



Youth Innovation

Conference

What works in youth
work to prevent youth
violence?

Caleb Jackson



The background of the slide features a photograph of a young boy with dark, curly hair and braces, smiling broadly. He is wearing a green and white zip-up hoodie. The photo is partially obscured by large, overlapping semi-transparent circles in yellow and red. The text 'Youth Innovation Conference 2025' and 'Manchester' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a large, bold, black sans-serif font.

Youth Innovation Conference 2025

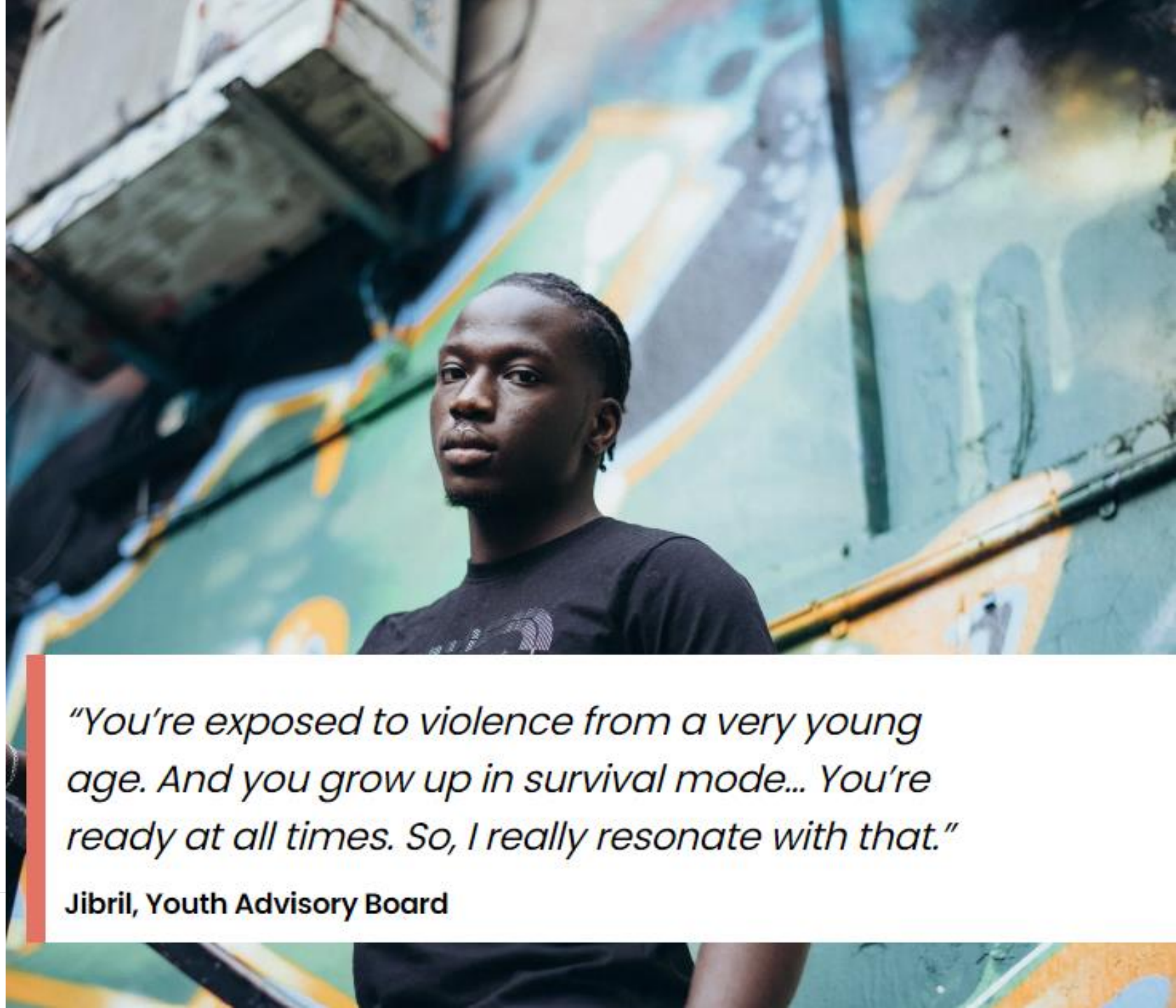
Manchester

Our Vision

A world where no child becomes involved in violence.

Our Mission

To find what works and build a movement to put this knowledge into practice.



"You're exposed to violence from a very young age. And you grow up in survival mode... You're ready at all times. So, I really resonate with that."

