

YEF review of child-centred policing from the perspectives of children

Summary

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of child-centred policing from the perspectives of children. We want to understand what 'good' looks like in interactions with the police, generating specific examples of practice which helps officers to operationalise child-centred policing and engage with children in ways which are grounded in children's needs and perspectives.
- The study will inform YEF's recommendations for the policing sector on how to reduce violence amongst children and young people (which will draw on a range of ongoing and completed research work).
- The deadline for the full draft report is 20th February 2026. The deadline for proposals is 8th July 2025. Interviews will take place in the week commencing 21st July. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 1st August.

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 children and young people's lives, and the systems and services that surround them.

The policing sector is one such system that supports children.

YEF's policing sector work

In 2026 YEF will publish recommendations for how the policing sector across England and Wales can support the reduction of serious violence amongst children and young people. These recommendations will draw upon YEF's existing work in the policing sector, including:

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

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

The aim of this project

Alongside ‘what’ police should do to keep children safe from violence is an equally important question of ‘how’ they should do it. Child-centred policing is an approach to policing which places children at the heart of the interaction. In their [Children and Young Persons strategy 2024-2027](#), the NPCC has defined ‘child-centred policing’, grounding it in the concept of procedural justice.

Procedural justice is an approach which suggests that treating people in a procedurally fair and just way means that they will view those in authority as more legitimate, and respect them more, leading to increased compliance and engagement. There are four key principles in procedural justice: voice, trust, neutrality and respect. The NPCC’s strategy uses the principles of voice and trust in its definition of child-centred policing. The evidence for procedural justice is well developed; a systematic review by Mazerolle et al. (2013) found that when police apply at least one principle of procedural justice—such as neutrality or respect—during interactions, it boosts public satisfaction, confidence, compliance, and cooperation. Policing which is perceived as legitimate strengthens crime prevention efforts, and the College of Policing endorses procedural justice as a way to reduce reoffending. We know procedural justice is evidence-based, and that police should be using its principles when interacting with children, but we don’t know the specifics of how that should be done in practice.

The aim of this project is to hear from children to gather specific and concrete examples of good practice in child-centred policing. We would like to understand where children see, hear and engage with policing, who they are engaging with, and the extent to which children trust and feel heard by the police across these interactions. Next, we would like to find out what ‘good’ looks like in different interactions that children might have with the police. Finally, we would like these findings to be taken to policing professionals, where they will work with the research team and children involved to develop operational recommendations for police officers to enact child-centred policing.

Race equity

There are significant racial disparities in children’s experience of violence, policing and youth justice. Our 2023 survey of 7,500 children found that while the majority of violence was committed by White children (70%) and the majority of victims were White (72%), Black teenage children were, on average, more likely to be vulnerable as both victims (21%) and perpetrators (22%) compared to White children (16% and 14%, respectively).¹ Racial disparities in the justice system are particularly pronounced for Black children, who continue to be over-represented across stop and search, arrest, youth cautions, first-time entrants, children in custody and reoffending rates.² Black children make up 6% of all 10–17-year-olds, but in

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

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

2022/23, they accounted for 26% of children in custody. Meanwhile, Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children make up less than 1% of children; yet a self-reported 7% of children in custody are from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds – over 7 times their population share.³⁴

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 like to see the NPCC [Children and Young Persons strategy 2024-2027](#) considered in the development of this research study and would expect to finalise the detailed research questions and methods with the appointed team.

1. Context: What is the nature of children’s interactions with the police?

- Where do children see, hear and engage with the police?
- Which police officers are children engaging with?

2. Trust: How can police build trust with children?

- Do children have any examples of where police have built trusting relationships? Where they have negative examples, how could this have been improved upon?
- How does this differ for children:
 - o from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds?
 - o who are neurodivergent or have SEND needs?
- What should police do to build the trust of children from these communities?

3. Voice: How can policing better listen to children?

- Do children have any examples of where police have listened to them well? Where they have negative examples, and felt not listened to, how could this have been improved upon?
- Do children want to, feel comfortable to and have opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns to police? How do they want to be engaged with? What do they most want to say?
- How does this differ for children:
 - o from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds?
 - o who are neurodivergent or have SEND needs?
- What should police do to enable better listening with children from these communities?

4. Setting: Do children want different things from police depending on where they interact?

³ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisonson/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/11/Children-in-custody-web-2023-2.pdf>

⁴ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2023/>

- If at all, what differences do children describe in how they would like to interact with police within the context of the street, at home, in school, or in custody?

5. Practice: What specific changes should be made to operational policing practice to ensure policing is more 'child-centred', focussing on building children's trust, and listening to their voices?

- How can these changes be embedded across officers, teams and forces?

