24 schools across Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Solihull, Sandwell and Dudley to be involved in the study. The WMVRP also liaised with schools to secure their buy in, conducted walk-throughs of routes to identify areas at potential risk and devised a training programme for chaperones. During the study, chaperones were present on the selected routes for, on average, six on each route for at least two hours daily at the start and end of each school day. Routes were chaperoned for between 20 and 43 weeks during the 2021–2022 academic year. In addition to being present on the routes, chaperones also interacted with pupils (generally 11–18 years old) and community members such as local shop staff, introducing themselves, enquiring about local issues and asking the young people how they were. This pilot intervention was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design (QED) study that compared changes in crime (including ASBs) in the chaperoned routes, to routes without chaperones, and compared school attendance and achievements in the study schools to those without chaperones. This quantitative study was complemented with an implementation and process evaluation.

Further information about the Step Together project including [Feasibility study report](#) and [Pilot study report](#), are available on YEF's website [Step Together | Youth Endowment Fund](#)

Next steps: Efficacy Study

Taking on board the lessons learnt in programme delivery and evaluation design in the pilot study, YEF would like to progress towards an efficacy study of the Step Together intervention. We anticipate that a full efficacy study may take a randomised control trial or quasi-experimental design and require a larger number of schools (up to 100 depending on research design chosen) to meet the required sample size. Such a study would likely be across multiple locations, will would require new schools and routes (so that results are not confused through influence of the previous intervention). We would aim to complement the efficacy impact study with an implementation and process

evaluation to learn contextual lessons about the mechanisms of change at work in the project.

Programme design

We are now looking to appoint a Delivery Partner (or a consortium of partners) who will act as an ‘umbrella organisation’. The umbrella delivery organisation will be responsible for updating the intervention’s delivery – that is the shared practice model used in the pilot study, based on lessons learned in the pilot, and pending approval, oversee delivery and completion of the study. This would be conducted in collaboration with teams from recruited local community organisations and the independent evaluator (appointed by YEF).

Finding out what works

Being a YEF delivery partner is a big commitment. This entails not only ensuring high quality, consistent delivery, but also doing so in the context of a robust evaluation that requires additional considerations and activities to be able to take place. It’s important that you’re aware of what we’ll need from you to make the partnership work for everyone – find out more about [what to expect](#). If your application is successful, YEF and your assigned evaluator will work with you to co-design the best possible evaluation to find out if, how and why Step Together works to reduce youth violence (and its impact on other relevant outcomes). We’ll be working as a team to ensure that you’re supported throughout the evaluation process. To find out more about the process you can watch this video explaining our [approach to evaluation](#) and read through our [guidance](#) explaining the relationship with the evaluator and your role and responsibilities.

Please note that we don’t expect successful applicants to have any technical expertise or knowledge of evaluation techniques. We only expect that you’ll commit to the independent evaluation and work closely with the evaluator throughout the project, including set-up and design stage, delivery, data collection and reporting.

The roles and responsibilities of the delivery partner would be to:

- Recruit and onboard local voluntary and community sector organisations in England and Wales who’s staff members have experience of youth work, to act as chaperones in the study.
- Work with evaluators and local organisations to select and onboard schools and identify appropriate routes to school for the study

- Develop and delivery training to chaperones on their roles in the study, based on that used in the pilot study.
- Provide project management for the project across all local organisations onboarded.
- Work with recruited local organisations and the independent evaluator to update a 'shared practice model' based on lessons learned in the pilot study.
- Work with the appointed independent evaluator to develop a robust infrastructure and mechanisms for collecting high-quality monitoring data.
- Acts as a single point of contact for the independent evaluators and the YEF.
- Effectively manage and disburse grants to the recruited local organisations
- Oversee delivery of the shared practice model, ensuring delivery is on-track, as intended, consistent and quality assured.
- Support the recruited local organisation to mitigate risks, overcome challenges and share learning.
- Consolidate monitoring data and quarterly reports for the YEF.
- Work closely with the evaluator to support the delivery of a high-quality evaluation.
- Translate evaluation activities for the local organisations, ensuring the evaluation is understood and on-track.
- Champion the YEF's approach to evaluation and uphold evaluation deadlines.
- Work in partnership with the YEF and the evaluators to keep them informed of progress, successes and challenges.
- Provide opportunities for the local organisations to share learning.

