



# Young Researcher Network

## Toolkit







# Young Researchers Network

Toolkit



## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

### Why do research?

Completing research can improve understanding in a particular topic area, and provide factual or evidence-based information about people's perceptions. A well written and in depth exploration can potentially contribute towards influencing policy and practice, and can compare different theories and approaches whilst exploring different methods and learning from other people's experience.

### What is the Young Researcher Network?

The Young Researcher Network (YRN) works to value, support, and encourage research led by young people. The Network is run by the National Youth Agency as part of its work with the Local Government Association. It empowers young people and raises their voice and influence on matters that affect their lives. We do this by providing young people with training and support, and opportunities to carry out research as a tool for change.

### What is the YRN toolkit?

This toolkit has been developed by the YRN team at the NYA to support young people involved in youth-led research projects. It is designed to sit alongside YRN training, but can also be used on its own.



### Who is the YRN toolkit for?

The YRN toolkit is written for young researchers, but can be used by anyone involved in youth-led research projects. Youth workers or project leaders could use the toolkit to support additional group learning and discussion.

### How do you use the YRN toolkit?

The toolkit covers all the major stages of developing and carrying out a research project. It is designed to be read/used stage by stage, but can also be dipped into at any point. It can be used by individuals or groups, as part of discussions.

Each section focuses on a single research stage, and includes key terms, top tips, and step by step guidance.

At the end of the handbook is a key information section with suggestions of further sources of information.

There are a number of additional handouts to supplement the toolkit, providing more detailed information. These are available on CDROM or on request from the NYA.

## Stage 1: Decide on your topic for the research project

**Key words: Motivation, Relevance, Action**

### What does deciding on a research topic involve?

The very first stage of a project is deciding what topic you are going to research, and, if you are working as part of a group, agreeing on the topic together.

You do not need to be very specific about it at this stage, as later stages will help you narrow it down. So, you may decide to focus on the way young people are portrayed in the media, for example, or the way sex education is taught in schools – the rest of this toolkit will take you through developing your research project around this topic.

### Why is it important to decide on a research topic?

It is important that you chose the right topic for your research for a number of reasons:

- **Motivation:** you may be working on your research for quite a long time, so the subject will need to be one that interests you.
- **Relevance:** it should have meaning for you or your group, so you can act on the findings.
- **Clarity:** agreeing on a research question will help you to work out how to carry out the research project, such as deciding on how you will collect the information you need.
- **Audience:** deciding on a research topic will help you determine who the key audience for your research findings will be.

For example, one group in the Young Researcher Network 2010/11 is researching services available to young carers locally. The young

researchers are all motivated and interested because they are young carers themselves, and can use their findings to improve the choices available to them and their peers.

### How do you decide on a research topic?

There are a number of ways that you might identify the topic. In some cases it will present itself to you without you having to do any work:

- a) You may feel that you or your group has a strong identity. There are plenty of examples where individual or group identity has been the starting point for a research project, such as:
  - a shared interest or hobby;
  - a group living in the same area; or
  - a shared sexuality, ethnicity, religion or similar.
- b) Your group has formed to meet a need, or take action around a problem facing you. For example:
  - a youth group that formed because there was nothing for young people to do in the area;
  - a campaign group that formed to raise awareness of poor transport for young people; or
  - a volunteer group seeking to improve their local community in some way.

If this is the case, then it is likely that doing some research that provides evidence for your campaign or action plan would be useful.



- c) Your group is already aware, through experience, or as a result of a consultation, of the issues that young people are concerned about but adults don't seem to pay attention to.
- d) You might have been asked by others to carry out research on a topic, or to evaluate a particular project or service.

If none of these apply to you, try holding a small discussion session in your group. The resource sheet with the list of questions may help you.

If you are finding it really hard to come up with a topic that you want to research, it may be that this is not the right time for you to carry out a research project. You may find it hard to find one that is relevant and interesting enough to motivate you.

#### Top Tips:

- Take your time choosing the right topic.
- Choose a topic that you care about.
- Don't worry if it's not obvious exactly what you will research – the next stages will help you decide.



## Stage 2: Find out as much as you can about your topic area

**Key Words:** Objectivity, Mapping, Referencing

### What is a literature review?

Now you have decided on a topic, you will need to find out what information and research is already available about it. This stage is sometimes called carrying out a literature review.