Suggested methodology

To answer the research questions, we would expect to see a detailed written discussion that draws from:

- Desk based research.
- Qualitative research with children. We want to hear from a diverse range of children (across age, gender, ethnicity, geography, involvement in the justice system). This might include interviews, case studies, and focus groups with children.
- Qualitative research with policing practitioners to help develop findings from research with children into operational recommendations. Findings should be developed and communicated with input from children.
- Additional resources suggested by the research team.

Please consider the following when describing the proposed research approach:

- **Involving children:** YEF would like to see some involvement of children in the design of the project, and the development of the findings that are taken to policing practitioners. Applicants are asked to think about the best ways to approach involving children, including justice-involved children, children who are neurodivergent or have SEND needs, and those from minority ethnic groups that are over-represented in the criminal justice system.
- **Working with policing practitioners:** Please detail whether you have existing relationships with police forces that could be utilised for this work, or whether you would need support making these connections.

Required outputs

At the end of the study, we would expect all these outputs to be drawn together in a written report, comprising:

- An executive summary;
- An introduction;
- Methodology;
- Findings (written discussion of each of the research questions in turn);
- 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.

Alongside a written report, we would ask for one or more further resources:

- a. an output that allows the findings to be shared back with the children who took part in the research.
- b. an operational resource that policing practitioners can use outlining best practises for child centred policing.

It is up to the applicant to decide how these resources should be presented, but children should be involved in the production of both outputs, and the police should be involved in the production of output b.

Timeline

The deadline for the full draft report is 20th February 2026.

The deadline for proposals is 9am on 8th July 2025. The deadline for clarification questions is 23rd June, and responses will be posted on our tender page by 27th June. Interviews will take place in the week commencing 21st July. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 1st August, after which a peer review process will take place.

| Activity | Expected time frame |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Proposal deadline | 8 th July 2025, 9am |
| Questions accepted until | 23 rd June 2025 |
| Questions published by | 27 th June 2025 |
| Interviews to take place | w/c 21 st July 2025 |
| Preferred bidder appointed (including all contractual work and kick off completed) | 25 th August 2025 |
| Full draft report delivered | 20 th February 2026 |
| Review and publication process | March 2026 |

Budget

We expect the project to cost between £50–75k. However, we have some flexibility here and will be judging bids on value for money rather than absolute cost. 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 engaging with children on sensitive issues, and what considerations would be needed to engage children on the topic of policing? Do they have understanding of, and links to, policing?
- **Research experience (20%).** How much experience does the team have in delivering:
 - similar research projects with children?
 - research with police forces.

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? This should include proposed methods for involving children in the design of the research and involving both children and police in creating outputs.
- **Value for money (20%).** Does the bid represent value for money?

More detail on scoring criteria can be found in the appendix. Where teams may be weak in any of the above areas, we encourage applicants to seek expert consultants and partnerships to supplement their bid.

Proposals should be no longer than 2,500 words, and should set out the team's expertise, experience, methodological approach, and budget. You may attach relevant documents to support your application – this will not be included in the word count. As noted above, we are open to research teams suggesting their own research questions and methodology, and/or suggesting improvements and amendments to our own.

We will interview selected candidates to better understand their approach to the project.

Please email your application to youthvoice@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 9am on 8th July 2025. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to

youthvoice@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 23rd June. Answers to questions submitted will be published anonymously by the 27th June where the tender can be found on the YEF website.

Appendix 1: YEF scoring Criteria

1. Relevant experience of core project team and understanding of topic area (40%)

- a. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates expertise and understanding of violence affecting children, and policing.
- b. The extent to which the proposed team demonstrates a track record of delivering high quality research with children, and research covering topics related to policing.
- c. The extent to which the proposal considers how justice involved children, and children who are over-represented in the criminal justice system, will be engaged throughout the project.
- d. The extent to which the proposed team demonstrate an understanding and track record of good project management and robust quality assurance procedures.

2. Methodology and approach (40%)

- a. Suitability of the methodology to deliver against the research aims and objectives, balancing the need to provide robust qualitative evidence, timely feedback, and flexibility with the need to be proportionate, targeted, and low burden.
- b. Suitability of the methodology to ensure research is pertinent, engaging, and sensitive to participant groups.
- c. Suitability of proposed strategies to access participant groups and maximise participation rates, especially amongst children with lived experience of the justice system.
- d. Suitability of proposed strategies to reach and involve policing practitioners in the research.
- e. Suitability of the proposed techniques to analyse data to deliver against research questions.

3. Value for Money (20%)

- a. Detailed cost of your proposal and how this demonstrates value for money.

| Scoring criteria | |
|------------------|--|
| 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 |

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|---|---|
| 3 | Fully meets the requirements with detailed explanation and evidence |
| 4 | Exceeds the requirements with extensive explanation and evidence |