

Background

In early 2023, seven workshops were conducted with a range of stakeholders including youth workers, youth work managers and young people. The aim of these workshops was to identify topics for research within the field. A total of seven workshops were facilitated in the following areas:

- Dundee
- Edinburgh
- Fife
- Scotland-wide
- South Lanarkshire
- Young Islanders Network x 2

Fifty-two potential topics were identified, many of which shared similarities. To group the topics based on similarities and differences, develop research questions and to prioritise these, an online workshop was held on the 4th of May 2023. Participants who attended or were involved in the facilitation of the seven workshops earlier in 2023 took part. This summary report outlines the aims, process and findings of this workshop.

Aims

The workshop had four aims:

1. To group the 52 topics into research areas based on their similarities and differences
2. To vote on the research areas in order to identify the Top Eight
3. To generate research questions in relation to each of the Top Eight
4. To rank each research question in terms of urgency and importance

Process and findings

Four activities were undertaken using the Zoom online conferencing platform, Cardsmith virtual whiteboard and PowerPoint.

Activity 1. Grouping topics from the workshops into agreed research topic clusters

The aim of this activity was to identify the emerging themes in relation to the 52 youth work topics identified. Topics were initially clustered based on similarities and differences by the facilitator (JM) using Cardsmith (<https://cardsmith.co/>). Participants were invited to comment on each cluster and invited to move topics around or to create new clusters. This process continued until everyone agreed that the clusters and names of these accurately reflected the 52 topics. The final clusters are shown in Figure 1, overleaf.