### Why do we do a literature review?

A good literature review will help you define your research question. It will help you understand the topic fully:

- You need to make sure that the answers to what you want to know are not already out there.
- If you are not sure exactly what you want to research, looking at the information available will help you identify gaps in knowledge, or questions that remain unanswered.
- Also, it will help make sure your research project is not exactly the same as one that has already been done recently (although being similar is okay).

### How do we do a literature review?

The three things to remember when doing a literature review are:

Find it

Judge it

Link it

### Find It

There are a number of ways you can find out more about your topic.

The simplest and most obvious ways are:

- Gathering and reading printed reports and documents.
- Conducting a web search.
- Asking others what they think or know about the topic.

If you are doing a search on the internet, have a look at our resource sheets to help you search. Don't rely on the web alone. This may seem like the best and easiest information source but there are still more documents available offline than online.

### Try:

**Libraries:** Your local library may help but also think about accessing others, like a reference library or university library.

**The local council:** They may have reports/research that they will let you have. This will be particularly useful if you are researching services which might be provided by the council, such as support for young parents, or careers advice for young people.

**Organisations that are relevant to your topic:** They will probably have information and research that will be useful. If your group is interested in young people with caring responsibilities, for example, you could contact The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Carers UK. Don't forget universities – many have specialist research departments. Loughborough University, for example, has a Young Carers Research Group.

**Don't forget documents** like minutes of meetings or policies and strategy documents. You will often find these sorts of documents on your local council website.



**Look at the reference list** on the documents you find (this is usually at the back of the document) – it might help you locate other interesting and relevant reading.

### Judge it

Not everything you find will be of good quality, or useful for your project. Think about:

#### How old is it?

For example, if the report is about young people and crime in your area, a report that gives the crime statistics from 40 years ago may not be very useful.

#### Where is it published?

Is the website, newspaper, journal etc. known to be reliable? Wikipedia, for example, is a free-content online encyclopedia which anyone can add to or edit. This doesn't mean that what is written on Wikipedia isn't true, but you shouldn't use it as the only source of information.

#### Might it be biased?

Some newspapers, for example, have strong political views. This doesn't mean you shouldn't use it, but it might mean you need to look for other articles with a differing viewpoint to balance your literature review.

#### How well is it written?

A poorly written report, for example one that doesn't seem very clear or easy to read, may not be that useful.



#### Who wrote it?

It may be that you know the author, or can find out about them with a little searching. This might reveal that they are very well respected for what they do, or perhaps that they are known for being biased or inaccurate.

#### Does the author(s) have an interest in the findings?

It might be possible to detect bias. For example, a report stating that climate change is not happening would seem far less reliable if you knew that the work was funded by a big oil company.

#### If it is research, is it well done?

Does the report give you enough information about the research methods? For example, if it is a survey, does it tell you how many people took part?

#### Is it relevant to your study?

It's very easy to forget this one! Some reports are so interesting you want to use them. But make sure they are actually on your topic and relevant to your research.

#### Does it seem objective?

Does the report make clear links between the evidence it outlines, and the conclusions it draws?

#### Is it accurate?

There may be obvious factual errors, or perhaps the numbers and statistics the report uses are wrong.

There is a resource sheet to help you do this for everything you read. If

you have reason to doubt the accuracy, relevance or objectivity of the document you should probably discard it.

### Link it

Summarise what the document tells you, and the key bits of information relevant to your research topic. Keep this summary, together with details of the original source. You will need to record the name of the source, the author(s), the date it was published, and where it was published (if it is a book). You will also need the page number of any quotes you think you might want to use directly. For example, you might want to quote from another piece of research to illustrate why you think more research is needed on your topic.

Use these summaries to map the literature review. You can group the summaries into themes, or sub-topics. For example, the reports you find on the topic 'young people and crime' might fall into the following categories, some of which overlap:

- Young people as victims of crime
- The causes of criminal behaviour
- Young people who commit crime
- The treatment of young people in the criminal justice system

To help you define your research question, look for gaps in the available literature (what there is no information about) or conflict (does one document contradict another?). You might decide to focus on exploring the gaps in knowledge or information, or digging deeper into contradicting information.

Alternatively, you may decide to explore a fairly well-researched topic,

but on a local level – for example, the experiences of young parents returning to learning in Leicester.

### Top Tips:

- If you are doing this as a group, try to make sure that you don't all end up reading the same things. Some of you might explore the internet; others can try the local library.
- You may be able to work towards a certificate for this part of your project. Awards like ASDAN accredit "finding and using information".
- Not all information is written down! Don't forget to simply ask people who you think will know about your topic area.



