

‘We need to be heard’:

a call to tackle violence
affecting young people

informed by the voices of
experience

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INTRODUCTION

The Peer Action Collective (PAC) is a £11.4 million programme, which aims to give young people the chance to make their communities safer, fairer places to live. It is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, the #iwill Fund (a joint investment between The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) and the Co-op Group.

PAC is a network driven by and for young people across England and Wales to conduct peer research and act on the drivers of violence affecting young people. More than 70 young people, employed by local delivery partners and supported by The Young Foundation, drive the network forward and demonstrate the power of youth voice.

During 2024, young leaders of PAC learned research skills and spoke to more than 500 of their peers about the challenges and solutions to violence affecting young people. Young people designed, carried out, analysed and presented their research, taking a peer research approach.

This report presents the story so far for PAC. It offers an early look at the journey led by PAC young people and their insights into how to listen meaningfully to young people on the issues that matter most to them. PAC's main findings report is due in September 2025.

Across England and Wales, PAC has explored young people's perspectives of three key areas:

- **Trusted adults** and how they can play a more significant and more effective role in the lives of young people, to protect or prevent their involvement in violence;
- **Schools** and how they can be more supportive environments to improve attendance and prevent exclusions;
- **Positive activities** and how these can protect children from violence.

Across seven research projects – looking at challenges and opportunities with trusted adults, schools, and positive activities – a central theme emerged around the importance of listening and responding to young people. PAC teams share their insights with a simple plea: **to work with us, but not for us; to talk alongside us, and not over us; and to recognise us as a key part of solutions.**



You can find more information on each team's specific projects here:

TRUSTED ADULTS		
Location	Delivery Partner	Research theme
Bristol and Exeter	Robins Foundation, Exeter City Community Trust and English Football League in the Community	What young people are looking for from supportive environments and relationships with trusted adults.
Wales	Media Academy Cymru	How to support young people to build relationships with trusted adults to reduce violence affecting young people.



SCHOOLS

Location

Delivery Partner

Research theme

Lancashire

Inclusive North, Child Action North West and Blackburn & Darwen Healthy Living

How can we amplify youth voices around exclusion, discipline, and violence?

London (Haringey)

The Peace Alliance and The McPin Foundation

How can we best support young people before, during, and after school exclusion?

Gateshead and Middlesbrough

NE Youth and Youth Focus North East

The impact of support services and PSHE on violence affecting young people.



POSITIVE ACTIVITIES		
Location	Delivery Partner	Research theme
Bradford and Hull	Bradford City Community Foundation, Tigers Trust and English Football League in the Community	Young people's barriers to accessing positive activities.
Birmingham	Bringing Hope	The links between social media and violence affecting young people.

At the time of writing (June 2025), PAC teams have completed their second research projects, including a national survey and interactive focus groups, looking at topics including support to de-escalate online conflict, mental health support (at school and in communities), and what young people see and want from safe spaces. **The PAC network plans to publish these findings in September 2025, based on the insights of more than 5,500 young people across research and social action projects. This builds on the findings from the previous phase of PAC that took place between 2021-2023 and reached more than 6,000 young people.**

As you read this report, the PAC network invites you, the reader, to continue engaging and listening to us, as PAC continues to work until 2028. We also invite you to reflect, and get in touch with any questions on how you could take peer research and young person-led social action forward to respond to the needs of young people who are involved or at risk of being involved in violence.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



Invest in and value young people:

Harnessing the potential of youth voice takes time and commitment and needs to be seen more as an investment, with time needed to build relationships and trust first.

Without this time, well-meaning adults can inadvertently build in practices that set young leaders back and exclude those whose voices are not normally heard. This reinforces stereotypes of some young people being 'hard to reach', when the challenge is, instead, adults and organisations not being flexible enough to reach them.

Alongside time, resource to make change happen is key, including fair and equitable payment structures to recognise the invaluable contributions of young leaders. This must be put in place, alongside support, to show young leaders' strengths and help them see how they can showcase these to be recognised by potential employers and partners in change.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

2

Ensure young people are supported to take action and have their voice heard:

Young people aren't necessarily used to being listened to, having the power to take action, or being in decision-making spaces dominated by adults.

