



# Turning what we heard into action

A response to everyone who took part in the Youth Endowment Fund's stakeholder consultations

February 2021

## About us

The Youth Endowment Fund is a charity with a £200m endowment and a mission that matters. 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.

### Learning from you to set our priorities

On 7 October 2020, we launched [our strategy](#) for the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) – an ambitious, long-term plan to use evidence, expertise and young people's voices to make children's lives safer.

To put the strategy into action, we knew that we needed to set priority areas of focus. So to make sure we got these priorities right, [we invited you to shape our future work](#). Over 450 of you responded – from community and youth charities, local authorities, schools, the police, mental health services.

We heard first-hand from those of you working on the frontline to prevent children becoming involved in violence. And we're incredibly grateful for the time you spent sharing your knowledge and experiences.

Your insight was invaluable. We heard where we'd got things right – and where we hadn't. Thanks to you, we've made some significant improvements to the way we'll do things. And as our Fund continues, we'll keep working with you to make sure we're doing the best for the children we're here to support.

Our mission isn't easy. But together, we can make a difference.

### About this report

This report is the result of a series of nine roundtables, multiple conversations with sector leaders and two events with young people with lived experience of the youth justice system, facilitated by our partners at [Leaders Unlocked](#).

Through all of our conversations there were some clear themes. We've drawn those out in this report and explained how we've improved our plans as a result.

If there's anything important you think we've missed, we want to hear from you. Email Antoinette [antoinette.kwegan@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:antoinette.kwegan@youthendowmentfund.org.uk) and she'll put you in touch with the right person in our team to answer your question.

If you want more detail about our future grant rounds and funding opportunities, you can find more information in our [prospectus](#).

# What you said, what we'll do

## Social exclusion, discrimination and the importance of lived experience

### What you told us

In every conversation we had, you were clear that we need to understand how discrimination and exclusion influences who is most likely to come into contact with the youth justice system. And you asked us to think about the experiences children have in the home – including domestic violence or family members' substance abuse – and how trauma increases their risk of becoming involved in violence.

You challenged us to both recognise and address the overrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic children, children who have experience of the care system, disabled children and children with experience of poverty across all areas of the criminal justice system.

*"We should have a more explicit conversation around the cultural competency of staff at school, because black and brown children both overrepresented in exclusions and the criminal justice system"*

**– participant at the youth sector roundtable (7 December 2020)<sup>1</sup>**

You also spoke to us about how special educational needs and disabilities, particularly speech and language development, are connected to a risk that children will become involved in violence.

*"Children's social, emotional and mental health should be the focus. We often find that it's children's speech and language needs that are connected to involvement in violence later down the line, with many children in secure facilities needing additional support"*

**– cross-Government roundtable (26 November 2020)**

And you reminded us to consider specific programmes for girls and young women.

*"Boys and young men are far more likely to be excluded and come into contact with the criminal justice system. You also need to make sure that the programmes you support work with and for girls and young women at risk of involvement in crime"*

**– participant at the local authority roundtable (2 December 2020)**

You spoke about the risks related to adverse childhood experiences, including domestic violence, substance misuse among family members and other types of trauma.

<sup>1</sup> All quotes in the document are paraphrased rather than verbatim

*“A lot of [youth violence] is society driven – poverty, lack of education, peer pressure – it comes from your surroundings, not necessarily who you are as a person. It’s also inside the home as well – trauma, drugs, low income, domestic violence.”*

*– Leaders Unlocked roundtable with young people (11 November 2020)*

There were also a number of comments about how we shouldn’t just focus on projects where the intended outcome is changing individuals’ behaviour. We should also look at the policies and practices of the agencies that should offer support to children at risk.

*“Focus on changing the system and policy, not just demonstrating effective interventions.”*

*– participant in the funders roundtable (8 December 2020)*

## What we’ll do

### **1. Funding organisations working to support Black, Asian and minority ethnic children and young people.**

We’ll ensure we’re funding and evaluating programmes that support with Black, Asian and minority-ethnic children and other children who are overrepresented in the youth justice system. One way we’ll do that is by ringfencing £5 to 10 million over the next three years, specifically support Black, Asian and minority-ethnic led charities working to prevent children becoming involved in violence.

### **2. Data collection and reporting on race, gender and disability.**

We’re committed to finding out what works. That means that every single project we fund will be partnered with an evaluator, who’ll be responsible for researching how programmes make a difference to children and young people. As part of that research, our partners will collect relevant data that helps us to understand who we’re reaching and whether different approaches are more effective for different young people.