Who should apply

Eligibility criteria

1. **Location:** your organisation must be planning to deliver in England and/or Wales.
2. **Your organisation:** your organisation must be a registered charity, company, statutory body or CIC.
3. **Children and young people:** projects must be supporting children and young people, as outlined in the 'young person eligibility' section.
4. **Willingness to engage in an independent evaluation:** the YEF exists to better understand what works to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. To help us achieve this, you will need to work with an evaluation partner throughout your project. There are certain evaluation tools and approaches that we employ that you must agree to utilise if in receipt of our funding – in particular, you'd be agreeing to take part in a randomised control trial (RCT) or a QED study

5. **Our approach to archiving data:** We're passionate about understanding what works to change things for children in the long-term. We want to avoid promoting work that looks great but doesn't make a long-term difference. To avoid this, it's a requirement for YEF funded projects to agree to our approach to collecting and storing data to enable long-term follow-up through our data archive. The data archive means we'll be able to learn more about what does and doesn't work to reduce violence over the long-term. You will not be able to progress with our funding unless you, your organisation(s) and where appropriate project partners have read, understood and agreed to our data archive. Please read the information on our [website](#) and watch our video explainer.
6. **Our approach to a comparison group:** We are committed to young people getting the best possible support at the right time. This means we strive to conduct the most robust types of research; in evaluations, RCTs are widely considered the gold standard, closely followed by QEDs. It will be the role of the appointed evaluators to determine if this study can follow a RCT or QED design, and which is most appropriate and reflect on recommendations from the pilot study. In the case of an RTC, the study would involve randomly selecting schools and routes to either receive the intervention or to not receive the intervention, but for which outcomes are still measured. If a QED design is followed it would involve matching the schools and routes that receive the intervention, with similar schools and routes that do not. If the evaluators determine that a RCT is the best approach, randomisation (of schools and routes, not pupils) must be something you agree to and facilitate, as a condition of receiving this funding.
7. **Scale:** to support a robust and meaningful evaluation we require projects to be able to reach a certain number of schools and routes, during the project lifetime. The evaluators will determine the number of schools and routes required, based on the evaluation design. We can consider that it will be significantly larger than the 18 routes and 24 schools involved in the pilot.

What are we looking for from a delivery partner

At a minimum, applicants should meet the following criteria (either as a single organisation or as part of a consortium):

- Be able to demonstrate the ability to recruit and onboard local community and volunteering organisations who's staff members have youth work experience, through existing networks and relationships
- Be able to demonstrate the ability to work with schools at a local level to bring them on board with the study
- Have strong project management experience
- Can demonstrate the ability to coordinate and manage multiple partners effectively

- Be willing and able to work with an independent evaluator who will lead on the evaluation design and delivery
- Be supportive of the idea of randomisation in evaluation, if a RCT design is selected by the evaluators, and be willing and able to explain the value of this approach to others.

Role of the appointed evaluator

The independent evaluator appointed by YEF will work with YEF and the delivery partner to co-design the programme delivery and the evaluation, agreeing an approach to key issues such as how schools and routes are selected, how local community and volunteering organisation are engaged, and how data will be collected. This process will draw heavily on the experience and lessons learnt in the pilot study with modifications to overcome the challenges experienced.

The evaluator will lead a series of workshops with the delivery partner, local organisations and YEF as part of the co-design process, to support the delivery partner to produce a high-quality delivery plan which build on the lessons learnt in the pilot study. The evaluator will also lead on producing a comprehensive evaluation plan and producing a full evaluation report at the end of delivery.