It is really important to be patient and support young people to build trust in adults, institutions and spaces at their pace. As important as it is to prepare young people to feel more confident in decision-making spaces, it is equally important for adult decision-makers to think about the steps they can take to create environments that support young people to feel more confident.

Transparency is also key, being 'up front' that deeper change may be challenging and take time, but not letting this get in the way of encouraging and activating young people's opinions, giving them space to explore their skills and nurturing their appetite for change.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



Think bigger and be creative:

Do not shy away from root causes or structural issues, or limit the incredible creativity and drive for change from young leaders. It can take time to build relationships and allies, to build understanding of systems, and to co-develop effective strategies for making change, developed from the ground up. Investing time, energy and resource in young people is key to having positive and deep impact on systems. These investments also have longer-term payoffs, as by helping young people to recognise their strengths, we create greater opportunities for change from a generation.

Young leaders should be encouraged to challenge their own assumptions, going beyond limits they assume adults set for them regarding social action. Instead, young people should be supported to unlock their creativity for deeper change. To achieve this requires honesty about the challenges teams with young leaders may face together, without placing limits in trying to make change happen.



Section 1: **Building trust with adults**

PAC teams researched young people's perspectives on developing relationships of trust with adults, inviting them to share their views and experiences on how these relationships are built and the key characteristics associated with trusted adults. Peer researchers in PAC asked young people to discuss their perspectives on the importance of relationships of trust for their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, as well as for longer-term positive life choices and outcomes. Young people said relationships of trust are built over time and worked on, and **we invite you, the reader, to reflect on our findings and how you could take these forward with young people you work with** as well as those you could work with in future.

Trusted adults don't sugar-coat the truth

Young people consistently highlight the same key characteristics of trusted adults during individual and group interviews addressing this topic, and also in conversations around other topics, such as PAC's work on schools.

Young people the PAC network spoke to tell us trusted adults are "kind," "compassionate," "reliable," and "don't judge you," especially during times of vulnerability. Critically, they frequently share that "nice" adults are not necessarily considered to be trustworthy – honesty and directness are essential, as is "not being fake" and being "straight in there". Trusted adults don't sugar-coat the truth, are confident to give young people constructive guidance, and communicate respectfully.

Young people say they build trust with adults who genuinely care about their wellbeing. One participant said that trusted adults:

...got to know what you were interested in and your personal situation and then help support you with your individual needs based on that...

Respect is increasingly important as young people age, and trusted adults are seen to demonstrate respect in their words and actions.

Trusted adults show they genuinely care

While young people recognise the value of school counsellors, social workers, and other adult professionals responsible for supporting them, young people highlight the difference between adults who are “only there for the money. They just want to get paid then leave” and others who genuinely care and take time to support with compassion and patience and “protect you, make you feel safe.” A young participant in Bristol explained that trusted adults “are willing to give up their time and extra effort for somebody” rather than being available during prescribed office hours. Young people explain that they are most likely to ask adults for support when invited, when they feel confident that adults are willing to listen, and when there are informal opportunities to chat.

Informal interactions can put young people at ease and provide more natural opportunities to share concerns and seek guidance. One participant in Bristol explained:

If you're going to them in an office, it feels like you're seeking help. But if they're just around and you go up to them that way, then it doesn't really feel like you're asking for help.

One participant in Exeter recommended, “If you do lots of things, try lots of things, meet lots of people, you’re more likely to find someone who’s there for you.” Meeting adults in social settings, clubs, and youth groups seems to foster trust more than in formal settings.

Trusted adults respect privacy and act fairly

Young participants across England and Wales consistently report that when adults don't control or regulate their emotions, this can swiftly undermine trust. Young people describe numerous examples of adult professionals – including teachers, social workers, and police officers – jumping to conclusions, unfairly blaming them, or becoming angry or aggressive. One participant explained:

I'm always a bit hesitant towards authority figures. Not because I feel like I've done anything wrong, but ... I don't know how they'd be towards me.