### **3. Recognising discrimination and taking an equitable approach.**

We want to continue making sure that we’re listening and responding to the needs and experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic children and young people. That’s why our Executive Director is leading an on-going series of roundtables with Black, Asian and minority ethnic-led community groups. Based on these sessions, we’ll develop a clear action plan committing us to equity. We’ll also appoint a Race Equity Consultant, to help us ensure that our future grant rounds are equitable. The Consultant will look at our internal practices to help us discover where they may be contributing to a disparity in funding.

### **4. Changing policy and practice.**

Our mission is to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. Some of our work (like our Agency Collaboration Fund) will help us evaluate how we can improve collaboration among agencies, so that they can better support young people. A lot our work, like our themed grant rounds, will look at the evidence for individual interventions. But we know that no single intervention is going to solve an incredibly complicated issue, which is influenced by poverty and inequalities. Through our work with national and devolved governments, local authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners and other decision-makers, we’ll do everything we can to make sure children’s needs are being met. It won’t always be easy, but we’ll always put children and young people first.

## A lack of long-term funding

### What you told us

Lots of you spoke about your frustration at only being able to deliver short interventions, because of the lack of availability of long-term funding. We were told that statutory funders often expect a quick turnaround between funds being announced and applications closing. This doesn't give service providers sufficient time to make sure the programmes they're proposing will make the greatest difference to the children they want to support.

Service providers said that small, short-term grant funding also means that they spend significant amount of time and resources on securing funds, rather than being able to focus on delivering interventions.

*"The lack of sustainable commissioning model is a problem. We see short-term funding, short turnarounds."*

*– participant at the cross-Wales roundtable (26 November)*

*"There are lots of examples where investments have been made, but there aren't resources to actually implement what we've learned from shorter-term projects."*

*– participant at the policing roundtable (4 December 2020)*

### What we'll do

#### 5. Developing long-term relationships with our partners and scaling up what works.

We're a ten-year fund, which means we have the chance to develop longer-term relationships with the projects we invest in. We expect most of our grant rounds to make two to three-year commitments. And if evaluations show that an activity is effective, we'll work to scale it up. We'll help organisations strengthen their internal structures and capacity. That could include expanding their existing provision or replicating programmes in new locations across their networks.

#### 6. Supporting you to apply.

We're opening our next grant round in April 2021 – but we've already launched our [prospectus](#) to give you an idea of what to expect. And to help you if you're considering applying, we're going to run a series of [workshops](#) to set out what we're looking for in an application and how our evaluations will work.

#### 7. Changing the way funding works.

We'll work with government, local authorities and other statutory funders to influence the way they work. It's clear that short-term funding is one of the things that's making it hard for you to implement sustainable programmes informed by the evidence. We'll work with you to make the case for a funding model that'll enable you to provide the best possible support for children and young people.

## Agency collaboration

### What you told us

You told us that opportunities to support young people are being lost, because agencies sometimes struggle to work together effectively.

We heard that high thresholds for referrals between agencies and a lack of collaboration can be barriers to providing the early support a child needs.

*“Multi-agency working useful, but thresholds have been raised. Things need to be dire before services kick in”*

*– participant at the education roundtable (2 December 2020)*

Lots of you recommended that we fund partnership models, to understand where collaboration is the most effective. Data-sharing was identified as an area that could be significantly improved.

*“The literature places emphasis on multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches, school culture is important in ensuring that all feel that they have part in identifying those at risk early on”*

*– participant at the education roundtable (2 December 2020)*

### What we'll do

#### 8. Future funding rounds on agency collaboration.

We heard that many children and young people at risk of becoming involved in violence are known to local agencies. You told us that this knowledge is often fragmented across multiple organisations, with different people holding different pieces of the puzzle. Some of the most effective and scalable ways of reducing youth violence are likely to be by getting local agencies to work better together. That's why we're going to fund projects to understand how local agencies can better share information, data and power. And we'll work to evaluate potential solutions to find out the most effective ways agencies can work together to identify and support the children most at risk. We'll launch our first call for proposals in early 2022.

#### 9. Building local partnerships through our Neighbourhood Fund.

Another way we'll build strong local networks will be through our Neighbourhood Fund. We'll invest in five areas to start, to empower communities to co-design solutions that respond to their local needs and context. We'll share more information on how we're working to select these partnership areas soon.

## Taking a positive approach and involving young people

### What you told us

You said that we were taking a 'deficit approach' to children and young people. You told us we were too focused on the services and support children are lacking and how to plug gaps, when we should be thinking about how to fund and evaluate programmes that make the most of their strengths and talents.

Many of you recommended that we fund projects that focus on providing positive alternatives for young people at risk of involvement in violence.

*"Young people need an alternative to violence – a way to find a happier future away from the streets. We need to have an alternative. Ask us what interests us, what will get us to a position where we will be happier in the future"*

*– Leaders Unlocked roundtable with young people (11 November 2020)*

*"Don't always frame young people as needing to be fixed – focus on their agency and purpose."*

*– participant in the funders roundtable (8 December 2020)*

You also told us about the value of support being provided by people who have lived experience. And you asked how young people who are most at risk will be involved in our decision-making.

