



## **Promoting Healthy and Respectful Relationships in Secondary Schools**

### **YEF Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Associates**

#### **Terms of Reference**

##### **About the YEF**

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is a charity with a mission that matters. We exist to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice. The charity was established in 2019 with a 10-year, £200 million endowment from the Home Office.

##### **Background to the YEF VAWG Prevention Programme**

In December 2025, the government published “Freedom from Violence and Abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls”, setting out the vision and actions for meeting the ambition to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.

Prevention and early intervention are fundamental to the approach. The strategy introduced a landmark package of measures for children and young people, including action to support teachers and schools to embed the new RHSE curriculum which will be taught in schools from September 2026, and early intervention targeting support to young people who may be displaying harmful behaviours.

YEF’s VAWG Prevention Programme has been designed to align and support this national policy direction and framework.

##### **The VAWG Prevention Programme**

YEF has been building the evidence base on what works to prevent VAWG among children and young people, including through our Toolkit strands on relationship violence prevention and bystander interventions. However, there remains a significant gap in robust evidence about what works specifically to prevent VAWG among children and young people in England.

This VAWG fund aims to expand this work by further supporting and evaluating approaches that strengthen universal prevention in secondary schools, and that help schools identify and respond to inappropriate and problematic behaviours before they escalate to harmful behaviours in teenage relationships where statutory services such as police and social care become involved.



This funding round forms part of a wider YEF programme of funding, evaluation and research over the next three years on what works to prevent and respond to VAWG, as part of our central mission to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence.

To ensure our work is informed by external expertise in VAWG, we are looking to recruit **two VAWG Associates** to support assessment and decision-making.

### About the funding

The fund is split into the following two aims.

#### **VAWG Prevention Programme Objective 1: Promoting Healthy and Respectful Relationships in Secondary Schools**

For this funding round, we are focussed on the early stages of VAWG prevention through supporting the **quality delivery of universal education on healthy and respectful relationships in secondary schools (11-16 year olds)**. This is in alignment with the Department of Education's roll out of the revised statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum in September 2026.

We are seeking to fund and evaluate interventions under two main strands of delivery:

- **Strand 1: Building school capacity internally** to deliver healthy relationships education, primarily through teacher-training and support (but this may also include wider school approaches)
- **Strand 2:** Delivery of the healthy relationships elements of RSHE provision in schools by **external specialist organisations or practitioners**

We will be primarily looking for interventions ready for an impact study (a Randomised Controlled Trial). We see this funding round not just as a critical step in generating robust impact evidence for pupils and schools, but also an important opportunity for ongoing learning about implementation and the challenges and success factors for this.

The application for this fund has just been launched on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

#### **VAWG Prevention Programme Objective 2: Strengthening Targeted School Responses to Prevent Harmful Behaviours in Relationships**

We are planning a second funding round to support schools in targeted interventions for children and young people where there are concerns around emergent attitudes and inappropriate or problematic behaviours in teenage relationships, but where behaviour has not yet required statutory intervention from services such as the police or children's social care. We anticipate that most interventions will be more suitable for early-evaluation (feasibility/ pilot studies) than impact studies. We plan to launch this in early July.

### **The VAWG Associate role**

VAWG Associates will play an important role in ensuring that YEF's work is informed by external expertise and grounded in the realities of frontline delivery and service provision across England.

The VAWG Associate role will complement VAWG expertise at the Grants and Evaluation Committee (GEC) level, who will be making evaluation funding decisions.

### **Purpose and responsibilities of VAWG Associate role**

The purpose of the VAWG Associate role is to provide independent external expertise and insights to support the design, assessment, and prioritisation of YEF's funding and evaluation activities relating to VAWG funding programme. VAWG Associates may contribute across several stages of the funding call, including:

Across Funding Aims:

- 1. (if available) Shape assessment criteria and decision-making: Advise on how applications should be assessed, ensuring criteria reflect:
  - Sector priorities and emerging issues
  - Policy and service context
  - Feasibility and implementation risks
  - Safeguarding and ethical considerations
  - Alignment with race equity objectives
  - When: Wk of 29<sup>th</sup> June (Objective 1) and Wk of 6<sup>th</sup> July (Objective 2)
- 2. Support funding decisions
  - Contribute to shortlisting and preparation/ attend internal decision-making meetings
  - Advise on which projects to prioritise
  - Identify evidence gaps to inform funding decisions
  - When: 24<sup>th</sup> Aug – 1<sup>st</sup> Sept (Objective 1) and 5<sup>th</sup> Oct to 13<sup>th</sup> Oct: (Objective 2)
- 3. During funding calls (expression of interest stage):
  - Engage the sector and potential applicants
  - Share funding opportunities through networks
  - Connect YEF with relevant organisations/providers
  - When: 8<sup>th</sup> June to 24<sup>th</sup> July (Objective 1); 20<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> August (Objective 2)
- 4. Provide expert advice on programme design and adaptation
  - Offer specialist input on programme design
  - Advise on scoping work for possible adaption of international interventions
  - When: 5<sup>th</sup> Oct to 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 2026 (Objective 1), and onwards depending on project needs (Objective 2)
- 5. Contribute flexibly as subject-matter experts
  - Provide ad hoc, targeted advice where specific expertise is needed
  - Work independently between meetings and review materials in advance

### Scope of Expertise Sought

Associates may draw upon a broad range of professional, academic, policy or practice backgrounds.

