



Evidence and Gap Map

Summary Report

January 2021

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- The **Youth Endowment Fund** (YEF) 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.
- To deliver this mission, it is critical that we first map what research is already out there on what works best to prevent children from becoming involved in violence. We have now produced this map. We call it our **Evidence and Gap Map**.
- Our Evidence and Gap Map is an interactive online tool that provides an overview of what research has been done on preventing children from becoming involved in violence.
- Our Evidence and Gap Map is the largest map of studies on this topic in the world, including more than 2,000 evaluations and systematic reviews.
- It shows that the evidence is extensive in some areas (for example, on mental health interventions), but very limited in others (like contextual safeguarding). It helps us understand where more research is needed.
- Our Evidence and Gap Map will be most useful as a reference database for academic and policy experts working in this area. But it provides the foundation for our upcoming **Toolkit**. The YEF Toolkit will translate the underlying evidence into easy to find, easy to understand summaries, so that people working with children at risk, and those who commission services for them, can use it in their decision making.
- It will also help to focus our future grant-making by identifying promising approaches that would benefit from more research and areas where there are big gaps in knowledge. It'll make sure we're funding the right high-quality evaluations to help us find the very best ways to reduce violence
- To develop our Evidence and Gap Map, we've worked closely with the **Campbell Collaboration**, an international social science research network that pulls together research evidence about different policy areas, produces plain language summaries and policy briefings.

Our Evidence and Gap Map

What is an Evidence and Gap Map?

Evidence and Gap Maps help us figure out what we do – and don't – know about what works. They focus on a specific policy area (for example, reducing homelessness or improving education) and offer us a visual representation of where evidence exists and how rigorous the research was.

What they don't show us is what the evidence says. You couldn't look at an Evidence and Gap Map to see, for example, if a certain policy or programme achieves the result it intended to. For that level of information, you have to read the studies themselves or use other evidence resources (including evidence toolkits, like the [Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#)).

For this reason in June 2021, we will launch our own evidence resource, the **YEF Toolkit**. Developed from our Evidence and Gap Map, it will provide you with useful, accessible information about what works to keep children safe from violence.

Technical Report

Our Evidence and Gap Map is quite a technical document. We think it'll be particularly useful for academics, policy analysts and researchers. If that sounds like you, then you can read more about how we developed it in our accompanying Technical Report, available on our website.

The Youth Endowment Fund's Evidence and Gap Map

We commissioned an Evidence and Gap Map to find out what evidence already exists to prevent children from becoming involved in violence. It maps over 2,000 studies, making it the largest map of its kind in the world focused on preventing youth violence.

But if it only shows us where the evidence is and not what the evidence says. What then will we use it for?

- We'll use the Evidence and Gap Map to find out what evidence exists (and where it's robust), about how to protect children from becoming involved in violence. This will help us bring together information on the effectiveness of different approaches, practices and programmes in a single, accessible online resource; our **Toolkit**. The YEF Toolkit will help guide decision-makers on which services or approaches are most likely make the biggest difference to the children they're there to support.
- We'll use the Evidence and Gap Map to find where there are gaps in the evidence for specific types of interventions. This means we can commission **new research** and focus our funding, so we're learning more about what works to keep children and young people safe.

Language and terminology?

It is important to recognise that in some places our Evidence and Gap Map uses outdated terms (like 'delinquent behaviour'). Although we'll always seek to avoid outdated terms that can attribute unhelpful stigma or other negative effects, they're included in our Evidence and Gap Map because we wanted to make sure we accurately reflect what the existing evidence says.

We're building a Youth Advisory Board and are working closely with stakeholders to make sure that our approach and the words we use are empowering and focused on the children we're here to support.

What does the Youth Endowment Fund's Evidence and Gap Map tell us?

Quality and quantity

With over 2,000 studies, we think that our Evidence and Gap Map is the world's largest map of evidence that looks at how to prevent children becoming involved in violence. The largest share of the studies were conducted in the United States, with 328 from the United Kingdom and hundreds more from all over the world.

When looking at evidence, it's always important to consider the robustness of the findings. To help us do this, our partners at Campbell Collaboration categorised every study in our Evidence and Gap Map according to its quality. In doing this, a large number of studies were categorised as 'low-confidence'. This means there were issues with the study design, the number of participants who dropped out or the way the data was analysed.

That being said, because so many studies were included in our Evidence and Gap Map, we've still found a lot of studies rated 'high' or 'medium' quality (289 in total). This means that their findings are likely to be reliable.

We'll be able to present the evidence from the Evidence and Gap Map in our Toolkit, helping practitioners to apply it in their work.



Where does the evidence exist and where are the gaps?

Our Evidence and Gap Map shows that there's a lot of evidence about:

- Approaches that work with parents and carers (for example, offering training to foster parents, or working with parents to increase their understanding of drugs and alcohol misuse).
- Mental health and therapeutic interventions with children (for example, cognitive behavioural therapy).
- Social and emotional wellbeing programmes (for example, lessons in school that promote feelings of self-worth among children).

It also highlights some important gaps. Our partners at the Campbell Collaboration didn't find much evidence on:

- Contextual safeguarding, which is an approach to safeguarding that responds to young people's experiences of harm outside of the home. For example, with peers in schools and in neighbourhoods.
- Interventions that aim to prevent child criminal exploitation, or tackle networks of criminal activity.
- Child-focused criminal justice approaches, which look to support children who come into contact with agencies like the police or courts.
- Approaches that look to change systems (like social care, education or youth offending services) that children interact with.

This doesn't mean that these approaches don't work (or that they do). It merely means that there is a lack of research in this area.

Next steps

Our Evidence and Gap Map shows that there is extensive evidence in some areas. We'll summarise this in our Toolkit to help everyone working with children and young people apply the findings to their own work.

It also shows that there are some key gaps and evidence quality concerns. This gives us a focus on where to spend our £200 million endowment and other funds that we raise. It will help us invest in studies that will build our understanding of what works.



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