Design overview

As noted above, the design of the Step Together intervention will follow that used previously in the pilot study, and articulated in the theory of change, with adaptations to incorporate lessons learned and address identified challenges. The co-design phase will consist of the review of the pilot implementation – in delivery, and in evaluation design, with recommendations from the delivery organisation and evaluator coming together to update the study design including shared practice model.

The shared practice model – that is the description of the common practice that all local organisations and youth workers on the study will be expected to follow – aims to ensure consistency of delivery for the purposes of evaluation. We note that there will be some areas within the shared practice model that will need to be flexible, catering to the needs of the local area and service. Therefore, there is scope for creativity in thinking about aspects of the delivery that could and should be varied; we will expect to see this creativity in proposals, and for this to be further developed in the co-design process.

Area/local partner selection

The following criteria should be met when recruiting local organisations:

- Staff of local organisation must have experience of youth work and ideally be local and familiar with the selected schools and routes to school

Applicants should also think about practicalities surrounding overseeing delivery of multiple teams spread across various regions, bearing in mind the needs of the local areas they operate within and what this means for delivery.

We need applicants to demonstrate they have the right connections and relationships in place with schools and suitable local organisation and be able to suggest where/who they would recruit.

Race equity, diversity and inclusion

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.

Through the evaluation of Step Together, we therefore want to make sure that we are reaching a diverse range of young people. It is essential for race equity, diversity and inclusion considerations to be embedded into the design and delivery of the programme. The delivery partner and evaluation team may work with one of YEF's Race Equity Associates in the co-design period who can advise on specific elements of programme design, but we would expect applicants to demonstrate initial thinking around this in their application.

Estimated timeline

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

Efficacy evaluation draft timeline (pre-delivery stages)	By when?
Call for proposals published	W/c 8 th April 2025
Deadline for full proposal submission	16 th May 2025
Proposals scored and shortlisted	23 th May 2025
Interviews with shortlisted applications	Week of 26 th May 2025
Delivery partner appointment	1 st June 2025
Evaluator commissioning	21 st April to 8 th June
Grants and Evaluation Committee – decision point	29th July 2025
Pre-meets with delivery partner and evaluator	w/c 4 th August
Co-design	August 2025 – January 2026
Grants and Evaluation Committee – Decision point	March 2026

The timeline below is subject to approval from YEF's Grants and Evaluation Committee – we would also encourage applicants to tell us whether this seems reasonable/achievable.

Estimated timeline	By when?
Set-up and mobilisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onboarding of local organisations, and training • Identification and onboarding with schools • DSA/MOU signing • Evaluation ethics approval • Developing data monitoring tools and processes • Training • Any other preparatory activities 	March 2026 – August 2026
Delivery and data collection and reporting: Delivery organisation Evaluator	September 2026 – March 2028 September 2026 – September 2028
Evaluation analysis and reporting	Mid 2029

Budget

Applicants should include in their budget costs for the delivery partner to effectively manage the development and delivery aspect of this trial. We expect this to cover core day to day management, being a point of contact for all local organisation recruited and the independent evaluator, quality assuring delivery and reporting to YEF as required.

We expect the budget to cover delivery management from March 2026 through to supporting data collection up until September 2027. These are estimated timelines and budgets can be revisited/finalised through the co-design period.

We recognise that taking part in an evaluation requires additional resource particularly related to administrative tasks such as data collection, and any additional staff time for engagement in training and adjusting to the shared practice model¹. Applicants should, therefore, include such costs in their proposed budgets.

Please note, applicants must provide at least 20% of the budget from supplementary and/or in-kind support. These sources of funding can include other grants, contributions

¹ Should an expansion of existing delivery in selected YJSs be required based on co-design work, we will review budgets accordingly



you make through your own unrestricted funding, or in-kind and pro-bono support your organisation receives for the activities. More details can be found [here](#).