Jibril, Youth Advisory Board

Violence casts a long shadow over children's lives

There are 1.7 million teenage children in England and Wales. Each year, roughly:

50 are murdered by a knife
(1 in 34,000)

500 are admitted to hospital
after knife violence
(1 in 3400)

68,000 carry a knife
(1 in 25)

85,000 are in a 'gang'
(1 in 20)

240k perpetrate violence
(1 in 7)

285k are a victim of violence
(1 in 6)

425k are either a victim or a perpetrator
(1 in 4)

850k are either a witness or victim
(1 in 2)

1 in 2 teenage
children
changed their
behaviour last
year

Focusing on 7 essential sectors



Children's Services



Education



Health



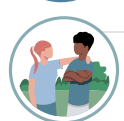
Neighbourhoods



Policing



Youth Justice



Youth Sector







What does the Toolkit say?

What does the YEF Toolkit aim to do?



Summarise research
making it accessible and
actionable



Support professional
decision making with
'best bets'



Create a foundation for
change

Go to www.menti.com

HIGH

Focused deterrence	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Social skills training	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Cognitive behavioural therapy	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Sports programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Trauma-specific therapies	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
A&E navigators	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍

MODERATE

Pre-court diversion	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Relationship violence prevention	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Custody aftercare & resettlement	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Mentoring	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Multi-systemic therapy	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Restorative justice	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Hot spots policing	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Stop and search	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Bystander interventions	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Functional Family Therapy	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍

Youth work

LOW

After-school programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Interventions to prevent school exclusion	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Parenting programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Adventure and wilderness therapy	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Anti-bullying programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
CCTV	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍

NO EFFECT

Street lighting	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
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HARMFUL

Boot camps	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Prison awareness programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍

NO CLEAR EVIDENCE

Knife crime education programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Police in schools	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Trauma-informed training	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Media campaigns	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Knife surrender schemes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Arts Programmes	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍
Summer Schools	🔍🔍🔍🔍🔍

Sports programmes

Secondary or tertiary prevention programmes which engage children in organised sports or physical activity

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON VIOLENT CRIME:

HIGH ?

EVIDENCE QUALITY:

5 icons (2 black, 3 red) ?

COST:

? ?

PREVENTION TYPE

Secondary
Tertiary

SETTING

Community
Custody
School and college

THEMES

Positive activities
Trusted adults

Is it effective?

- Sports programmes could have a high impact on crime and violence
- Our estimate is based on one review of six studies (low confidence of low to moderate quality)
- Desirable impacts on reducing aggression, promoting mental health and responding to other behavioural difficulties

How can you implement it well?

- **Developing strong, trusting relationships with participating children**
Adults running sessions become role models; building strong relationships is important to drive impact; soft skills are key for staff.
- **Choosing an accessible and safe location and time**
Venues should be well equipped with the right facilities and, most importantly, safe for children (such as after school between 4-6pm)
- **Plan to connect children with other activities**
The programme could be used as a hook into wrap around or follow on services (such as therapy and mentoring)
- **Be aware of the reasons young people may leave programmes and support continued engagement**
Providing incentives (such as healthy meals, or coaching accreditation) can help children remained engaged and having relevant activities that have a wider offer can strengthen engagement.

Key take aways

- Sports can support in protecting children from serious youth violence.
- However, there are **significant evidence gaps**, particularly in high-quality research from English/Welsh contexts.
- **The Positive Activities funding round** aims to fill these gaps, funding activity interventions and evaluations from 2024.
- **Encouraging (but very early) results** from initiatives like Rugby Football League's Educate Mentoring Programme, Empire Fighting Chance (boxing)– these programmes are feasible and well perceived– future evaluations will tell us if they are impactful!
- YEF is building the evidence base through these funded programmes:

FEASIBILITY & PILOT STUDY

Empire Fighting Chance

Non-contact boxing and mentoring for at risk young people.

[View evaluation](#) →

ORANISATION NAME:
Empire Fighting Chance

FUNDING ROUND:
Launch grant round

ACTIVITY TYPE:
Sports programmes

FEASIBILITY & PILOT STUDY

Rugby Football League: Educate Mentoring Programme

12 week mentoring programme delivered by the Rugby Football League

[View evaluation](#) →

ORANISATION NAME:
The Rugby Football League

FUNDING ROUND:
Launch grant round

ACTIVITY TYPE:
Sports programmes

Building evidence

Landmark £11 million investment to test the transformative power of sports, outdoor activities and the arts for young people

New YEF funding for Audio Active, Dallaglio RugbyWorks, Ingeus UK, National Literacy Trust, Rugby Football League and StreetGames

The transformative power of sports, outdoor activities and the arts to change young people's lives will be rigorously tested thanks to a landmark £11 million investment from the **Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)**.



