

Seven Young Disabled People aged between 16 and 25 from across England (Hull, London, Birmingham and Bristol) came together during the summer of 2008 to learn about research. More importantly, they learnt how research can challenge people's attitudes and change peoples lives for the better. This was an opportunity for young people to develop their personal skills, do practical work experience and evaluate the YP-in project of which they had been members of for 2 years previously.

Outcomes of the Project

Young Disabled People committed to four days of research training and four days of fieldwork; they completed the following modules:

Research Modules

What is Research?

Designing a Research Question

Designing Interviews and Questionnaires

Carrying out Research

Reporting and Presenting Research Findings

The young researchers designed their own research questions, chose their preferred research methods, analysed the data they found, reported their findings and presented their results (see attached). The young people chose research questions that reflected what they were most passionate about, for example, 'Do non disabled people treat disabled people differently to their non disabled peers?' and 'What do 12-18 year olds like doing in their spare time? Are these places fully accessible?' Three of the seven young researchers took part in

auditing a major national information service to measure the accessibility and usefulness of the telephone information service for Young Disabled People. This was through deciding what made a telephone information service useful and accessible, designing interview questions and an audit and then carrying out mystery calls across the country.

Young researchers developed the following skills:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skills Development</u> (National Occupational Standards)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Communicate effectively Manage and store information Plan and manage own workload Identify sources of information and present findings Engage with the local community Address the health and well-being of young people</p>
--

Young people's research findings were fed into workshops at the YP-in Inclusion into Practice road shows, which toured around England in autumn 2008. These road shows provided guidance to youth, leisure and other practitioners on including Young Disabled People in their services.

Young researchers were rewarded for meeting the project agreement through completing the entire project. YP-in staff also worked with the young people on the issues of being paid and learning how this may or may not affect their benefits. The young researchers will take the skills and experiences that they have learnt on this project to continue to support them in extending their skills.

This project has been an opportunity for young people to learn how research can make a difference and an opportunity to create and manage their own research projects on issues that affects them alongside their peers.

Several of the young researchers are currently attending full time education, which they find is not challenging enough. Some of the young researchers have been pushed out of mainstream colleges, which refuse to offer the right support to Young Disabled People.

The success of the YP-in Young Researcher's Project was possible through the ongoing commitment of YP-in staff and the commitment of the research trainer to make research accessible to Young Disabled People. Using Mary Kellert's book on *How to Develop Children as Researchers*, Raj Anand, the research trainer from Brent Council used Kellert's approach and made it accessible. This was through first getting to know each young person's learning levels, making activities interactive and seeking facilitation support from YP-in staff who the young people knew well. The young people spent residential weekends in Birmingham city centre away from home. In order for young people to even consider joining the project, YP-in staff worked intensively to introduce the concept of research to young people, and continued to support young people's communication and personal care requirements throughout the project.

YP-in also worked with the National Youth Agency (NYA) Young Researchers Network (YRN) who has provided action research training and support with doing research with young people. YP-in is sharing it's learning on making research accessible with the NYA YRN to support their Participation Workers to do research with Young Disabled People.

What Worked Well?

Preparation

The Research and Evaluation Officer whom coordinated the project worked closely with the research trainer on making the training contents and methods accessible to the young people. This involved regular meetings and continually sharing draft training materials.

Young Researcher's Pack (see attached)

Before young people decided to join the project regional staff worked closely with young people to explain what research was. The Research and Evaluation Officer designed an introductory research pack using Widgit to explain the concept and explain what they would achieve through the project and how. This document supported staff in assisting young people in making a commitment to the project and also enabled staff to understand research in the context of the project.

Support

Regional staff supported young people through every step of the project from attending the induction day, through to workshop support and carrying out research to presenting their results. Some staff also supported young people with personal care and travel assistance, which would have otherwise been the main barrier to inclusion for some young people.

Residential Setting

Young people travelled from all over the country to complete these training residentials in Birmingham. This gave young people the opportunity to meet other young people from across the country and it

also was an opportunity for young people to travel and explore other parts of England.

Requirements for Inclusion

The experience that YP-in staff had with meeting requirements for inclusion such as arranging assisted travel and finding accessible accommodation was invaluable to ensure that all young people and staff were able to participate as much as possible.