When adults make false promises or demonstrate unreliability, this also undermines relationships of trust. A participant in a focus group in Exeter recommended:

if you want trust with young people, be honest, be truthful, and don't give them false hope.

Young people also note the importance of respecting their wishes in terms of observing appropriate confidentiality: “if I talk to them, I know they're not just going to go and tell everyone else”. Several participants shared experiences of betrayal by a trusted adult. Young people emphasise that once trust is broken, it's not easy to rebuild.

A trusted adult models emotional regulation

Young people frequently suggest that when at-risk young people have relationships of trust with adults, they are less likely to 'give in' to peer pressure, make poor decisions, and get involved in violence and anti-social behaviour.

According to young people, trusted adults offer moral guidance and support emotional regulation, offering advice on handling difficult situations in socially acceptable ways.

A young person in Wales explained, "Trusted adults...can teach them how not to escalate into a fight." During another interview in Wales, a young participant noted that early support can help them to think through the consequences of their actions over the longer term, including:

...the dangers of getting into certain crowds or just the dangers of violence in the street or in school... They could end up with a criminal record, which is going to stay with them forever, and it's going to block so many things for them... and all that for a silly mistake.

Young people tell us that support from trusted adults can balance or mitigate harmful content from social influencers. In Birmingham, young people described how content shared on social media, such as drill music, glorifies short-term gains of participation in crime and violence without acknowledging the longer-term outcomes and potential risks. For young people who see few options for their future, influencers present crime as a lucrative career option. Trusted adults could play a greater role in supporting young people to navigate these influences, helping them to navigate harms and build plans to go down alternative pathways. One participant in Bradford explained:

More influencers are popping up ... they'll drive around in RS3s and AMGs [sports cars] and stuff like that. They won't show the part where you're having to hold a towel over your mate's stomach because they've been stabbed. Yeah, it's all one-sided.





Section 2:

Education for success

PAC teams invited young people to share their experiences and opinions on PSHE, school behaviour management, relationships with teachers, and disciplinary policies. Young people frequently highlighted the importance of secondary school experiences and peer groups on their decision-making and life choices. A consistent theme was that young people often feel they don't have the space, relationships or encouragement to share what is going on for them, but have lots of ideas for how they could work with teachers and schools on supporting students to co-work on solutions. While several participants recognised the challenges that schools and teachers face, taking on more responsibilities with less resource, **we invite you, the reader, to think about our solutions that start with student voice at their core.**

Exclusion can catalyse a domino effect

Schools' behaviour management and disciplinary policies, procedures, and practices are a serious concern for young people we spoke to. Many characterise these as key catalysts disconnecting young people from their education and teachers, and even setting them on the road to crime. Young people highlight strict, arbitrary, or unfair rules around food, uniforms, toilet breaks, isolation rooms, detentions, and exclusion.

Young people frequently tell us that schools' behaviour management policies are punitive without addressing root causes or supporting young people to regulate their emotions and help them make better choices. Young people we spoke to want more support through the journey of different types of exclusions. A young person in Wales explained,

"...it's a lot about what's done wrong and what penalty are we going to give you for this; rather than what's gone wrong, okay why has that gone wrong, what can we do next time to change the outcome?"

A good example that highlights the importance of asking the right questions to uncover root causes, but crucially in taking action to address these, comes from a young person in Lancashire:

...I wasn't going to PE. I had a difficult home situation and I couldn't get myself a PE kit. I came into school every single time without a PE kit and I would get after school detentions over and over and over and over again. I tried to explain to my teacher that I didn't have PE kit, I couldn't get a PE kit. That wasn't a good enough excuse. So I kept getting after school detentions...but then I told my head of year, my head of college, that I told my PE teacher like what was going on and they wasn't like trying to get me anything for a replacement or anything like that. So there's nothing that I could really do about it.

According to young people the PAC network spoke to, experiences of exclusion lead many young people to disengage from their schools and peers, contribute to negative self-perception, and undermine opportunities and expectations for the future. A young person in Gateshead explained, "Secondary school is the place where you can just go one way or the other..."

