

# Ending Youth Violence Lab

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## Strategy 2023



THE  
LAB

ENDING  
YOUTH  
VIOLENCE



THE  
BEHAVIOURAL  
INSIGHTS  
TEAM

# Contents

1. **The current challenge**
2. **Introducing the Ending Youth Violence Lab**
3. **How we will operate**
4. **Overview**



# The current challenge

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# The importance of ending youth violence

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**Involvement in crime and violence has a devastating effect on the lives of children, their communities and wider society.**

In the year ending March 2022 there were 33,000 proven offences committed by children in England and Wales. Around 8,000 children were first time entrants to the criminal justice system, whilst just under 3,500 proven knife and offensive weapon offences were committed by children.<sup>1</sup>

Children caught up in serious violence have poor life prospects. On average they will gain fewer qualifications, earn less, suffer poorer mental and physical health, and die younger than their peers.<sup>2</sup>

Supporting children to avoid serious violence is one of the most critical social policy problems we face, yet too little is known about effective solutions.

<sup>1</sup> see Youth Justice Statistics 2021/22 for England and Wales published by the Youth Justice Board & the Ministry of Justice (Jan 2023)

<sup>2</sup> see Piquero et al., 2010; Piquero et al., 2014.



# Identifying effective solutions is an essential element in tackling youth violence

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To tackle this problem, we need to know which services have the most impact. We can learn this through evaluation.

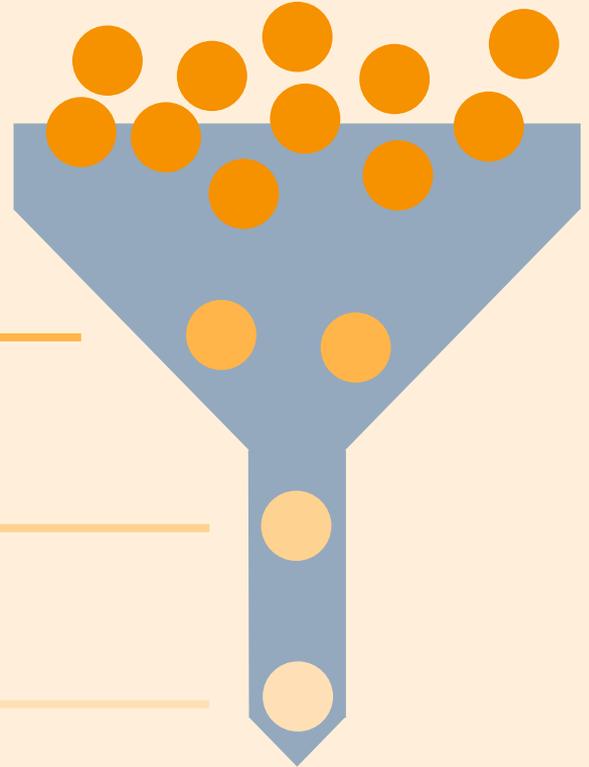
Yet most interventions do not undergo rigorous evaluation to establish their effectiveness.

There are a wide range of services to address youth violence

But there is a lack of investment in development and early-stage testing

Meaning few interventions are ready for large scale impact evaluation

So there are few interventions delivering at scale that we know are effective





# Introducing the Ending Youth Violence Lab

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# The Ending Youth Violence Lab

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**Our vision is that all children and young people are protected from involvement in violence.**

The Lab is an exciting new venture that was founded in Summer 2022, bringing together expertise in intervention, evaluation and youth violence.

The Lab is funded by Stuart Roden and the Youth Endowment Fund and is being incubated at the Behavioural Insights Team.



# The Ending Youth Violence Lab

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**Our mission is to catalyse a step change in understanding and tackling youth violence.**

Underinvestment in development and early-stage testing work stifles progress. We will address this by building a pipeline of high-quality interventions that are ready for – and committed to – rigorous impact evaluation.

We will work with organisations that are ambitious and share our commitment to evidence, innovation and collaboration. We will work at pace, with a focus on innovation and taking informed risk, to develop a diverse portfolio of projects.

This will range from preventative approaches which address upstream factors associated with violence (such as bullying, behavioural problems and substance misuse), to interventions that work with children caught up in the criminal justice system.