## Stage 3: Plan for change

**Key Words: Critique, Policy, Practice, Research, Campaign, Systematic**

### What is 'planning for change'?

Research is sometimes used as part of a larger campaign for change. In this instance research can be used as evidence to show that a problem exists (such as the under-representation of young people from black and minority ethnic communities in Apprenticeships) or that there is a better way of doing something (such as meeting the transport needs of young people in rural areas). Knowing what type of evidence your research can be used for is the first step towards giving your research a definite goal. You can then begin to plan how your research fits in with campaigning for change.

### Why do we plan for change?

Research is an important part of what is sometimes called the magic triangle. The magic triangle consists of research, policy and practice, all of which are interlinked and feed into and from each other. Please see the Magic Triangle Resource for more information.

**Research** is a systematic way of gathering evidence that can be used to support changes made to policy and practice.

**Policy** refers to our thinking about something or the ideas that guide how we do something.

**Practice** is how we actually do something.



It is important to know where your research sits on the magic triangle.

Knowing if your research is about making a change in policy, practice or both will help you to:

- Be very clear about why your research needs to be done.
- Argue effectively why your research should be done (this may be especially important if you are asking for funding).
- Understand how your research may be useful in bringing about change as part of a larger campaign.
- Know what type of evidence you are looking for.
- Be prepared to write your research question!

### How do you plan for change?

Think of this stage as a big sieve. The thinking that you do in this stage helps you to really focus down so you are left with the core argument, ideas and questions that your research is based upon.

The best way to do this is to 'interrogate' yourself about your research so that you know that you are clear.

### Answer these important questions

- **What do you want to change? And why?**  
This will help you to be clear on what you want to happen as a result of your research. Remember though that the research itself is unlikely to bring about change as it is usually only one part of a bigger campaign or strategy – the later stages in this toolkit will help you to plan how to use your research.

- **Do you want to change policy, practice or both?**

This will help you to be clear what type of evidence you will need to gather, and begin to start thinking about who might be interested in your research findings. If you are hoping to influence policy, for example, you would need to focus on government departments, and your local council. If you were hoping to influence practice, you would focus on the people or organizations currently involved in that practice – bus companies, for example, or careers advisors, or newspapers.

- **Who do you want this research to influence?**

Who has the power to make the changes that you wish to see made? These are the people that you need to persuade. Are some of them already supportive? Or do you need to challenge their view and use your research as evidence? This is an extension of the question above. If you have decided you need to influence your local council, think about the links or ways in you may already have, or whether there are opportunities for you to put your findings across.

**Top Tips:**

- Don't rush this stage! Make sure that you are all clear as a group and can clearly state what needs to change or what the problem is.
- Ask people if what you think makes sense.
- Check if there are any existing campaigns locally or nationally that could be helpful or fit with your research.



## Stage 4: Write your research question

**Key Words: Hypothesis**

### What is a 'research question'?

A research question is the question that you as a young researcher really want to know the answer to. It is the purpose of the investigation.

The research question is exactly what you will try and answer with your research. A research question is what you will go on to investigate from your initial idea, topic or concern.

There are three different types of questions you can ask. These differ according to whether you want to explore, describe or explain something.

### Exploratory

This type of question is about exploring the topic. Usually this will help people to have new insights, ask further questions, assess in a new light or raise awareness of something that might be happening.

For example, how do 13 to 16-year-old boys from Birmingham access youth provision?

### Descriptive

This type of question is about describing something. Answering this question will give you an accurate description or understanding of people, events, situations or experiences.



For example, what are the different types of youth provision on offer for 13 to 16-year-old boys in Birmingham?

### Explanatory

This type of question is about trying to find an explanation for a situation or problem. Answering this type of question often helps people to decide what are important factors in making something happen, or have an understanding of causality.

For example, why do 13 to 16 year-old-boys perform better in single sex leisure activities?

### Why develop a research question?

Developing a good research question takes time and effort. However, a good research question will give you a well defined research project.

This will help you to:

- narrow your focus;
- manage time;
- remain motivated; and
- achieve a carefully planned and evidenced investigation.

### How to get started

1. Developing your research question will be helped by:
  - Knowing the area (completing a literature review, see sheet 2).
  - Widening the base of your experience (talk with other young people, youth workers and council officials).