Relevant expertise may include:

- VAWG Research and Evidence
  - **Research** into the causes, prevalence, and impacts of VAWG, and related harmful behaviours, among children and young people (CYP)
  - **Evaluation** of interventions designed to prevent or address VAWG among CYP
- Expertise relevant to the **two funding aims**, including:
  - Relationship and Sexual Health Education (RSHE)
  - School contexts, cultures, and responses relating to gender-based violence (GBV) and VAWG
  - Targeted support to prevent children and young people at risk of using harmful behaviours in relationships
  - The management, commissioning or delivery of relevant interventions and services
  - Adaptation of international programmes or interventions to UK contexts
- Policy and Systems Expertise
  - Experience of working in **VAWG prevention policy**, including within campaigning organisations, government departments, local authorities, youth sector organisations, or NGOs and charities
- Race Equity Expertise
  - Expertise related to **Race Equity** and VAWG, including understanding how VAWG and related services may be experienced differently across communities and population groups, as well as the understanding of culturally responsive and community-led approaches

### Person Specification

Ideally, Associates will be able to demonstrate:

- **Essential:** Have subject-matter expertise in VAWG and healthy relationships education among **children and young people**, with a strong understanding of **preventative approaches**.

- **Desirable:** Be knowledgeable about, and supportive of, **rigorous experimental methods**, including randomisation, particularly about approaches to overcome practical implementation challenges of evaluation approaches.

### Expectations of role

#### Time commitment and engagement expectations

We are looking to appoint two VAWG Associates to work across Objectives 1 and 2 with an initial phase from June to October 2026, of approximately 10 days, allocated between the two appointed associates. With further opportunity to support into 2027. Experts time will be split between working independently and attending and contributing to meetings. These meetings are currently expected to be (subject to change):

##### *Objective 1:*

- Shortlisting meeting: 4<sup>th</sup> August, 10-11am
- Recommendations meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> September, 10-11am
- Internal Decision-Making meeting: 9<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-1pm

##### *Objective 2:*

- Shortlisting meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1-2pm
- Recommendations meeting: 13<sup>th</sup> October, 10-11am
- Internal Decision-Making meeting: 20<sup>th</sup> October, 10.45am-12.45pm

We will aim to send papers/materials for meetings to members at least two working days in advance of meetings, where possible. Any materials, content and discussions will be managed confidentially within the group, unless otherwise stated.

From time to time, individuals may be asked to provide specific advice and expertise as required.

Experts main point of contact will be YEF's VAWG Lead.

#### Payment and expenses

When applying please state your day rate (the YEF day rate is capped at £650). Travel and reasonable associated expenses can also be covered, where required.

#### Decision-making authority

These Associate roles are primarily advisory. Significant weight will be given to the perspectives and expertise of VAWG Associates when making decisions about which projects to fund. However, VAWG Associates will not hold formal decision-making authority over funding decisions, for the following reasons:

- To ensure alignment with YEF's existing governance and decision-making processes
- To ensure selected projects hold the best potential for generating robust evidence in line with YEF evaluation and evidence standards
- YEF should retain ultimate responsibility and accountability for decisions about which projects and evaluations are commissioned and funded.

Final funding decisions will be made by YEF's Grants and Evaluation Committee (GEC), who will be joined by additional visiting members with VAWG prevention expertise.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

We anticipate and encourage participation from stakeholders across the VAWG prevention and PSHE sectors in responding to funding opportunities under these calls.

VAWG Associates may be involved in bids for funding; however, they will be required to declare any actual or perceived conflict of interest and recuse themselves from any discussions or decision-making relating to their own applications or associated projects.

### **How to apply and timeline**

To submit a short Expression of Interest outlining how your knowledge, skills, and experience could contribute to this work: [EOI: VAWG Associate - Promoting Healthy and Respectful Relationships in Secondary Schools – Fill in form](#)

We are interested in hearing from Associates who are interested in supporting either one or both Objectives.

Decisions will be made based on experience for the role, including the strength and relevance of expertise across education and wider VAWG prevention approaches, and availability over the stated time period.

**To apply, please complete an Expression of Interest form, and send a CV to [jess.southgate@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:jess.southgate@youthendowmentfund.org.uk), by 9am 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026.**

Decisions will be **made w/c 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026 for an immediate start.**

For further information, please contact: Jess Southgate, VAWG Lead  
[jess.southgate@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:jess.southgate@youthendowmentfund.org.uk)