

National Youth Agency Research Steering Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The *National Youth Agency Research Steering Group* (The Group) works to further the interests and needs of research in the youth work sector in England, including collaboration with the home nations.

The goals of the National Youth Agency (NYA) Research Hub are to advance research that:

- Articulates the benefit of investing in preventative services and open access youth work.
- Investigates how youth work and associated services adapt to new environments.
- Explores particular aspects of youth work and young people's lives.
- Facilitates research findings to be incorporated into training, development and policy.

The Group will enable the development of a national programme of youth work research, within the above context. The ultimate aim is to ensure that youth work practice 'on the ground' feeds in to research and vice versa, with the results helping to better inform practice, policy and sector development.

Key Activities

- a) Seek to baseline existing youth work research from April 2019 under the following (but not exclusive) categories: issues and needs of young people, youth policy, return on investment of youth work, youth work practice, training and workforce developments; including providing a short summary of each, and host this on the NYA Network platform.
- b) Determine evidence uncertainties in current knowledge and research needs (including the emerging needs of the youth work sector and needs as determined by young people), being where:
 - No up-to-date, reliable systematic reviews of research evidence exists.
 - Up-to-date systematic reviews of research evidence show that uncertainty exists.
- c) Create and implement a National Programme of youth work research that:
 - I. Identifies evidence uncertainties as per (b) above.
 - II. Identifies funding routes and make appropriate applications for financial investment in to youth work research.
 - III. Commissions youth work research as appropriate.
 - IV. Identifies and shares emerging youth work research with the sector.
 - V. Disseminates published research, including a 'grassroots' friendly executive summary of each.
- d) Engage, where appropriate, with national research which impacts upon the youth work sector, and seek to influence its development or dissemination.
- e) Inform and report on progress to the National Advisory Board, the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work; and other stakeholders.
- f) Periodically connect with other UK and international groups for a wider perspective.
- g) Host an annual symposium to facilitate opportunities for connectivity between The Group and stakeholders.

Scope and Limitations

- h) The Group will progress academic research to meet the needs of the youth work sector through conducting the activities listed above.
- i) The Group recognises that many youth organisations and external partners will undertake evaluation and impact assessments for individual programmes and services, and that there are many semi-academic opinion pieces that inform practitioners; this work is vitally important to the sector and to meeting the needs of individual young people; however due to the volume and diversity of approaches, methods and potential volume of such reports, work of this nature will not typically be included within the scope of The Group.
- j) The Group will focus upon research for the youth work sector and young people in England, but with comparative analysis with other areas where relevant.

Protocols

- Public notes of all meetings will be kept and shared openly.
- Members of The Group will seek when appropriate to represent the wider interests of their sector/organisation or network.
- Decisions will be taken by The Group as a whole, except where a member(s) have conflicts of interest, in which case decisions will be taken by all other members.
- NYA will provide the secretariat to the group.
- A common online platform will be utilised to share documents and task lists.

Membership

All members of The Group shall be approved by the board of the NYA similar to the process for the Education and Training Standards Committee. Members will be appointed for a 3-year term.

The initial membership of The Group is to be determined by the NYA and the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work following an open application process. Longer-term the group will be encouraged to make recommendations to the NYA board for approval.

Members of the group will be drawn from:

1. Practitioners and young people – grassroots, active practitioners working with young people (who will also ensure a youth voice on the group).
2. Academics –with an active interest in young people and youth work related research.
3. Funders – supporters of the youth sectors practice and research interests.
4. Policy – local, regional and national policy development leads.

Meetings

The Group will meet twice per year with the support of the NYA team who will facilitate The Group coming together. Meetings will typically be between 13:00-16:00, but The Group can amend these to meet the attendance needs of The Group. The Group may convene working groups and/or task and finish groups to further the key activities.

Meetings will typically be held at the NYA office in Leicester, but can be hosted by partners if cost neutral.