- Trying techniques for enhancing creativity and ideas (for example group work).
2. Don't be tempted to be guided by a research method (such as questionnaires) that you have used before! Your question should be formed by the evidence that you need to know rather than the way of gathering that evidence.
  3. When deciding upon the question(s) you should not forget the purpose of your research. This might be to help campaign for organisational change (a youth club night at your school) or to make a contribution to some wider political effort (positive stories of young people in the media).
  4. A good research question has two key qualities.
    - It is focused and defines the limits of the research: so a research question should not be "what do young people want?" where your research could go on and on and on ... A more focused question might be "What facilities do young people from Nottingham want in their local area?"
    - It is answerable: so a research question should not be "what will young people be doing in ten years time?" This is not possible to answer, as no one can predict the future accurately. A more precise question could be, "What do young people think they will be doing in ten years time?"

You may already have a hypothesis in mind: this is where you have a theory about something that you want to test. So, your hypothesis might be "young women are more likely than young men to ask for advice and information about sexual health". A good research question

will test out your hypothesis, and also help you campaign for the change you want to see, so you might ask:

*"Why are young men less likely to ask for advice and information about sexual health?" or "what would make young men more likely to ask for advice and information about sexual health?"*

So once you think you have a research question – put it to the test!

- Can you think of a way to answer this question? Try it! Is it possible to get the information that you need to answer your question?
- Is your research question defined and focussed? Is it doable or is it too large? Are you interested in too many things? Refine and Define!

#### Top Tips:

- Do not allow your familiarity with a certain method/ technique to decide the research question.
- Do not use research questions that cannot be answered.
- Do not ask questions that have been already answered satisfactorily.
- Do not develop your research question without considering the practicalities and the ethics of what you can do, and how you do it.



## Stage 5: Plan how you will get answers to your research question

**Key Words: Research Design, Methods, Data, Quantitative, Qualitative, Triangulation, Validity, Reliability**

### What is the research design?

You now have your research question(s) but how do you go about collecting information and making sense of it? A research plan – also called the methodology – will help you organise your research into a doable project.

The methodology is the *approach* (ways of doing research) linking the research *question* and *methods* (interviews, visual diaries, surveys, etc). It also includes:

- how you select the sample (that is, the people involved in your research project);
- related questions of ethics and safety (see sheet 6); and
- finally, how you are going to analyse (or interpret) the information once you collect it.

### Why design your research?

1. The key activity at the research design stage is to select suitable methods and data sources (forms of information) that will best enable you to best answer the research question(s).
2. You also need to develop some understanding of the methodological implications (ethics) and how you will analyse or interpret the data.
3. For other people to have confidence in your research findings you must give convincing reasons for your choice of methods as well



as a clear description of how you collected data. This will allow others to examine the research findings and ask whether they are true (valid) and repeatable (reliable) based on the information you provide.

### How do you design a research project?

Firstly, you will need to think about the kind of data you want to collect, and what would best support the outcome you are hoping for. Data can be either quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative research is used to measure how many people feel, think or act in a particular way. It is best for producing hard facts and statistics, such as the number of young people using a service, or how many times per week young people visit a youth club.

Qualitative data aims to provide an understanding of how and why things are as they are. It is best for explaining or analysing things.

So, if you were hoping to demonstrate that the opening hours of the local youth club were limiting the numbers of young people who could use it, you could survey lots of young people locally to ask whether or not they think the club should be open longer.

If you were hoping to show the value of young people deciding how money is spent locally, you could undertake longer interviews with all the key people involved.

1. You will then need to think as creatively as you can about data sources (types of information) and methods. Make a fairly long list

of possible options. Think about whether the information will be quantitative or qualitative.

2. Making a list or a chart of possible research methods and data source options – including those which you are going to reject – can be a good way of forcing yourself to think carefully and consider all the possible options. There is a resources sheet to help you with this. Talking the list through as a group and with your youth worker can be an even better way of broadening your perspective and helping you to see other possibilities.
3. You will need to clearly show how and why you have reached the conclusions you have made. The best way to do this is by looking for three different sources of data.

This is called triangulation of data. For example, Ofsted will come into your school or children's home and speak with:

- young people;
- staff; and
- managers

to gather their view or experience of the service. If all three different sources say the same thing we can be more sure that Ofsted's conclusions will be correct. Once can be accidental, twice a coincidence, but three times, it is unlikely to be wrong. Triangulation may also try to balance quantitative and qualitative data. For instance, if we wanted to learn more about what sports activities mean to young people, we might:

- a) interview young people;
- b) survey youth workers; and
- c) look at attendance registers at a youth club against the activity schedule.