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

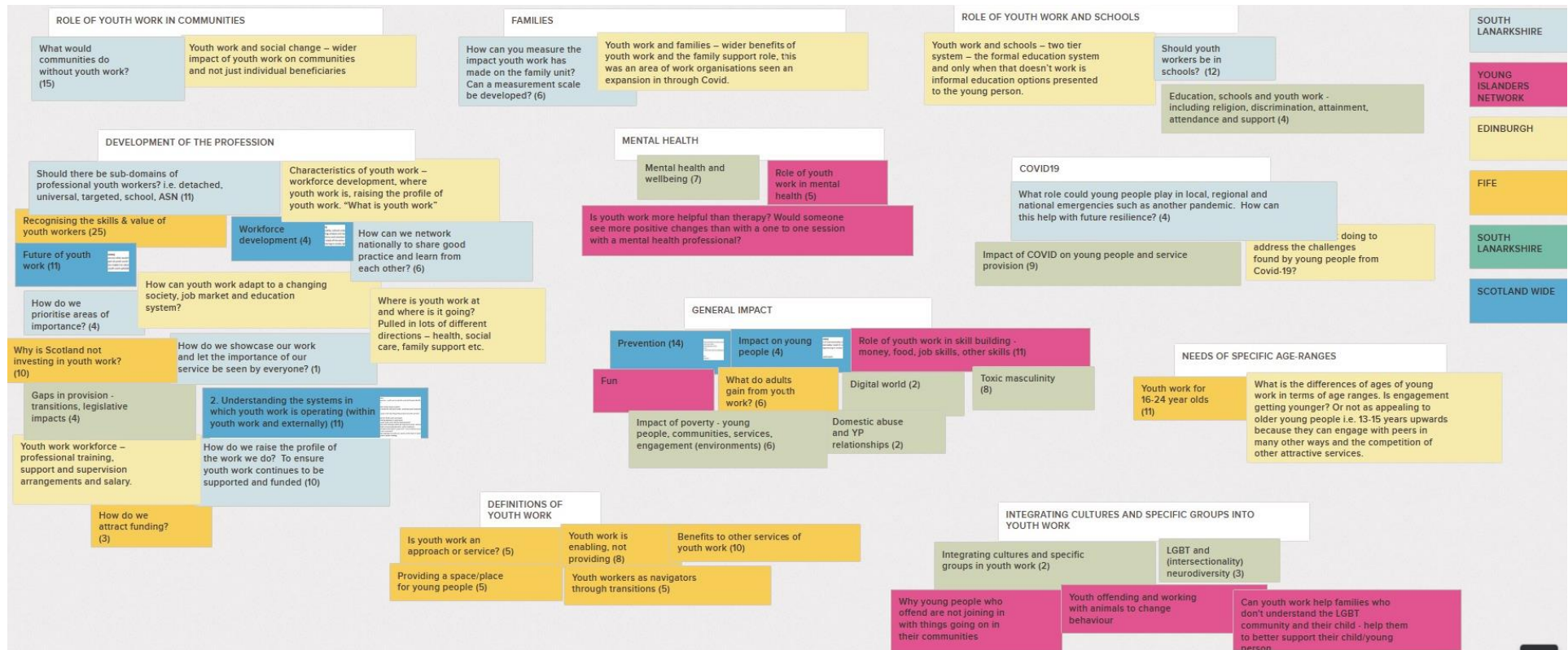


Figure 1. Activity 1 – Final clustering of the 52 research topics

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

Ten research topic clusters were identified in total, and labelled as:

- Role of youth work in schools
- Development of the profession
- Families
- Mental health
- General impact
- Definitions of youth work
- Role of youth work in schools
- Covid-19
- Needs related to age
- Integrating cultures and specific groups into youth work/integrating all young people

Activity 2. Voting on research topic clusters to identify the Top Eight

Participants were invited to vote on the clusters to identify the Top Eight using the Annotate function on Zoom. They were asked to place a stamp next to up to five research topic clusters that they thought should be prioritised. Table 1. shows the results of this activity. Impact (8), development of the profession (7) and the role of youth work in communities (7) received the most votes. Of the ten research topics clusters, “Covid-19” and “Needs related to age” did not receive any votes. These therefore did not progress to the next activity. This does not mean that these topics are not of importance, only that the group felt these were not as much of a priority in relation to the other topics *at this time*.

Table 1. Activity 2 – Results of the voting exercise

Topic	Votes
General impact*	8
Development of the profession*	7
Role of youth work in communities*	7
Role of youth work in schools*	4
Mental health*	3
Purpose of youth work*	3
Integrating all young people*	1
Families*	1
Covid-19	0
Needs related to age	0

*Top Eight taken forward to Activity 3

Activity 3. Generating research questions for the Top Eight research priorities

This activity was undertaken with the aim of developing some starter research questions in relation to each of the eight research priorities. Participants were split into four breakout rooms. Each room was allocated two research priorities. They spent 20 minutes generating up to three research questions in relation to these two research priorities. Participants then spent 30 minutes editing and adding to the research questions developed in relation to the remaining six priorities. Discussions were facilitated by AC, AJW, IF, and JM, who moved between the rooms to ensure that participants had contributed to the development of research questions for all eight priority areas. A total of 25 research questions were developed across the topics, as shown in Table 2 (p6) and 3 (p12).

Activity 4. Ranking research questions in terms of urgency and importance

The group were then tasked with ranking research questions in terms of urgency and importance, in order to provide some indication of which questions need to be answered first. Each question was discussed in terms of its urgency (Can this research question wait?) and importance (What sort of impact would the answer to this question likely have?). Using PowerPoint, participants were asked to agree on the placement of research questions in the grid shown in Figure 2. The aim was to identify those questions with high importance and high urgency as agreed by consensus within the group.

