

YEF review of custody resettlement for children and young people

Summary

- YEF is seeking a team to conduct a review of custody resettlement for children and young people in England and Wales. This review will describe current practice, how well this aligns to the evidence on successful implementation, and how well this meets the needs of children and young people. We want to identify and understand good examples of resettlement, and explore the specific changes required to improve the quality and consistency of these programmes.
- The study will inform YEF's recommendations for the youth justice sector on how to reduce violence amongst children and young people (which will draw on a range of ongoing and completed research work).
- The deadline for proposals is 9am on 2nd March 2026. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 3rd April. The deadline for the full draft report is 13th November 2026.

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 rigorous evaluations to find out what works. We also synthesise the best available evidence from across the world and mobilise what we learn 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. Alongside our [programme funding](#), and [evidence synthesis](#) work, we fund a wide range of research projects (including data analysis, youth understanding work, and practice reviews) to better understand young people's lives, and the systems and services that surround them.

The youth justice sector is one such system that supports children.

YEF's youth justice sector work

In 2027, YEF will publish two guidance reports for the youth justice sector in England and Wales: Practice Guidance and System Guidance. These reports will set out recommendations for how the sector can support the reduction of serious violence involving children and young people.

- Practice Guidance is delivery-focused, guiding practice leaders and commissioners on what works to keep children safe from violence.
- System Guidance is system-focused, guiding policymakers and system leaders on the changes needed to enable and sustain best practice.

The recommendations in these reports will draw on YEF's existing work in the sector, including:

- Projects YEF has funded and evaluated in the sector (such as a trial of [therapeutic support](#) for children who have been in police custody, research into the [referral pathways and support](#) available for arrested children, and secondary data analysis on the use of [diversion](#))
- Relevant sections of the YEF [Toolkit](#) (e.g. restorative justice, informal and formal pre-court diversion, and custody aftercare and resettlement programmes)
- Our annual [Children, Violence and Vulnerability](#) survey of young people
- Our work understanding the lives of young people with the [Peer Action Collective](#)
- YEF's [practice guidance](#) and [system guidance](#) on supporting children through effective, equitable diversion

In addition, YEF is currently commissioning two other research projects which focus on youth justice responses to serious violence, weapons and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and the use of community sentences for children. In February we will be commissioning a fourth research project focussed on the health needs of children in the youth justice system. We are open to teams applying for more than one project, particularly if efficiencies can be achieved through combining methods or reporting.

Context

Focussing on the support children leaving custody receive is important for reducing reoffending, and specifically violence. In the year ending March 2024, an average of 430 children were held in custody at any one time across England and Wales; most (68%) had committed violent offences, and most will likely go on to reoffend.¹ The reoffending rates of children leaving custody indicate significant room for improvement in resettlement. In the year ending March 2023, the proven reoffending rate for children released from custody was 66.1%, compared with 32.5% for all children who have offended.²

Children and young people who are given a custodial sentence should be supported during their time in custody, and upon their release, through an approach called resettlement. In this approach, a case worker assesses the young person's needs and risks, provides support during and after custody, and coordinates other services. Resettlement plans are a requirement for children sentenced to custody, and there's existing guidance for professionals on this.³ We know these programmes can work to reduce violence and we have good evidence on what successful implementation looks like.⁴ However, we don't currently know how well resettlement practice aligns to the evidence-base on successful implementation and suspect there is room for improvement.

A thematic inspection by HMI Probation and HMI Prisons into youth resettlement in 2019 highlighted a range of issues,⁵ including positive work done with a young person in custody not being continued or developed when they re-enter the community. For example, only 11 of the 50 cases reviewed had young people receiving education or training immediately after their release, and substance misuse work upon

¹ [Youth Justice Statistics: 2023 to 2024 – GOV.UK](#)

² [Youth Justice Statistics: 2023 to 2024 – GOV.UK](#)

³ [Case management guidance – Custody and resettlement – Guidance – GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [Custody aftercare and resettlement programmes | YEF Toolkit](#)

⁵ [Youth resettlement – final report into work in the community \(HMI Probation and HMI Prisons, 2019\)](#)

release was only delivered in 44% of the cases where it should have been. Late notice of accommodation for young people leaving custody, particularly for looked-after children, was a key challenge raised, along with the transition between youth and adult services. The most recent of HMIP's annual inspection of youth justice services⁶ highlights resettlement policy as an area which services score relatively well in, but notes the lack of specific training on resettlement for practitioners and a need to focus more on this cohort of children. A breakdown of these inspection ratings from 2018–2025 show that 30% of Youth Justice Services who were rated on resettlement policy and provision were rated as 'Requires Improvement'.⁷ We know that a key feature of successful implementation is meaningful co-planning with children, but around only half of children in custody report knowing about their resettlement plan, and fewer feel they have had a say in it.⁸ Voluntary and community sector engagement with children in custody can also be an important feature for successful resettlement, but we have anecdotally heard from practitioners that this is lacking in youth custody.