One young person in London explained,

As a student, I would always get picked on [by teachers]. I would always get in trouble. It's like I got used to it in a sense. After a while, I wouldn't care. In the back of my mind, I've already prepared for all the teachers' disappointment.

A young person in Gateshead described their experiences of exclusion starting at a young age,

When I was at the start of Year 8 there was this teacher, he had anger issues. I dropped a pen and he kicked me out the classroom for it. He seen us walking away, started kicking off and I got put in isolation. And I never got back out of isolation. I didn't get out of isolation for the whole of that year. I think they should have picked up why I was going on the way I was. That it was mental health, and I was not just a naughty kid. But they never even noticed

The lack of genuine, timely support for young people's mental health and wellbeing is a recurring theme across England and Wales. Young participants also highlight the importance of adults modelling emotional regulation, both in schools and other settings, rather than mirroring or amplifying anger and violent outbursts.

Participants in Newport described how some adult teachers and supervisors, “just berate them over and over and just make the child more angry and usually much more violent the next time they have a violent outburst...” This theme recurred, with young people describing some adults in educational settings who shout and refuse to listen to their perspective.

Unfairness, and in some cases resentment, is another recurring theme across the regions as one young person described, “a lot of hatred towards the teacher that suspended you because you feel like you’re the innocent one.”

A young person in the North East described their increasing anxiety and disengagement as they felt isolated from peers and were set tasks they saw as demeaning, explaining:

You have to complete little mock test sheets in isolation. So, I done it. And they wouldn't even look at it, they'd just scrunch it up and chuck it in the bin...without even looking at it, or saying well done. I tried and I wanted to get out of isolation. It got worse from there because I was around more naughty people. My behaviour started to go downhill, and I was going through a lot of personal stuff.

Once excluded, young people often feel stigmatised, “like every teacher is watching you, trying to wait for you to slip up”. Several participants described how experiences of exclusion can lead to a spiral of negative self-perception and harmful outcomes. A young person in London explained,

Exclusions lead to a domino effect. When the child is having bad labels throughout secondary school, then they end up getting bad grades, it's harder for them to get opportunities. Which leads to gun violence and knife crime. If a child not getting anywhere in school, they will go for the easier route. Like going into gangs, selling to get money. Because they know that if they put their full potential in school, no one is going to hear them out, they're not going to get anywhere.

Across the research, young people call for more support through the process of different types of exclusions to help address the root causes driving the behaviour that leads to an exclusion in the first place.

You, the reader, may also be interested in reading our [London team's report](#), which includes some helpful printable cards as reminders of the emotions students might be feeling around an exclusion and how you might take these into account.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) should better prepare young people for adulthood

Young people, even within the same region (as we saw in the North East), highlight a wide variability of PSHE provision in terms of topics covered, frequency, and style of delivery, with more interactive styles seen as particularly positive. In this context, young people across the research emphasise that PSHE should prepare them more effectively for adulthood and independence, with many resorting to influencers and online content for basic information about managing money and finances, careers, and income generation. A participant in the North East explained:

I think there should be more about future things like moving out or like job-wise, because I'm terrified of job interviews and things like that. Just a lot of like lifestyle things...

Young people also describe turning to social media for information about building healthy relationships and friendships, understanding their identity, sexual health, and emotional resilience, noting that these topics are not adequately addressed in schools. Several young people also explicitly note the correlation between a lack of knowledge and experience, and violence affecting young people.

One participant in Gateshead explained,

a lot of youth violence situations come about because people have no idea what they're doing or have no idea about a certain topic. An example could be people attacking a young queer child because they don't fully understand what their sexuality or gender could be. So, I think the education could help them understand it and...prevent the violence altogether."

Young people explain that PSHE is often taught in ways that fail to engage students and by teachers who lack experience in the subjects (eg, drugs, gang violence). One participant in Gateshead explained,

They told us what they (drugs) would do, but never what to do if we get involved with them... I know what they do, I'm not stupid.... They never taught us the long-term of what could happen. Addiction and that. They never ever said if you know you're going that way, who you speak to."