*"There's great need for voice of child – should underpin everything [YEF] do[es]."*

*– participant at the cross-Wales roundtable (26 November)*

### What we'll do

#### 10. Making our themes child centred.

When we first presented our ideas to you, we suggested that we would run grant rounds called **Shut out at school** and **Diversion from the criminal justice system**. Instead of these narrow focuses, we've entirely reframed our themes. Each one is now centred on what a child needs – at school, at home and in their community – so that they have the best chance of a life free from violence. You can read our new themes in the table below.

#### 11. Involving young people with lived experience in our decision-making processes.

We're proud to have committed to working with Leaders Unlocked to develop a Youth Advisory Board (recruiting now for a first meeting in May). This group of 20 young people – who will have lived or near experience of violence – will take an active role in our decision-making and help set our future direction.

#### 12. Creating opportunities for peer researchers.

As well as the Board, we're building a national network of peer researchers. They'll build our understanding of their experiences and opinions which, together with research, will influence the choices we make.



## Young people need...



### A supportive home

Whether it's through family therapy or parenting classes, we know that helping parents and carers can make a difference to children at risk of becoming involved in violence. This includes specific support for children in care.

### Adults they trust

It might be a teacher, youth worker, sport coach, mentor or friend of the family. Children and young people need adults they can trust to talk through their problems and get help when they need it.

### A safe, positive place to learn

Keeping children engaged in their education helps to keep them safe from involvement in violence. We'll look at making sure schools, colleges, Pupil Referral Units and other forms of schooling have programmes in place to make sure they're safe, positive places to learn.

### Opportunities

Young people need opportunities – whether it's employment, training or education. A bright future, with the chance to build their strengths and talents, can protect young people from becoming involved in violence.

### A safe neighbourhood

Having a strong friendship network and safe places to go in their neighbourhood means that children and young people can keep safe. That might include opportunities to take part in a sports team or the chance to make art or music. And it involves policing that that is effective, fair and trusted.

### Another chance

Sometimes things go wrong. If a young person gets into trouble, is arrested or convicted of a crime, they need a route to take an alternative path and avoid a cycle of re-offending.

### Social skills and good mental health

Children and young people need to develop social and emotional skills. If they can recognise and manage their feelings, they can build strong relationships with other people and overcome the challenges they face. They also need the best possible support, to improve their mental health and self-esteem.

### A fair society

To make sure that every child gets the same chances in life, we need to work to make society fairer. That means tackling racism, discrimination and poverty.

The knowledge we build about what works in each of these themes will help us decide what needs to change to make sure every child has what they need to keep safe from violence. We'll look to change not just programmes and practice, but the policies and systems that let too many young people down.



## Funding specific approaches or interventions

### What you told us

Some of our conversations covered the types of programmes or approaches you'd like to see us invest in and test. Across sectors, there were several that were often given as examples of really effective practice or approaches that you'd like more evidence about.

Lots of you identified the following approaches as areas you would like us to invest in:

- ♦ Trauma-informed approaches
- ♦ Contextual safeguarding
- ♦ Family support
- ♦ Mental health and therapeutic approaches
- ♦ Interventions that build relationships between children and trusted adults

*“Contextual safeguarding could be used to help us identify others who might be at risk in the future; it’s something lots of us are looking to implement”*  
– *participant at the policing roundtable (4 December 2020)*

### What we'll do

#### 13. Widening the scope of our themes.

Our change in themes is not only more child centred, it also addresses some of the issues that you raised about being flexible enough to fund a broader range of approaches. Through *A supportive home*, we'll address family support, while *Adults they trust* will cover the mentoring relationships that are clearly vital. We'll also look at mental health approaches within *Social skills and good mental health*.

#### 14. Finding the evidence on widely delivered practices.

We know that trauma-informed approaches and contextual safeguarding are clearly important and should be investigated further. There's a lot of potential for early stage evaluations (like feasibility studies), which we could build on later to evaluate at a large scale (reaching several hundred children). We're looking at ways we might be able to do this effectively in the future, potentially in collaboration with other What Works Centres.



## Continuing our work together

We're incredibly grateful for the time you gave up to help us get this right. The changes we've made to our work are based on the insight, experience and knowledge that you generously shared. By putting what we heard into action, we'll make sure we're doing what's best for young people.

And as our work continues, we hope that we can carry on listening, learning and adapting. We want this to be the start of a conversation that goes through the life of our fund.

So please do let us know what you think. You can get in touch by emailing Antoinette at [antoinette.kwegan@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:antoinette.kwegan@youthendowmentfund.org.uk)