Resettlement practice is likely to look different for children who are in custody on remand, compared with children who are sentenced to custody, due to different legislative requirements.⁹ A high proportion of children in custody are there on remand and a high proportion do not go on to receive a custodial sentence. In the year ending March 2024, children on remand made up 43% of the children in youth custody, and 62% did not go on to receive a custodial sentence.¹⁰ Inspections have highlighted that children on remand do not always receive their specific entitlements, instead being treated the same as children who have been given a custodial sentence.¹¹ We believe resettlement is a particular issue for this cohort of children. A thematic inspection focussed on this cohort of children highlighted specific issues facing these children when they return to the community.¹² These include uncertainty about the length of remand making planning difficult, a lack of consideration of longer-term planning and particular challenges for those leaving Secure Training Centres and Youth Offending Institutes.

The aim of this project

This project aims to examine current practice in resettlement for children and young people in England and Wales, with a view to identifying specific changes required for improvement. We'd like to build on existing knowledge of practice and specifically assess how well this aligns (or doesn't) to the evidence-base on good implementation. We're particularly interested in aspects of good implementation as identified in the YEF toolkit strand on these programmes.¹³ We are keen to generate insights that help us quantify current variations in practice so that we can describe them precisely. Within the project, we are especially interested in insights that relate to violence. A focus of the project will be understanding the

⁶ [2023 Annual Report: inspections of youth justice services \(HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2024\)](#).

⁷ Noting that resettlement is rated in youth justice service inspections from 2021 onwards. See: [Youth inspection ratings and scores table \(2018 – March 2025\) \(HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2025\)](#)

⁸ [Children in custody 2023-24. An analysis of 12-18-year-olds' perceptions of their experiences in secure training centres and young offender institutions \(HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2024\)](#)

⁹ While the local Youth Justice Management Board retains the responsibility to oversee children in the secure estate both sentenced and on remand, there are different requirements relating to these two cohorts of children. See for example [Case management guidance – Custody and resettlement – Guidance – GOV.UK](#) and [Case management guidance – How to manage bail and remands – Guidance – GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰ [Youth Justice Statistics: 2023 to 2024 – GOV.UK](#)

¹¹ [A joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention \(HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023\)](#)

¹² [A joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention \(HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023\)](#)

¹³ [Custody aftercare and resettlement programmes | YEF Toolkit](#)

specific changes required to improve the quality, intensity and consistency of resettlement support provided to children and young people.

Alongside the resettlement support given to children who are sentenced to custody, we are also interested in exploring what resettlement planning and support is given to children who are remanded in custody. Given the differences in resettlement planning for this cohort, and the large numbers of children on remand in custody, this is a specific focus of the project. We are also aware that some children who enter the youth custodial estate will turn eighteen while there, and these young people make up a proportion of those in the youth custodial estate. In HMIP's last annual report inspecting youth justice services, they noted that a large proportion of the children in the resettlement cases they reviewed had turned 18 and were eligible for transfer to the adult system.¹⁴ We are interested in exploring specific challenges for this group.

Race equity

There are significant racial disparities¹⁵ in children's experience of violence, policing and youth justice. While most children in the youth justice system are White, some minority ethnic groups are over-represented relative to their share of the population. This is most pronounced for children who are Black, Mixed Ethnicity or from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds. For example, Black children continue to be over-represented across stop and search, arrest, youth cautions, first-time entrants, children in custody and reoffending rates. Custody, and therefore also resettlement, is disproportionately experienced by children from some groups. Black children make up 6% of all 10–17-year-olds, but in 2023/24 they accounted for 24% of children in custody – four times their population share.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ In the year ending March 2023, the proven reoffending rate for children released from custody was 66.1%, compared with 32.5% for all children who have offended. This project will therefore focus on an issue which is disproportionately experienced by children in these communities.

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

- 1. Current Practice.** What is the current practice in resettlement for children and young people sentenced to custody in England and Wales?
 - a.** What support is delivered before, during and after custody, and what is the quality of this support?
 - b.** How does provision vary across different areas, types of custody, or groups of children?
- 2. Alignment.**

¹⁴ [2023 Annual Report: inspections of youth justice services \(HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2024\)](#)

¹⁵ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/racial-disproportionality/>

¹⁶ [Youth Justice Statistics: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁷ [Children in custody 2022-23: An analysis of 12-18-year-olds' perceptions of their experiences in secure training centres and young offender institutions \(HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2024\)](#)

- a. How well does current practice align with statutory, policy and professional expectations of what should be happening in resettlement?
- b. How well does current practice align to the available evidence on effective implementation?¹⁸
- c. How well does support offered as part of resettlement align with YEF toolkit interventions which work to reduce violence?