This is a recurring theme. Young people tell us they often are not given the tools and knowledge to avoid or escape adverse outcomes. Young people explain that they learn best when they're interested and engaged, when experienced teachers and practitioners teach interactive classes using discussions and dialogue, and where there are opportunities to follow up and ask trusted adults more questions in confidence after class.

Many participants feel that PSHE lessons are too scripted, lack depth, and don't encourage active student engagement. One participant in the North East explained, "them teachers don't teach, they just tell. Big difference".

Another indicated that they feel, when teachers teach PSHE, they just "read off the board". Positive experiences are reported when teachers actively engage with students, making the content relatable and impactful. PSHE is reported to be most effective when taught in small groups with opportunities for discussion rather than whole school assemblies or large group lectures. Young people ask for more open, conversational teaching styles, opportunities to discuss topics in-depth, more partner discussions, Q&A sessions, and more tailored learning approaches that align with students' interests and concerns.

Several young people expressed sympathy for teachers who "have a lot on their plate" and "are at full capacity". One noted,

Teachers are currently expected to be counsellors, teachers, social workers, nurses, and parents to students. That isn't what a teacher is for.

Whilst young people say they want more attention paid to their PSHE provision, they recognise that teachers are at capacity and suggest that external providers could provide capacity alongside specialist knowledge of the topic area, enhancing PSHE without putting additional pressure onto teachers.

One participant in London recalled,

In our old school they used to bring people, gang leaders or people who went to prison, they'll just bring them to assembly and they'll explain their whole life story, like how something happened to them, like they got stabbed and they went to prison and then how they changed their life after.

The real-life stories of visiting speakers, including testimony around drug addiction and loss of family and livelihoods, are reported by respondents to have “scared people off drugs” and helped young people to focus on “what they want to do with their life so they don’t go out there and ruin it”. Young participants say that external presentations are most effective when trusted teachers provide follow-up opportunities for young people to share concerns and discuss issues privately.





Section 3:

Positive activities for young people

Outside of school and home, young people frequently told PAC teams how activities, sports, and hobbies help them gain skills and confidence, relax and unwind with peers, and build relationships with trusted adults. Key themes include feeling safe and included, being told about opportunities in a relatable way, and young people wanting more support from adults they trusted. **We invite you, the reader, to think about how you could work with young people to co-design spaces that feel safer and how young people could help extend your reach to support more young people.**

Positive activities for young people

Young people say they make decisions about taking part in activities based on their access to information, the level of effort required, the cost and availability of transport and participation, personal safety, and territorial boundaries.

Young people speak about the influence of peers and social media on their attitudes to participation and highlight differences in the available options in their communities.

Young people tell us they are concerned that clubs are closing and alternative activities are unavailable, with remaining centres often at capacity. Without accessible and acceptable options, participants described how young people can, “roam the streets” and get into trouble. One participant in Exeter commented:

If people don't want kids hanging round at home or in streets and making trouble then they need to find somewhere that is okay for them to go and that is okay for them to play.

Participants particularly highlight sports as a way to clear their mind and, “get young people’s energy out in a safe way” under supervision, rather than, “getting built up with all this energy and then it just getting used as anger”.

One participant explained, “I love playing rugby. Gives me a chance to get some of that anger out, in a legal way”. Their sporting achievements can earn respect from peers and adults. Participating in activities outside of school also creates opportunities for respectful communication with adults, which young people highly value, particularly if they have not established trusting and respectful relationships with adults in home, care, or school settings.

Young people see positive activities as an effective means to reduce crime; they offer an alternative that allows young people to channel energy constructively and gives them a sense of purpose. When young people have been involved with potentially harmful influences, participants suggest that joining youth clubs or sports clubs can help distance them from these groups by providing alternative social circles and interests. One young person in London explained,

...they actually have to dedicate time... instead of going outside and being hoodlums. That helps them to stay away and focus on one thing. They might even want to go further in the sport ... so it gives them something to actually work hard and to pursue seriously.