Sports interventions

Multi-site Trial



**AP, PRU / IAP
Settings**

Dallaglio
RugbyWorks

**Rugby Football
League**



Arts & Wilderness Interventions

**YEF's first RCT in
the secure estate**



**Wilderness &
adventure**



**1-to-1 Music
mentoring**





The Youth Sector's Role in Preventing Violence

Youth Sector briefing– Emerging themes and findings

1. YEF Guidance for the Youth Sector
2. With the loss of government funding, the sector's capacity for violence prevention is reduced
3. Closing youth clubs in London increased crime and violence
4. Vulnerable children are the most likely to attend youth clubs

YEF Guidance for the Youth Sector

Practice Guidance

What works in the youth sector to prevent violence?
(Winter 2025)

- A guide for commissioners and funders of youth provision
- Secondary audiences: Youth workers and youth work delivery organisations

System Guidance

How can we make it easier to do what works?
(Spring 2026)

- A series of recommendations for policymakers and youth sector system leaders
- 5–8 ways the system could make it easier to do what works to prevent violence.

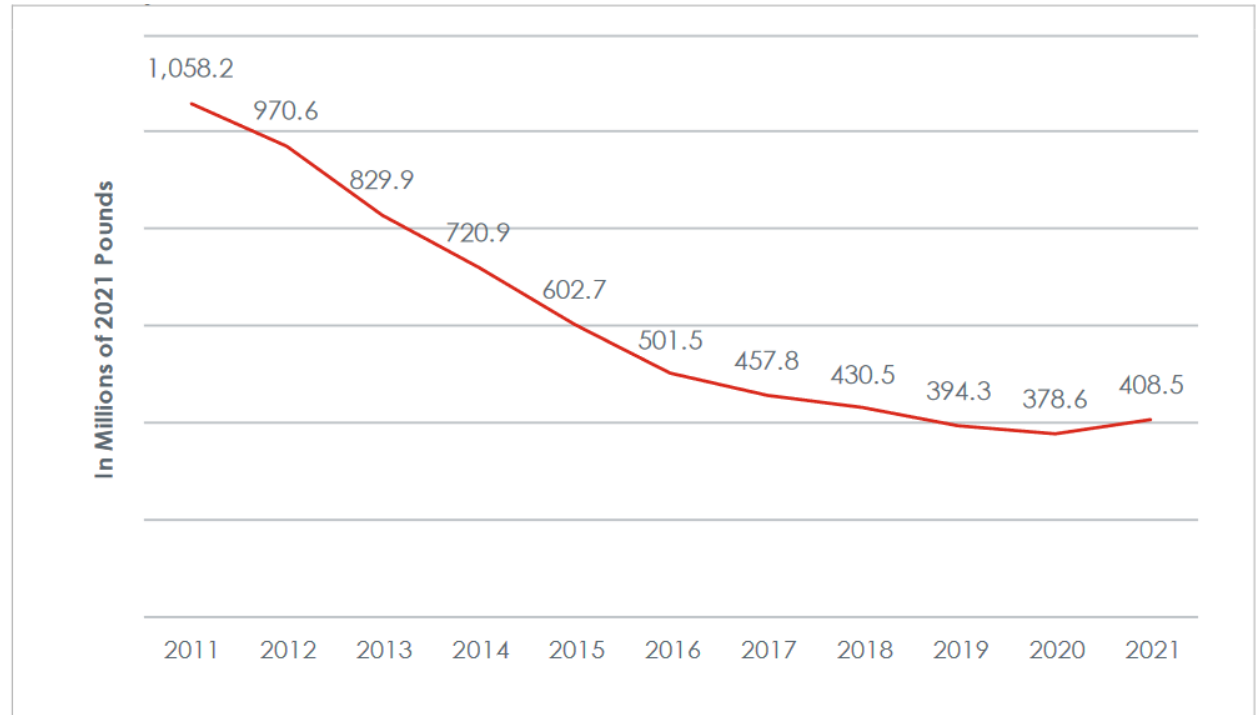
With the loss of government funding, the sector's capacity for violence prevention is reduced

- Local authority funding of youth provision in England was cut by over 60% since 2011.
- Government funding in Wales also fell, but less drastically, with a real-terms cut of 23%.