3. Children on remand. To what extent do children on remand in custody receive resettlement planning and support, and what changes are required to improve this?

4. Race Equity. How well does practice meet the needs of children and young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?

- a. How do resettlement challenges differ for children from these groups?
- b. What changes are needed to better support these children and actively promote equity?

5. Good practice. Where is resettlement working well and why?

- a. What examples are there of good practice of resettlement in England and Wales and what are the key features of this practice?
- b. How does current practice in England and Wales compare to international models and what learning (if any) can be drawn from these?

Bidding teams are welcome to propose amendments and/or additional questions that they think could help meet the aims of the project. We would expect to finalise the detailed research questions and methods with the appointed team.

Required outputs and suggested methodology

To answer the research questions, we would expect to see a range of methods used, which may include:

- a. Any data analysis that the review team deem possible. This could include administrative or monitoring data, or anonymised case files detailing resettlement plans.
- b. Case studies of youth custody settings in England and Wales, likely to include interviews, focus groups, and a quantitative component to describe variations in practice, such as a survey.
- c. Relevant, focussed desk-based research and a review of existing literature. This could include a review of relevant legislation and policy, inspection reports, research and guidance. It could also include a comparative analysis of selected international models.
- d. Journey mapping, interviews or focus groups with children and young people who have experienced custody and resettlement, and their families.
- e. Interviews with relevant practice and policy stakeholders. This could include the Youth Custody Service, the Probation Service, Youth Justice Services, local authority representatives, HM Prison and Probation Service, and relevant Inspectorates.
- f. Additional methods suggested by the research team.

We strongly encourage teams to consider how they could provide descriptive statistics and quantitative insights on the research questions, for example through surveys and analysis, or quantitative components to interviews and focus groups.

¹⁸ See for example: [Custody aftercare and resettlement programmes | YEF Toolkit](#)

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

- a. An executive summary
- b. An introduction
- c. Methodology
- d. Findings (written discussion of each of the research questions in turn)
- e. Conclusion and insights for policy and practice

Upon sharing the final report with us, we would expect the research team to provide a short presentation to the YEF team on the study's findings. YEF will pay for the peer review of the report.

Timeline

The deadline for proposals is 9am on 2nd March. We intend to have appointed the successful team by 3rd April. The deadline for the full draft report is 13th November after which a peer review process will take place.

If teams have good ideas for specific pieces of data analysis that may take longer than this timeline, we are very open to considering them. In such cases, we would encourage teams to explain what they could achieve by 13th November, and what additional work could then be completed following this date.

Budget

We expect the project to cost approximately £75-110k. However, we have some flexibility here, and will be judging bids on value for money rather than absolute cost. This range gives an indication of the scale of budgets we envisage – we will consistently prioritise proposals that give good value for money and strongly discourage research teams using these figures as the sole driver of their costs. If a team presents a proposal for a higher cost, but can fully justify why a particular method or additional element of the project adds significant value, we are open to considering it.

We would not expect VAT to be included in teams' budgets. Pass through VAT via sub-granting work to other organisations may in some circumstances be included. However, it is up to the bidding team to decide if they need to include VAT and any charges must be covered within the total grant amount.

We do not require budgets to use a specific template in proposals. Any approach that enables us to see total cost, the cost of project components, day rates, and number of days assigned to each team member is sufficient.

How to apply

YEF will judge research applications using the following criteria:

- **Subject expertise (20%).** How much expertise does the team have relating to youth justice, specifically the youth secure estate and resettlement?
- **Research experience (20%).** How much experience does the team have in delivering similar research projects? Does the team have expertise and experience in delivering research projects that aim to understand and address racial disparities?
- **Proposed methodological approach (40%).** What methodology has the team suggested, and does it match our needs?

- **Value for money (20%).** Does the bid represent value for money?

Where teams may be weak in any of the above areas, we encourage applicants to seek expert consultants and partnerships to supplement their bid.

Proposals should clearly set out the team's subject expertise, research experience, methodological approach, budget and value for money, and a project plan and timeline. Proposals should be no longer than 2,500 words. You may attach relevant documents to support your application, but there is no guarantee that these will be read. Attached documents will not be included in the word count.

As noted above, we are open to research teams suggesting amendments or additions to the research questions and methodology. Teams are welcome to apply for multiple projects, particularly if there are opportunities to streamline methods or reporting for greater efficiency.

Please email your application to jeanne.robinson@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 9am on 2nd March. If you have any questions regarding the project, please email these to jeanne.robinson@youthendowmentfund.org.uk by 6pm on 20th February.