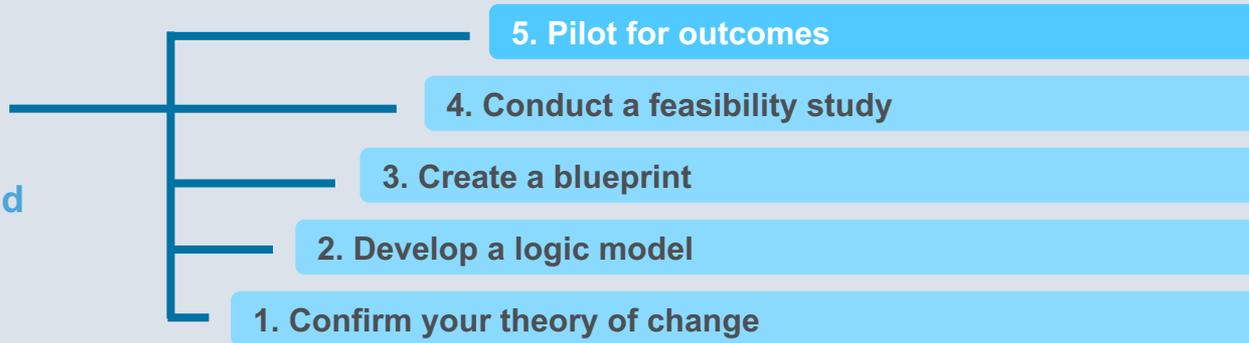
# Delivering effective services requires high-quality evaluations built on strong foundations

Our approach is grounded in the Early Intervention Foundation's

## 10 Steps for Evaluation Success

which emphasises areas such as having a well-evidenced theory of change, demonstrating the ability to recruit and retain participants, and defining the most appropriate outcome measures prior to large scale impact evaluation beginning.

**Our focus is on steps 1-5 and increasing the supply of evaluation ready interventions and maximising opportunities to identify what works.**



# We will work across the sector to increase the number of well evidenced interventions being delivered at scale

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3. **Government, the voluntary sector, schools and many others** all have a role to play in delivering interventions which have been shown to be effective at scale.

2. The most promising of these will progress to large scale evaluation, funded by **YEF or other research funders**.

1. The Lab will work with **practitioners, academics, charities, social purpose vehicles and beyond** to generate, develop and pilot ideas.



# How we will operate

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# Initially we will prioritise three strands of activity

## 1 Supporting the importation, adaptation, and early-stage testing of well evidenced interventions from overseas.

We will identify approaches with strong evidence of improving youth violence outcomes or related upstream factors in other countries, adapt these to the UK context, and deliver early-stage testing.

## 2 Working with UK organisations to develop strong ideas into evaluable interventions

We will work with the sector to find interventions that have strong theoretical underpinnings and are committed to rigorous evaluation and oversee the development and early-stage testing needed to get them trial ready.

## 3 Working with developers, researchers, practitioners, and service users to co-design new and innovative approaches

We will build partnerships and fund the development of novel approaches to tackling youth violence, with a focus on addressing underserved populations and unmet needs.

**Our focus is on using our skills and resources to ensure high-quality work gets done. This will involve delivering design and evaluation work, as well as working in partnership and funding experts. Initially our priorities will be closely aligned with YEF's to maximise our impact.**



# We will test a range of approaches to tackling youth violence in the longer term

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## 1 Understanding the impact of tackling structural challenges

Factors at the family, community, and society level may have as big an impact on youth violence as the child level issues typically addressed in interventions. These include poverty, parental mental health, community violence, access to drugs and alcohol, and the availability of weapons. We will expand our focus to develop and test the effectiveness of approaches that address these factors.

## 2 Building the evidence beyond programmes

Manualised programmes are a small part of the support provided to vulnerable children. Much more evidence is needed on the effectiveness of areas such as:

- the strategies and routines practitioners use;
- approaches and practice models such as police in schools or teachable moments; and
- system level interventions such as approaches to improving data sharing across agencies.



# We will also seek to address some of the most pressing issues in the field

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## 3 Delivering more successful trials and learning from null results