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Application process

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

Proposal forms should be downloaded here 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 16th May 2025**

Submissions should include:

- Completed proposal form (including eligibility check)
- Completed project timeline – we anticipate that this will be a first draft and subject to change
- Completed project budget – similarly we anticipate that this will be a first draft and subject to change, particularly as the scale of the intervention is clarified in the co-design phase
- Completed risk register – similarly we anticipate that this is a first draft, subject to further refinement

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

Partnership applications

To ensure we deliver the best evidence about what works for children and young people, we require projects to reach a high number of children and young people. 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 'Step Together_query' in the subject line of your email.

What happens next

Step one: 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.

Step two: Matching you with an evaluator

We'll then match the successful delivery partner with an evaluator from our evaluator panel. This panel is made up of approximately 35 research organisations and universities that have the knowledge, skills and expertise to conduct rigorous evaluations of the implementation and impact of the projects we fund. Each organisation will competitively bid to be partnered with you. Evaluators will be matched based on a range of considerations, including the strength and quality of their bid, their skills and experience in the evaluation methods that are appropriate for your project, their subject specific knowledge and experience of conducting research with the children and young people your project supports.

Step three (subject to our Grants and Evaluation Committee approval): Co-design

Once you're paired with an evaluator, the delivery team will be expected to be available for a series of intensive [co-design workshops](#).

These are likely to run from August 2025 to January 2026 and you will need to be available to attend a minimum of three 2–3-hour, co-design workshops before the end of January 2026. These will mostly be virtual meetings with in-person meetings scheduled where needed. Additional work will be required outside of these meetings to complete tasks/relevant outputs (e.g. Theory of Change, detailed delivery plan, budget, timeline, risk register, Shared Practice Model). Further information on the required outputs will be provided prior to co-design commencing.

The purpose of co-design is for the delivery team, representatives from local organisations and the appointed evaluator to work together to further refine and develop a clear, joint project and evaluation proposal to take to YEF's Grants and Evaluation Committee for final approval.

There will be budget provided to support some of the costs of engagement in the co-design period and produce the relevant outputs listed below. This shouldn't be included in the budget you submit as part of this application.

Step four: Final proposals

Once you submit your final proposal, which has been co-designed with your evaluator, we will present it to our Grant and Evaluation Committee who will make the final decision on whether or not to award the grant and the evaluation. The length of time this 'co-design' phase will last is 6-months.

Time

It's important to be aware that from the time you submit the first part of your application to the point you hear the final outcome (i.e. whether or not YEF will be award the grant and the evaluation) is likely to be from around 10 months. We believe that this amount of time working with our team and your paired evaluator is critical. Together, it will help you develop a strong foundation to find out what works to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence.

Appendix 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 set up (including the development of a shared practice model) and delivery of Step Together intervention will entail, with a clear strategy of how your organisation will successfully coordinate and oversee delivery within local charities and voluntary organisation teams.
- How likely it is you'll be able to work with local partners to deliver in the given timeframe. To do this, we'll look at your previous experience, expertise, and existing networks with local charities and voluntary organisation, and schools and how you plan to use these to successfully promote and set up delivery.
- Whether sufficient consideration has been given to the possible risks to set up and delivery the project 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 how the local organisation and other setup up activities likely sample size will be met within the 6-month setup and recruitment period.

It's important for us to be able to assess whether your proposed approach, including selection of schools and local organisation, and areas in which they deliver, will enable the sample size to be met.

3. Ability to successfully recruit and onboard local charities and voluntary organisation teams and schools

We're trying to assess whether you have prior experience of working with schools and local charities and voluntary organisation, who have suitable youth workers on staff and your strategy for recruiting and onboarding them into the trial.

We also want to understand any potential risks involved with recruiting and onboarding schools and local charities and voluntary organisation into the evaluation and what approach you will take to mitigating these risks.

4. Ability to appropriately consider race, equality, diversity and inclusion issues

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.

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 programme.

To do this we will want to see that you have considered how you will ensure reaching children and young people from marginalized backgrounds and how these children and young people will continue to be supported during and after the programme.

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