Positive activities need to feel safe and inclusive

Young people tell us they must feel safe to attend positive activities, and their families and carers must also support their attendance. The location, setting, journey, entrance, and exit are critical factors. Appropriate adult supervision and welcoming group dynamics are also important.

Travel safety can be a challenge for some young people. One participant in Bradford said, while walking alone, “people have harassed me, people have tried to sell me drugs, threatened to beat me up...” Another noted that public transport feels risky,

I definitely don't feel safe going in a taxi or an Uber by myself. I very rarely try and do that because I don't feel safe enough being in a car with a random, complete stranger. And buses... there can be some strange people on there.

Parental attitudes and rules also affect participation. One young participant explained, “my parents don't really let us go out at all most of the time because it's not safe outside”.



One young person in Bradford explained,

There's issues between different postcodes. And even if...you're not part of the group of people that have got the issue with the other postcode, if you were to go there and they ask you what postcode you're from...they'll do whatever they have to do.

Several participants in Birmingham also spoke about a need to “look over their shoulder” when entering certain areas and youth clubs, making them feel uncomfortable and unsafe. In some cases, concerns about territories and rivalries also prevent young people from attending events or visiting particular areas. A participant in Hull stated, “if I've got beef with someone that's in here, I won't go in”. Young people tell us that while social media can contribute to escalating and glorifying violence in some cases, online spaces can also function as a ‘safe place’ for young people when physical settings feel unsafe.

Positive activities need to be easier to access

Young people tell us that positive activities must be available and accessible with reasonably little effort. For young people without a car, travel distance and cost are relevant concerns. Many young people find it difficult to physically travel to youth clubs or community activities, particularly if located far from home.

Young people emphasise that information must also be available for them to know the planned activities, location, cost, and timing. Young people frequently report discovering activities or youth clubs only by chance or through referrals from friends, indicating a lack of effective promotion. One young participant in Bristol explained,

I don't know anything, nothing. There are not many sessions I know about that are local to where I live. There's nowhere to really go, and you have to stay in your house.

Suggestions to enhance visibility include leveraging social media to reach more young people, tagging relevant organisations and locations, and working alongside young people to improve outreach and marketing to attract more diverse groups of young people to positive activities.

The cost of participation and essential materials is also a crucial consideration for many young people.

One participant in Bradford explained,

parents don't want them going to the youth centre because it's rough and you have to pay to get in. And then there's...football activities, but it'll cost you an arm and a leg.

Another participant noted,

Money. It's money. I have met people who tore the laces in their shoes playing football and couldn't even afford new ones.



Young people want activities that better meet their needs

Finally, activities must be attractive to young people. This includes reassurance that they will be welcome and their basic needs will be met. During colder seasons, warmth and comfort are important, while refreshments can make a significant difference, particularly for young people experiencing economic hardship. Entertainment, welcoming peer groups, and respectful adult supervision are also highly valued. For some young people, activities that support their long-term goals, hopes, and dreams are particularly attractive. Young people also recognise the power of positive peer pressure and highlight the opportunities for influencers to normalise healthy activities. One participant in Birmingham explained,

...you'd never want to go to a youth centre because people are going to think it's weird. But if the cool person starts doing it more often, then that's how that's going to become different.

Many young people follow their friends, both into crime and anti-social behaviour, and into healthy sports and hobbies. Young people also express concerns about the stigma associated with attending some youth clubs and activities and the risk of being “judged by their friends”. This can be a powerful incentive to participate in positive activities.

Several participants mentioned crime and anti-social behaviour as a form of “entertainment” when other options for young people are limited. Others describe them as a way of “seeing their friends”, suggesting that young people worry about missing out and can engage in illegal activities to remain connected, “joining in with the stuff that their friends do because they don’t want to be the one left out.”

Young people frequently draw connections between their peer group, performance in school, engagement in activities, and life choices around crime and violence. One explained, “You get involved with the wrong crowd, and in turn, you will be sucked into disorder and violence...” Another participant in London observed,

“your home life and who you’re chilling with, they can influence on you to do stuff, to go and chill with people outside that is dangerous and do bad things. People get influenced really quickly nowadays.”