Fewer qualified youth workers

Loss of universal provision

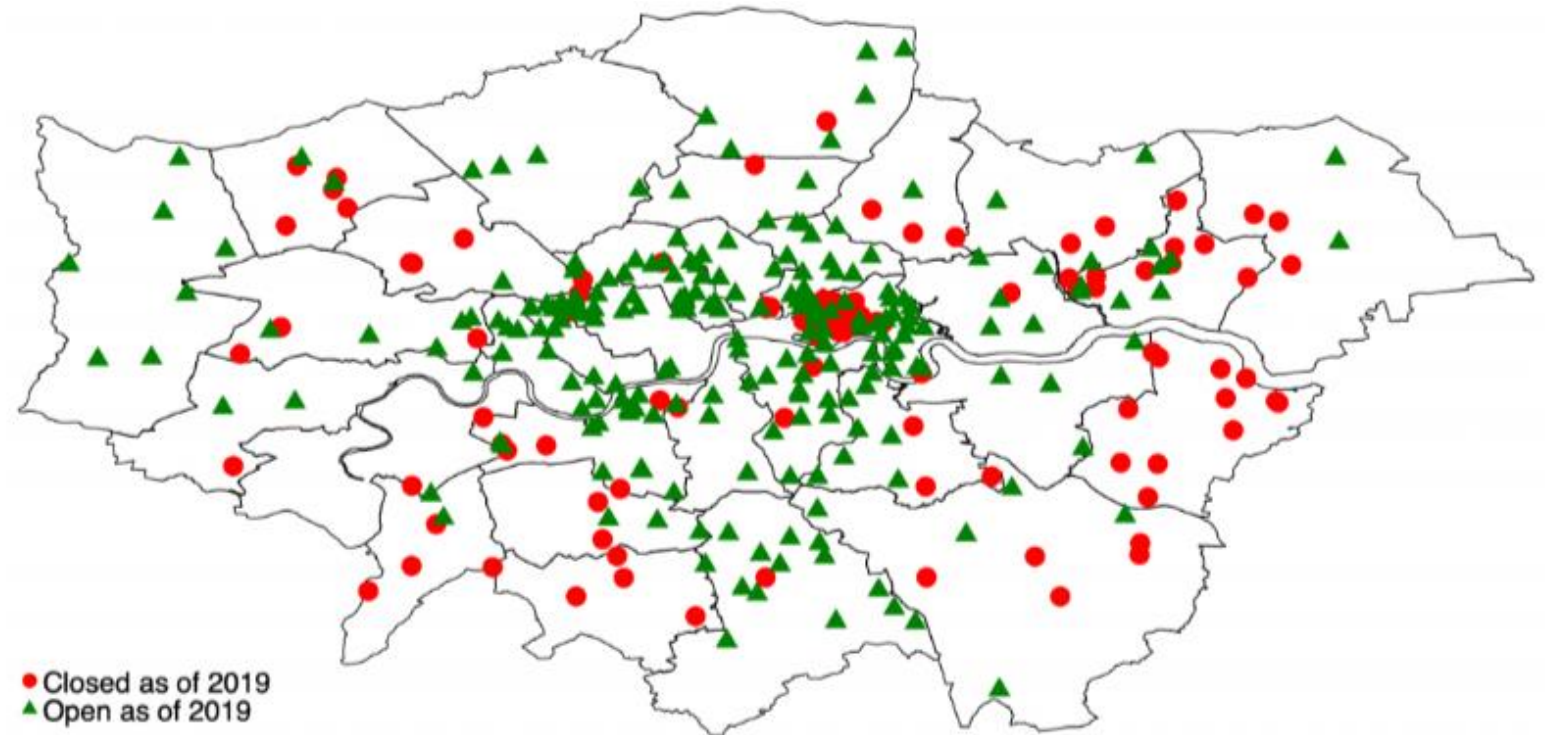
Local authority expenditure on services for young people in England



