



## Session 4: How to research sensitive topics (Stage 6 of YRN Toolkit)



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The National Youth Agency (NYA) is one of three Education Support organisations to receive funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government, under the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The Local Government Association (LG Association) has oversight of the NYA's work supported by this funding. The annual funding supports key areas of the NYA's work and promotes the role of local government and its partners in youth policy.



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Time	Session activities	Resources
5 minutes	<p><b>Icebreaker/energizer</b></p> <p>Spend five minutes on an icebreaker, such as Ball of Fun. Ask participants to stand in a large circle, with plenty of space between each other. Participants then throw a ball around the group until each person has had a chance to catch and throw. They then have to catch and throw the ball in the same order each time. After a couple of repetitions, introduce another ball, and then another (depending on the size of the group). After a while, ask participants to reverse the order they throw the balls.</p>	Two or three small balls (e.g. tennis or ping-pong balls)
10 minutes	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>What is researching sensitive topics all about?</b></p> <p>Explain that researchers sometimes research topics that are personal or likely to cause upset to a certain group – a group they may well be gathering data from, for example through interviews and questionnaires. As such, it’s important to think through the implications of your research, and make sure you are clear on your research ethics, and that you bear them in mind at every stage of your project.</p> <p><b>What are research ethics?</b></p> <p>Research ethics cover the responsible conduct of research. They help make sure your research does no harm to other people. At this point, you may want to review the YRN ethical framework as a group.</p> <p><b>How to research sensitive topics</b></p> <p>The golden rule for researching sensitive topics is to be well prepared. It’s crucial to think through all the possible implications of your research, and to think about how you might tackle them.</p> <p>Explain that the aim of this session is to enable participants to identify the potential impact of their research projects and to think through ways they might address this.</p>	Flipchart paper, copies of the YRN ethical framework (from Stage 6 of the YRN Toolkit)

Time	Session activities	Resources
40 minutes	<p><b>Case studies</b></p> <p>Split into pairs or small sub-groups and give each a different case study. Give the sub-groups 25-30 minutes to discuss the following two areas regarding the project described in their case study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The possible impact of the project – could there be a physical, psychological, social, political, religious, cultural or economic impact? Go through each type of impact and discuss whether it might be an issue.</li> <li>• What steps you might take to address each impact. Refer to the YRN ethical framework for ideas.</li> </ul> <p>You might like to suggest that each sub-group writes ideas/ thoughts about each area on a piece of flipchart. When the sub-groups have discussed both areas, ask each to summarise their case study and present their thoughts on both areas to the rest of the group. Ask the rest of the group for comments, and ask if they can think of any possible impacts/way to address each impact that the sub-group might have missed.</p> <p>Explain that each case study represents a real YRN project conducted in 2008. After the training session, you might like to refer the group to the relevant YRN reports to find out how each group tackled researching a sensitive topic.</p> <p><b>Case study 1</b> corresponds to Just Ask! Vision (Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs).</p> <p><b>Case study 2</b> – Have Your Say Research Report – North Tyneside – ‘How Looked After Children are Involved in their Review Process’</p> <p><b>Case study 3</b> – UKYP Research Report – After Wagon Time</p> <p><b>Case study 4</b> – ‘Ethnicity’ Research Report</p> <p>All past YRN reports are available to download at <a href="http://www.nya.org.uk/integrated-services-for-young-people/young-researcher-network/yrn-research-reports">http://www.nya.org.uk/integrated-services-for-young-people/young-researcher-network/yrn-research-reports</a></p>	Case study cards (from Activity Sheet for Session 4), flipchart paper, marker pens

Time	Session activities	Resources
5 minutes	<p><b>You are not alone! A circle of guidance and support</b></p> <p>Give participants each a copy of 'A circle of guidance and support' (In Stage 6 of the YRN Toolkit) and explain how the different circles of guidance and support work. Explain that whilst researching sensitive topics can be difficult, there are plenty of people and resources available to help guide participants through the process.</p>	Copies of 'A circle of guidance and support' (In Stage 6 of the YRN Toolkit)
	<p><b>Next steps: follow the discussion questions for your own project</b></p> <p>Why not follow the activity above for your own research project? You may want to leave some time between this training session and doing this activity for your own project; ask participants to think about possible impacts in the meantime.</p>	

## ACTIVITY SHEET FOR SESSION 4

### Case study 1

You are part of a group of disabled young people from Birmingham. You have chosen to research the experiences of disabled young people in everyday life. The aim was to increase general understanding and awareness of the underlying personal and emotional issues that impact on the lives of disabled young people. You also hope to challenge stereotypes that exist in society.

### Case study 2

You are part of a group of looked-after young people. In your research, you have chosen to look at the involvement of looked-after young people in their reviews in your local area. You are aiming to find out who controls the review process, if young people's views are listened to in the review process, and the different ways young people can contribute to the review process in your local area.

### Case study 3

You are part of a group of young Gypsies and Travellers from all over the UK. For your research project, you are aiming to research your own and other families' experiences of changes in identity and culture over the last forty years. Your aim is to raise awareness of similarities and differences in culture between generations as well as between various Gypsy and Traveller groups. You are also hoping that the research will raise awareness of and help to tackle the prejudice and discrimination these families suffer.

### Case study 4

You are part of a group of young people that has been asked to research the barriers and drivers of young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups accessing sexual health services. You hope that your research will help to inform the design and delivery of services, addressing any inequalities in regards to

teenage pregnancy and sexual health by meeting the needs of young people from BME communities. You also hope to make recommendations on how young people from different backgrounds can, in the future, be involved in the process of service development.





## About the National Youth Agency

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. Our particular focus is on youth work and we believe strongly that by investing in young people's personal and social development, young people are better able to live more active and fulfilling lives.

Working with young people, we advocate for more youth-friendly services and policies. We have four themes:

- Developing quality standards in work with young people
- Supporting services for young people
- Developing the youth workforce
- Promoting positive public perceptions of young people.

We deliver our work through training and consultancy, campaigning, publishing and online communications. Through our activities we want to ensure that young people have a strong voice and positive influence in our society.

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