Inclusion Adaptations

- Assisted travel (ramp on and off the train, using lifts)
- Wheelchair accessible carriages with accessible toilets on board
- Accessible bedrooms and accessible bathrooms (walk-in showers) with adjoining rooms for staff
- Accessible meeting rooms
- Accessible taxis
- Accessible restaurants
- Accessible evening activities
- Large font size 16-24 Ariel font printed on yellow paper
- Simplified language and wording
- Talking clearly and slowly and being patient
- Considering young people's basic reading and writing skills
- Straws (for drinking)
- Hoist hire
- Personal care support including overnight (toileting, showering, changing clothes)

What Worked Less Well?

Transport

We had problems using the taxis to and from Birmingham station. The taxi drivers were inconsistent in their use of ramps and some taxi drivers were charging for the time it took for young people and staff to get into the taxis. As ever transport is still a major barrier to young people's inclusion. This needs to be considered to gain the confidence in young people to trust the capabilities of staff to support them in these scenarios.

Young People's Views

Direct Quotes from Young people

"The sessions were good, the guys (the people) was the best. Lots of love from, A.L.G (Andrew Grant)"

"I loved it; I had a break from home"

"It was fun meeting new people"

"I had a fun time"

"I had a really nice and good time"

"I thought it was great, thank you"

"I would do it again. I liked hearing what people believe in"

"I really enjoyed all of it. I really enjoyed being away and hearing the answers to my questions"

"I thought it was good, we got a lot done"

The impact of the project was most evident in the increase of young people's confidence in interacting in the group environment. Not only were young people able to make the connection between action research

and what they would like to change in their lives but they also committed to challenging themselves in ways they knew would be difficult.

For some young people participating in a group environment was a huge miles stone for others it was completing the entire project. For some it was learning that even though their research findings were not perfect that they were still able to learn something from it.

Key Learning for Group as a Whole

Learning research theory, designing their projects and carrying out the research was a real challenge to all the young people. Not only would this project challenge young people's confidence but also their ability to apply research theory to practice.

Young people excelled in their ability to understand research and in completing training exercises however their main difficulty was committing to deadlines whilst carrying out research, being self-motivated and approaching their peers and strangers to complete questionnaires.

In response to the young people's lack of social skills, the research trainer incorporated group warm up exercises that required young people to make conversation with one another. As staff we also struggled to support young people to talk with one another at social settings.

Key Learning for Workers

Direct Quotes from Staff

“The young researcher’s project was so very successful and the young people seemed genuinely proud of their achievements”

“I enjoyed it and found it interesting”

“It was an amazing experience for me. I felt very privileged to be involved. Thank-you YP-in. Thank-you young people” (Research Trainer)

“I think that this project will empower young people”

“I think young people will actually get something out of this project rather than it being just a tokenistic gesture”

“Young people seemed to enjoy it”

“I thought that the trainer was good, he was not patronising”

The staff’s contributions were crucial to the project. We were heavily reliant on the staff’s ability to simplify instructions of tasks and their ability to creatively use alternative formats to support young people in carrying out research (see attached).

Suggestions for Improvement / Further Adaptation

More Time

Though young people understood that it was the process of the research project not the outcome that was most important it would have been better to had delved deeper into the issues of disability and accessibility. These were quite clearly important subjects for young people and it would have been thrilling to support young people in taking their projects to the next level.

Less Dependency on Staff to Socialise

Having been quite successful at supporting young people in interacting with one another in the workshop setting we took on the challenge of encouraging friendship building and peer socialising. We did this through asking young people to sit together during meal times and encouraging conversations. Unfortunately though young people have expressed the desire to have friends they were not very well experienced or equipped in initiating conversations with their peers. Though they had improved in their professional development their personal development needed to catch up to the same level to progress to the next level.

Project Participants

YP-in Young Researchers

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Paul Christian, age 25 | London |
| 2. David Hogan, age 25 | London |
| 3. Lucy Hurst, age 18 | Hull |
| 4. Anthony Blanchard, age 21 | Hull |
| 5. Helen Forrest, age 16 | Bristol |
| 6. Andrew Grant, age 16 | Bristol |
| 7. Gurpreet Bassi, age 16 | Birmingham |

YP-in Staff

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Kay Sibley | Regional Development Officer (SW) |
| 2. Ruth Garner | Programme Coordinator (SW) |
| 3. Simon Berry | Regional Development Officer (Y&H) |
| 4. Amy McStravick | Youth Worker (Y&H) |
| 5. Elizabeth Streeter | Programme Coordinator (London) |
| 6. Louise Quiller | Regional Development Officer (WM) |
| 7. Natalie Bodenham | Youth Worker (WM) |

Research Trainer

Raj Anand	Neighbourhood Coordinator, Brent Council
-----------	---

Young Researcher's Project Coordinator

Le N Ho	Research and Evaluation Officer
---------	---------------------------------