When appropriate supervised activities are available, and when they can afford to take part in the activity, feel it is safe to get there, and feel it’s worthwhile, young people say they are more likely to participate in activities.

‘We need to be heard’ – and meaningfully involved

This report is a call to engage young people not just as participants, but as partners in tackling violence. Across England and Wales, young leaders on PAC show that with time, respect and the right conditions, they will speak – and lead – with insight and ambition. Too often, young people most affected by violence are treated as ‘hard to reach’. The work of PAC teams challenges that idea. The real challenge is whether adults and systems are prepared to adapt; to be more flexible, take time to build trust, and value young people’s contributions as expertise, not add-ons.

To create real change, engagement must be built around young people’s lives – offering meaningful roles, space to lead and fair pay and incentives. It must also include patient, ongoing support so they can shape decisions and impact the systems around them.

By the time the PAC full findings report is published in September 2025, PAC teams will have worked with over 5,500 young people across England and Wales, including:

- 70+ employed to lead the research and social action
- 1000+ through peer-led qualitative research
- 1800+ through a national survey
- 2000+ through social action projects

Young people have already led the way in this work. Now it’s up to adults, institutions and systems to listen – and change in response.



Related research and guidance from YEF

The Youth Endowment Fund, one of the co-funders of the PAC, are an organisation with a mission to find out what works to reduce youth violence, and build a movement to put this knowledge into practice. PAC is one of the ways that YEF ensure that young people's voices contribute meaningfully to research.

PAC has been focussed on researching the education and youth sectors for the most recent projects to add to YEF's evidence base. Those that would like to find out more about our evidence and guidance related to these sectors should explore:

The [YEF Toolkit](#)

An overview of existing research on approaches to preventing children and young people becoming involved in violence.

[Children, Violence and Vulnerability](#)

In 2024, YEF's Children, Violence and Vulnerability survey reached over 10,000 teenage children in England and Wales about their experiences of violence.

YEF's Systems and Practice Guidance

YEF produce guidance at a practice and systems level for each of the seven essential sectors YEF believe children rely on to be safe. YEF's guidance for the education sector can be found under the 'Sectors' section of the YEF website.

Appendix –

Research methodology

The Peer Action Collective (PAC) uses peer research to gain in-depth, contextualised insights into the lives of young people. Young people employed as Peer Researchers lead every part of the research, from design to analysis, to sharing findings. Peer Researchers from PAC teams were supported to design questionnaires, interviews and focus groups to answer their research questions. Some PAC partners integrated creative methods such as 'body mapping' into their focus groups. PAC partners selected their research methods to align with the interests and communication styles of young people affected by violence.

All PAC partners submitted their research framework and tools for ethical approval from The Young Foundation. Potential risks were identified, including the risk of triggering distressing or traumatic memories or experiences in peer researchers and research participants. Where risks were identified, they were mitigated appropriately. PAC partners were also supported by The Young Foundation to continually reflect on and improve their practice.

All appropriate ethical processes were respected to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of participants. Informed consent was recorded for all participants before data collection commenced, with parental/guardian consent collected for participants under 16 years of age. Responses were digitally recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed to facilitate thorough analysis, in accordance with UK GDPR. Demographic data forms were also completed by research participants, which were optional to complete.

PAC partners across England and Wales facilitated the data collection activities; gathering the experiences and perspectives of 532 young people aged 10–25.

Area	Number of young people engaged
London	75
Birmingham	82
Lancashire	75
Gateshead and Middlesbrough	58
Wales	91
Bristol and Exeter	76
Bradford and Hull	75
TOTAL	532

This report is informed by rigorous inductive thematic analysis of all transcripts undertaken by researchers from The Young Foundation. Quirkos was the tool used to support thematic coding and analysis was supplemented by that conducted by PAC partners across all seven regions to inform detailed presentations summarising their key findings shared as part of local share-out events.



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