



## **Outcomes measurement guidance**

## Background

### Why the Youth Endowment Fund has produced this guidance

The aim of the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is 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.

The YEF is committed to measuring offending outcomes through self-report measures and, where possible, via the long-term follow-up of young people who take part in a YEF funded project using official records of offending.

However, many YEF funded projects will be intervening early with children and young people, aiming to address common risk factors that might influence the likelihood of later violence and offending. The YEF is therefore interested in measuring broader cognitive and behavioural outcomes as well as offending outcomes for several reasons, including:

- They shed light on the mechanisms through which a project works;
- To ensure that it's possible to understand the short-term and intermediate outcomes of a project;
- As predictors of YEF's ultimate goal (of reducing serious violence), upstream outcomes provide early indicators of the potential effectiveness of the activity we fund.

## Choosing outcome measures

The YEF's approach to evaluation has been heavily influenced by one of its founding partners', the Early Project Foundation (EIF). EIF has published evidence standards that are used to classify and identify projects that have been shown to improve one or more child outcomes. They distinguish between five levels of evidence strength, with levels 2, 3 and 4 indicating programmes with an evidence base. These evidence standards have heavily influenced the YEF's approach to evaluation and YEF evaluations must be consistent with EIF evidence standards.



[Please see the EIF website for further information about EIF's evidence standards.](#)

To meet the criteria for EIF level 2 and above, the measures used in YEF evaluations should be both valid and reliable where validity refers to the extent to which a measure quantifies what it claims to measure and reliability refers to how stable, consistent or reproducible a measure is. Without valid and reliable measures, it is not possible to have confidence in the findings of an evaluation (EIF, 2020).

In order to meet the criteria for EIF level 2, measurement tools must:

- Be standardised and validated independently of the study and the methods for standardisation are published; and
- Capture the project's intended outcomes and be appropriate for the population the project is working with, considering the age, culture and ability of participants.

For an evaluation to meet EIF's evidence standards, scales and measures that are used must not be amended. This includes adding or deleting items, changing any wording or altering the order in which items are captured from participants. If a measure is amended or only a subset of all items included without having been through the usual reliability and validity checks, the evaluation will not meet EIF's evidence standards.

## How many outcomes?

Evaluators will work with YEF and the Grantee to agree one primary outcome and a small number of secondary outcomes that are closely aligned with the project's theory of change and logic model.

### YEF's core measures

Although each project will have its own outcomes, the YEF requires common measurement of outcomes wherever possible to ensure its evaluations are as comparable as possible and to maximise learning across the fund. For this reason, the YEF has a set of reliable and valid core measures that will be used in every evaluation, but which may vary by grants round or theme. Examples of YEF core measures that you may be required to use are:

- **The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire** (SDQ; Goodman, 1997<sup>1</sup>); and
- **The Self-Report Delinquency scale** (SRD; Smith & McVie, 2003<sup>2</sup>)

Please see YEF's core measurement guidance on the SDQ and SRDS for further information about the measures and how should they be delivered, scored and analysed.

## Delivering the outcomes measures

The evaluator will usually lead on the delivery of the outcome measures. The grantee will be expected to support the Evaluator to ensure that outcome are captured from all participants and grantees will need to factor in sufficient time and resources to do this. Evaluators will be expected to deliver, score and analyse the outcome measures in a consistent way to enable comparison of results across projects. Evaluators will also be expected to deliver, score and analyse the data 'blind' to whether a participant has received the treatment or not.

Administering outcome measures carries a risk of bias, for example during the presentation of instructions and during completion of the measure. The Education Endowment Foundation's guide on the selection, use and interpretation of measures provides some useful tips on how to reduce the risk of bias during administration (p.14-15)<sup>3</sup>.

1 Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 38, 581–586.

2 Smith DJ, McVie S. (2003). Theory and method in the Edinburgh study of youth transitions and crime. *British Journal of Criminology*, 43: 169–95

3 Wigelsworth et al. (2017). Social, Psychological, Emotional, Concepts of self, and Resilience outcomes: Understanding and Measurement (SPECTRUM). A brief guide to the selection use and interpretation of SPECTRUM measures. [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Evaluation/SPECTRUM/V6\\_Guidance\\_document.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Evaluation/SPECTRUM/V6_Guidance_document.pdf)



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We reserve the right to modify the guidance at any time, without prior notice.

The Youth Endowment Fund Charitable Trust

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