

Area Leaders Programme: systems thinking adviser

Summary

- YEF is seeking a person or organisation to help identify how systems thinking and systems approaches can support development of the Area Leaders Programme (ALP). ALP aims to help local strategic partnerships work better together to prevent children's involvement in violence.
- This spec is for a rapid initial piece of work. There are two main deliverables:
 - Design and delivery of a short introduction to systems thinking for local partnerships (session scheduled for **Tues 22nd Oct**)
 - Advice to YEF on systems frameworks, approaches and workshop exercises that could be valuable to ALP local partnerships in understanding how to strengthen violence prevention in their local contexts. (**by 5th Nov**)
- The deadline for quotes is **5pm Thursday 18th September 2025**.
- Delivery of this work will require rapid mobilisation as the ALP programme is due to start delivering in October 2025 (dates for deliverables included above).

Background

We're here 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.

[Last year](#), 244 people in England and Wales tragically died after being assaulted with a knife. Of these, 32 were children. Every child captured in these numbers is an important member of our community and society has a duty to protect them. Even when violence doesn't strike directly, [we know](#) that the fear of violence has a terrible effect on children's lives.

The Youth Endowment Fund exists to try and permanently change things. To succeed, we must deeply understand how to reduce the violence that affects young people. We then have to make this information highly relevant and accessible to the people making decisions for vulnerable young people. In practice, this means we need to find out what works and what doesn't through high quality qualitative and quantitative research into children's lives. We then must convert this into really accessible content on what works, how delivery organisations (like schools, councils, police forces and more) can change what they do, how the systems have to change. We then need to work with and inspire those making decisions. Together, we believe we can change things permanently for children.

At the heart of this work is our new Area Leaders Programme. It provides support to local councils on what they can do in their towns and cities to change things.

The Area Leaders Programme

The ALP is part of YEF's change work. It will bring together local partnerships to better protect children from being drawn into violence. These partnerships often include the police, community safety teams, youth justice services, children's services, health, education, youth and community organisations.

The programme will support the areas to develop the five Ps of violence prevention:

- **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 ALP, partnerships will be offered:

- Learning resources and workshops that bring together the best available evidence on topics related to the 5Ps
- Bespoke sessions to reflect on their local context, problem solve and action plan together
- A community of practice to share learning with other areas
- Funding for a part time local coordinator role to help embed and sustain joint working across the partnership

Following a successful pilot in four local authority areas, we're expanding into ten new areas in 2025/26, helping more places work collaboratively to keep children safe.

The draft prospectus of sessions for ALP 2025/26 can be found [here](#). We know from the ALP pilot and recent reports (including the [JTAI report on multi-agency responses to serious youth violence](#) and the [evaluation of Violence Reduction Units](#)) that opportunities and challenges for effective multi-agency violence prevention can be rooted in complex local system factors. In describing 'local systems' we are interested in different inter-related levels that impact the support children and communities receive:

- the various services, pathways and multi-agency panels that form systems of support for young people affected by or vulnerable to involvement in violence – this spans a number of specific systems of support focussed on different issues and provided by different agencies

- the wider structures and cultures that enable (or disable) delivery of effective support for children and communities, including factors like (but not limited to) funding streams, information flows, professional skills and practices, relationships and ways of working between agencies
- the local trends, values and shared goals (or lack of shared goals) that shape the context for violence reduction work

The systems thinking adviser will support the ALP team to embed useful, practical and feasible systems approaches into the support offered to ALP local partnerships. The aim is to bring systems tools to specific challenges local partnerships are facing, giving new ways to approach problem solving and action planning in their local contexts.

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. Our 2023 survey of 7,500 children found that while the majority of violence was committed by White children (70%) and most 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

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 equity should be considered in the response to this call for proposals, and in the final workplan for the systems lead.

Required outputs and suggested methodology

There are two main outputs for this work.

1. Short introduction to systems thinking for local partnerships

The short introduction should equip ALP local partnership representatives with a foundation of knowledge on systems thinking. The aim is to help them recognise when and how they can apply systems thinking and practical systems approaches/ tools to problem solving and action planning.

We would expect this session to draw on approaches and tools that bidders have already used with groups of professionals from public service and/ or multi-agency settings. The content will be delivered in an online workshop on **22nd October** and should include some delivered content and some participatory activities.

¹ [Children, violence and vulnerability 2023](#)

2. Recommendations for ALP sessions

The successful bidder will advise the ALP team on parts of the ALP programme where drawing on systems thinking and approaches could be particularly helpful. We would also like the successful bidder to give recommendations for workshop activities or tools that offer simple ways for local partnerships to apply systems approaches to problem solving and action planning. This will need to happen **by 5th November**.

Timeline

The deadline for quotes is Thursday 18th September. We intend to have appointed the successful organisation by w/c22nd October. The contract will require a rapid mobilisation due to timescales.

Budget

We expect the project to cost **up to £10,000**. We will consider quotes based on value for money rather than absolute cost and will consistently prioritise proposals that give good value for money and strongly discourage bidders using this figure as the sole driver of their costs.

We would not expect VAT to be included in budgets. Pass through VAT via sub-granting work to other organisations may in some circumstances be included. However, it is up to the individual/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.

Please also include your day rates for session facilitation support, as there is some possibility that this work could be extended to include this.

How to apply

YEF will consider quotes using the following criteria:

- **Expertise and experience in applying systems approaches in a similar context to ALP.** How much expertise and experience does the bidder have relating to systems approaches and applying them in a context comparable to ALP?
- **Proposed approach.** Does the suggested approach meet the outlined aims for the project and can the bidder show how the support they provide will help achieve the aims of ALP?
- **Capacity to deliver.** Can the bidder mobilise rapidly within the timeframe?
- **Value for money.** Does the bid represent value for money?



Quotes should be no longer than 1,500 words, and should set out the organisation's expertise/ experience, approach, capacity and budget. You may attach relevant documents to support your application – this will not be included in the word count.

catherine.fayers@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 5pm on 18th September

If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to catherine.fayers@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 5pm on 16th September