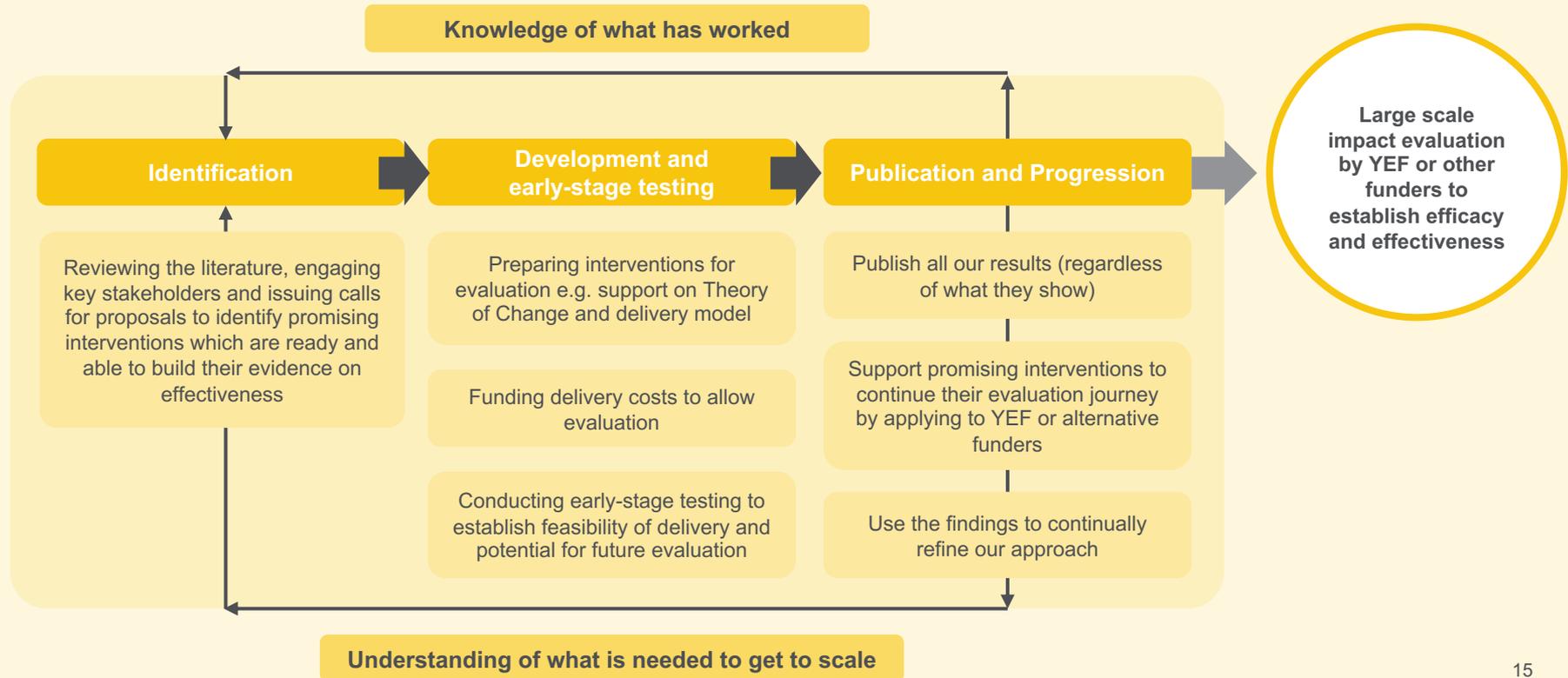
We will work with developers, evaluators, policy makers and funders to take stock of what we have learnt from recent RCTs and what we might do to improve the insight they offer, with a particular focus on understanding null results and why many interventions have failed to replicate in the UK.

## 4 Developing the infrastructure to deliver at scale over the long-term

Barriers to delivering interventions at scale include leadership, staff experience, external support, funding and shifting priorities. We will work to find sustainable solutions to these, so that effective interventions can be delivered at scale with quality.



# We will follow a structured process to get the most promising ideas ready for large scale impact evaluation



# We will work with stakeholders that share our values

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Partnership will be key to delivering our mission. We will work with **charities, social enterprises, research institutions, academics, funders**, and beyond.

## We will prioritise organisations which are:

### Evidence Informed

Deliver interventions that have a strong theory of change which is grounded in the evidence on what works

### Ambitious

Are passionate about evaluation, can work at pace and want to deliver at scale

### Innovative

Develop new ideas, experiment, take informed risk and learn from failure

### Collaborative

Work with children, families, and communities to understand experiences and co-design solutions

# And we are distinct from others in the sector

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We will not replicate the work of others.

## Our focus will be on

### Development and early-stage evaluation

Few funders specialise in this area, and sources of funding are limited.

### Innovation and informed risk taking

We will back new approaches and learn from failure

### Moving at pace

As a small organisation we can be agile, reacting quickly to new opportunities and responding to emerging issues

### Building relationships

We will use our expertise to identify great organisations and ideas, and work in partnership to support their development



# Overview

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# We will catalyse a step change in our knowledge on tackling youth violence

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