#### Top Tips:

- Be creative in your initial thinking; you can narrow down the options later.
- Using three sources of data will make your conclusions more reliable.
- Balancing quantitative and qualitative data will help too.
- You persuade others by clear, well written and presented, logically argued accounts which address the research questions that concern them.



## Stage 6: Think about research ethics

**Key Words:** Ethics, Confidential, Disclosure

### What are research ethics?

Research ethics cover the responsible conduct of research. They help make sure your research does no harm to other people.

### Why is it important to think about research ethics?

Ethics are a way of thinking about what is moral, or right. They promote good practice and a high standard of behaviour amongst those conducting research.

Think of them as a code of conduct for researchers. There a number of ethical dilemmas that can arise during the process of undertaking research. These can come about for some or all of the following reasons:

- The topic is particularly personal, sensitive, or in some way likely to cause upset. For example, you might be asking questions about bullying of someone who is being badly bullied at school, which causes them to get upset.
- Those who take part in a project (research participants) may be vulnerable or 'at risk'. For example, you might be interviewing young people who have problems with addiction, or who have a learning difficulty.
- The researcher is not well equipped to deal with issues as they arise. For example, a young person may disclose that they are self-harming, and the interviewer doesn't know what to say or do.

This last point is particularly important. It is easy to think that your



research project will result in some benefit. At the very least, it should increase your own and others' knowledge about a topic. It may help provide evidence of the need of others, or show good practice in a particular area.

However, sometimes research can be harmful for reasons that are not always obvious. There are a number of types of impact to consider:

- **Physical impact:** for example, might the research cause physical harm to people?
- **Psychological impact:** for example, might the research cause mental distress or ill health?
- **Social impact:** for example, what will the research mean for society as a whole?
- **Political impact:** for example, how does the research relate to ongoing political debates?
- **Religious and cultural impact:** for example, are the research methods sensitive to religious and cultural differences between groups?
- **Economic impact:** for example, will the research result in a financial cost to some individuals or groups?

Some of these are easier than others to answer, and not all will seem immediately relevant. However, researchers should consider all of them carefully before starting any research process.

### How to use ethics in your research project

- **Ethics are something that you should think** about at the very start, and all the way through, your project.
- **In most cases** you will have to go through some sort of 'ethical

clearance' before you start research. There are many ethical frameworks out there to help you. The Young Researcher Network has developed an ethical framework that has been simplified for use by young people.

- **Be honest:** don't trick people into taking part, and be up front about what will be involved in the research – how many times will you need to talk to participants, for example? Will they need to give up their time to get involved?.
- **Think about how your project might affect** those taking part. Are you going to be talking about subjects that might upset them? Do you need to have some information about sources of support available?
- **Get permission from your participants:** ask people to sign a consent form before you carry out an interview, and think about whether participants fully understand what they are agreeing to – for example, if they are very young, or need information to be communicated in a different way. .
- **Respect others' privacy:** don't ask personal questions that aren't necessary for your research, and make sure you are clear about what you will do with the information you have gathered.
- **Keep things confidential:** think about whether the information you have gathered and the way you are going to share it will reveal someone's identity (even if it's by accident). You might change people's names rather than use their real ones in your research report, or keep certain information (such as location) private to stop others finding out participants' identity.
- **Know how to keep yourself and others safe:** if someone tells you something that could mean that they or someone else is at risk of harm, you should tell an adult about this straight away. You need to know in advance who this adult is within your research

project. This person is sometimes called the Safeguarding Lead.

- **Protect your data:** keep your questionnaire returns, video diaries or transcripts, for example in a safe place where only you and your team can access them.
- **Feedback:** if you interview lots of young people, it is only polite to let them know later the results of your research. If there are going to be delays in speaking to them again, or in publishing the research, keep them informed.

The framework will guide you on how to do this, as well as signposting some resources to help.

Remember the fourth reason that things can go wrong is that the researcher is not well equipped to deal with issues as they arise. It is very important as young researchers that you take responsibility for ethics, but that you don't do this alone and when you reach the limit of what you can deal with you share the problem or decision with others.