Closing youth clubs in London increased crime and violence

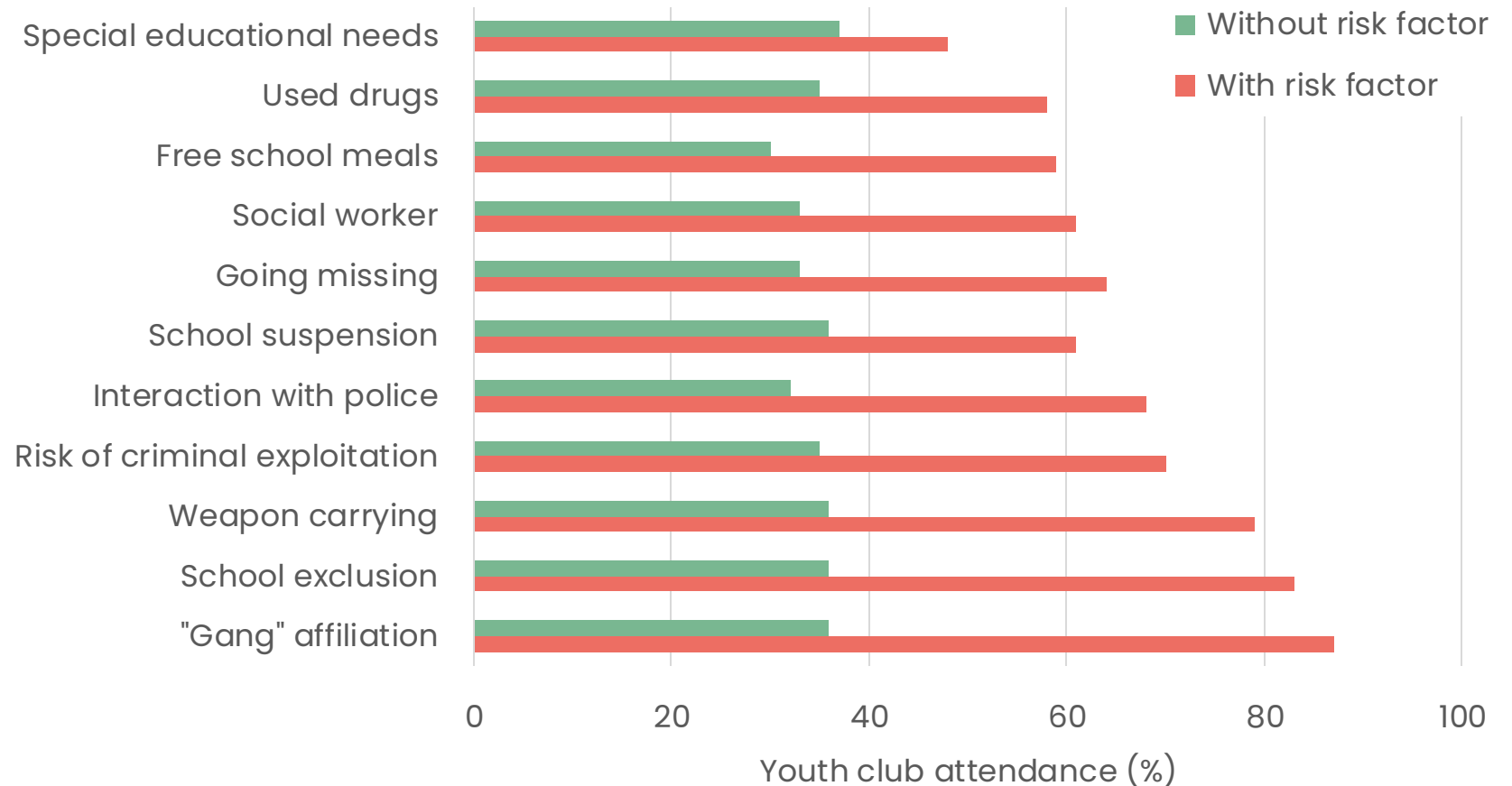
- Young people living in areas where all youth clubs closed became 12% more likely to commit crimes.
- They were also 9-10% more likely to commit violent crimes, but this finding is tentative.

Youth clubs in London



Vulnerable children are the most likely to attend youth clubs

- Children who are directly affected by violence are twice as likely to attend youth clubs as those who aren't.
- Children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are also particularly likely to attend youth clubs.



Current 'best bets'



1. Target the right interventions:

- Put in place high-quality mentoring programmes for vulnerable children
- Fund regular, organised sports activities for vulnerable children
- Consider commissioning adventure and wilderness therapy for vulnerable children
- Consider using arts programmes as a hook, especially for children uninterested in sports

2. **Promote children and young people's access to a local youth club,** prioritising those who are vulnerable to violence

3. **Coverage of services:** Ensure youth services are evenly distributed and accessible across underserved areas.

4. **Distribution of violence:** Focus resources on the times and places in which violence is likely to occur amongst children.

5. **Longevity:** Ensure all youth provision is long-term, allowing services to become embedded and for children to maintain meaningful relationships with staff.



Keep in touch

Sign up to YEF's newsletter for latest updates:

www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk/newsletter

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