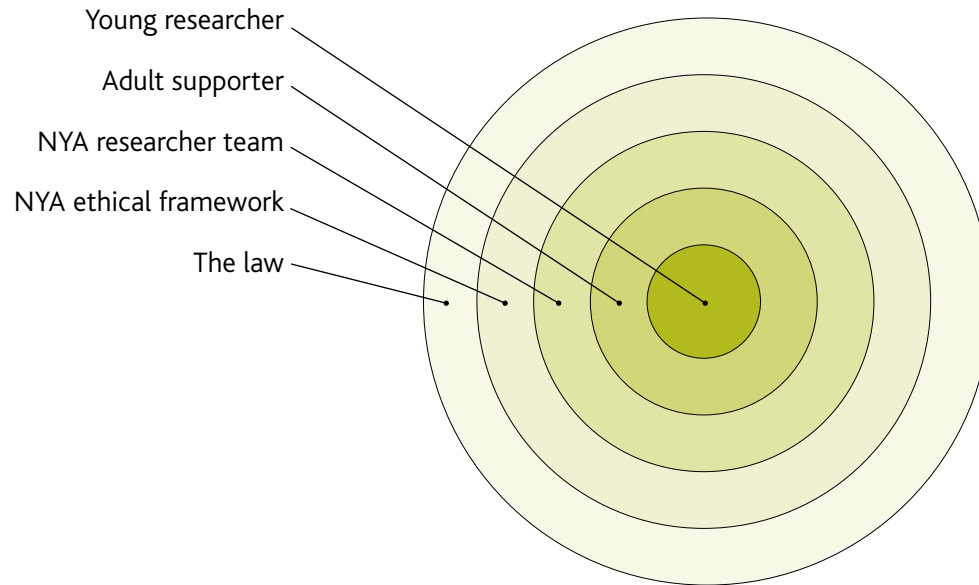
The diagram on page 00 shows how young researchers are inside a circle of guidance and support.

Your youth worker, or other adult support in your organisation, is your first source of support:

- There is also the team at The NYA, including a safeguarding specialist.
- NYA staff have an ethical framework that they can call on when they need help.
- Beyond that there are other sources of guidance, including the law. Ask for help!



## A circle of guidance and support



### Top Tips:

- Good ethical practice should be at the front of your mind at the very start of your project, and remain there throughout.
- Good ethical practice is as much about doing good, and doing quality research, as it is about minimising harm.
- No-one can deal with every issue that arises alone. Ask for help!



## Stage 7: Report your research findings

**Key Words:** Data, Communication, Transparency, Validity, Reliability, Robustness, Executive Summary

### What is reporting your research about?

From your analysis of the research data that you have collected, you will have 'found out' a number of things. You will now need to share:

- What you actually found out – your research findings.
- How you went about getting these research findings – your methodology.
- Any conclusions or recommendations you make.

You also need to decide who to tell – that is, who your audience is.

Research findings are the key things that you found out that you want people to know about. They are also sometimes called the key messages. A research report is a formal way of writing how you did your research, in a systematic way, so that other people can judge how trustworthy your findings are.

### Why do we report our findings?

To make the most of your research, you have to let people know! It is particularly important to communicate back to:

- a) the people who funded the research;
- b) young people and adults who volunteered their time and took part in the research; and
- c) organisations, councillors, governing bodies and other people who have the power to champion or bring about changes you recommend in your research.

We report our research findings so that they can be used as part of a campaign for change. We will look at this more closely when we consider dissemination (stage 8).

The other reason that we write a research report is so that other people can judge how trustworthy our findings are. People can then make an assessment on how valid and reliable the findings are. Remember, your research report might be included in someone else's literature review!

If we can be clear about how and why we took each step then people can follow our tracks and double check our thinking. This is sometimes called 'transparency.' Writing a report is a formal way of being transparent about how we got our findings.

### How do we present research findings?

A full research report will need:

- Introduction to the topic and why you did the research.
- A description of the literature review.
- A description of the research aims, including the research question.
- The methodology and a full account of what was done.
- A description of the analysis.
- The research findings.
- Conclusions.
- Any recommendations you want to make.

Not everyone will want to read a full report though! So as well as the full account, often a summary version of all the above stages is also produced. This is called an 'executive Summary.'



An executive summary

- Allows someone to quickly evaluate your research.
- Presents the key points from all stages of the research.
- Normally appears at the front of the full report as well as being produced on its own in a variety of formats.

### Producing Key Messages

As well as the executive summary you can also produce your key research findings in a variety of ways. Here you can be as creative as you like. You might decide to use more than one format to present the research findings. You might use:

- Written report
- Drama
- Music, for example rap, poem or rhyme
- Video/DVD/CD-Rom
- Poster
- Articles in newspapers or magazines
- Radio broadcast
- Podcast or vodcast
- Website
- Newsletters
- Presentations



#### Top Tips:

- Remember it is best to present your research findings in different ways for a variety of different audiences – different people will be engaged by different things.
- Think about how accessible your report is – think about an audience with visual or auditory impairments, or who struggle with reading and writing.
- It may be easier to write your report, then your executive summary and then get creative with the key messages in this order.

## Stage 8: Plan how you will tell people about your research findings

**Key Words:** Dissemination, Target Audience, Council, Governors

### What is this stage about?

This stage is often called 'dissemination'. It is about thinking who you are going to share your main research findings with and how you are going to tell them.

You will have a research report that you need to shrink down so it is quick and easy for people to learn about and understand your key messages.

At the end of disseminating your research you want lots of people to be thinking about your research, and its findings.

Why is it important to tell people about your research?

If you do not tell people about your research findings nothing will happen. In order to make change happen you need to tell the right people about what you found out so that it can be used as evidence as part of a larger campaign.

Thinking carefully about dissemination will help you to put your research to work.

This stage will help you to:

- Be clear about the main messages from your research.
- Have a list of people that you are going to 'target' with your research findings.
- Have a plan of how you are going to get your research messages out there!

### How do you disseminate your research findings?

It's as easy as one, two, three ...

1. What is it that you want to change?
2. What are the main messages from your research that are going to help make that change?
3. Who needs to know?

### Identifying your main messages

Go back to planning for change (stage 3). If your research is part of a larger campaign you will have a clear campaign aim. What are the main messages that you can take from your research to support that campaign aim? Alternatively, your research may not be part of an existing campaign but may be about making people aware of an issue or a problem. In clear sentences, decide what the key messages from your research are, and set them out.

### Who do you want to be thinking about your research?

Go back to planning for change (stage 3). You should have a list of people that you want to influence. These are the people that you need to share your main messages with. These people are your 'target' audience. People who form your target audience may be:

- People who have some power to make changes, for example local council, or school governors.
- Other young people who can help spread your message and support your campaign.
- The local or even national media who can help you to spread



your message, support for your campaign and raise awareness of your issues.

- There may be people who want to make similar changes to you: your evidence may be really helpful to them, but again they need to know about it to use it!

### An example ...

At the local college there are some aerobic exercise classes that are being held. The students want to have some dance classes instead of aerobics. To strengthen their campaign, the students do some research that will show exactly how many of the pupils want dance classes instead and what type of class. The research found that 75 per cent of students wanted a dance class to be on offer rather than aerobics. They then disseminated the research findings to the college governors, headmaster and PE staff to persuade them to change to dance classes.

Now get your findings into the heads of your target audience!

There are many ways you can spread your main messages. Here are just a few:

- Send key people a copy of the final report, with a personalised letter telling them why they need to read it – think about the size of the report that you are sending, how long should this be? Remember this can be a DVD or a CD.
- Put it on a website – think about how people will know that your research is on the website.
- Hold a public launch event – think about who will you invite and why will they come. Is it easy for your target audience to travel?



- Tell the local press – think about what messages you want to go into the papers/radio.
- Use existing newsletters that your organisation uses – think about who these newsletters go to.
- There are many other ways. Plan how you will get your message out because if you do not tell people about your research nothing will happen (stage 7).

### Top Tips:

- People may not have time to read and remember all about your research. Make it easy for them and give them the main points they need to know.
- Don't forget you may have a local youth parliament who can help you!

## Useful resources

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OPM (2010) *Creative influence: research led by young people*

Available at [www.opm.co.uk](http://www.opm.co.uk)

Kellet, M (2005) *How to develop children as researchers – a step by step guide to teaching the research process*

London: Sage

Kellet, M (2010) *Rethinking children and research: attitudes in contemporary society*

London: Continuum

Tisdall, K at al (2009) *Researching with children and young people: research design, methods and analysis*

London: Sage

Social Science research ethics web resource from Lancaster University

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/researchethics/index.html>





## How to find out more

The National Youth Agency works in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support and improve services for young people. Through our activities we want to ensure that young people have a strong voice and positive influence in our society.

Please contact us to find out more about working together to get it right for young people.

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