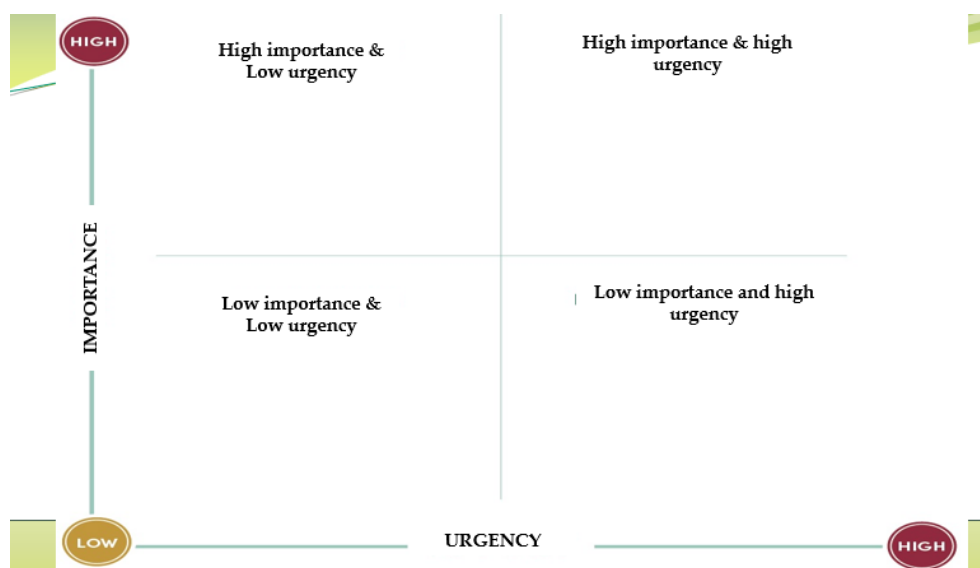


Figure 2. Activity 4 – Research question importance and urgency grid

It is important to note that the placement of a research question in a quadrant denoting low importance or low urgency does not mean that these questions should not be pursued. All

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

questions were considered to be important, but some more important and more urgent to address than others at this particular time.

This task took longer than anticipated due to the number of research questions generated, which perhaps reflects the energy and excellent ideas stemming forth from within the group. The placement of nine of the questions was unable to be discussed during the online workshop due to time constraints. These were uploaded to a Google Jamboard and participants were asked to – in their own time – access this and provide an indication of which quadrants they believed these questions should be placed.

Table 2 (p6) was prepared by YouthLink Scotland and shows the full list of 10 questions identified as high importance/high urgency. The research questions (RQs) focus upon the following topic areas: Purpose of youth work (3 RQs); Mental health (2 RQs); Role of youth work in schools (2 RQs); Developing the profession (1 RQ); Integrating groups into youth work (1 RQ); Role of youth work in communities (1 RQ). Table 2 also includes some initial thoughts on outcomes, populations, whether qualitative or quantitative, an indication of the potential project Leads/collaborators for each question, and examples of work already undertaken or underway. Table 3 (p12) provides a list of the other 15 research questions that were identified for reference.

Next Steps

A number of steps have been identified in relation to taking the project forward:

- In order to inform decision making around which projects to prioritise, it would be useful to further discuss and consider what each high importance/high urgency research project would look like in practical terms. Table 2 (p6) provides a good starting point for this.
- It would be useful to consider potential projects in terms of feasibility given any budget constraints.
- Check whether other members of the steering group are aware of existing work that has been undertaken or is underway in relation to each of the questions in Table 2 (p6).
- Gauge interest in involvement (as a partner or a lead) from members of the steering group in relation to each of the 10 priority questions.

Table 2. High priority/high urgency research questions and initial thoughts (n=10)

High priority/high urgency area and question	Outcomes	Population	Method	Possible lead	Potentially relevant work that has been undertaken/is underway
<p><u>Purpose of youth work:</u> How do we and other sectors recognise and value the definitive features of youth work? Taking ownership of the definitive features of youth work, and protecting them</p>	<p>1. To understand how the youth work sector defines and values the features of youth work.</p> <p>2. To understand how other sectors define and value the features of youth work.</p> <p>3. A revisit and possible update of the principles of youth work (to develop a deeper understanding of what they mean with CLD/youth work pedagogy and how do they sit alongside relationships, safe spaces and youth work as a non-formal education practice?)</p>	<p>Youth work sector, other sectors which could include social work, police, schools/colleges, other third sector orgs</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>This would be a good partnership project, YouthLink Scotland would be happy to lead or support.</p>	<p>Ian Fyfe and Alan Mackie have completed some research exploring authenticity in community-based youth work https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2022.2101353</p> <p>Researchers at KCL have recently developed resources for youth workers to aid in helping decision makers to understand the value of youth work. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/new-resources-to-improve-understanding-of-the-value-of-youth-work</p> <p>https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/assets/rethinking-impact/valuing-youth-work-research-informed-practical-resources-for-youth-workers.pdf</p>

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

<p><u>Purpose of youth work:</u> How do we promote youth work to be a priority, creating a culture of enabling not providing a substitute?</p>	<p>This is linked with the question above about how youth work is understood. This would be easier to address if practitioners understand and can articulate what youth work is.</p>	<p>Youth work sector, other sectors which could include social work, police, schools/colleges, other third sector orgs</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>This would be a good partnership project, YouthLink Scotland would be happy to lead or support.</p>	<p>Researchers at KCL have recently developed resources for youth workers to aid in helping decision makers to understand the value of youth work. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/new-resources-to-improve-understanding-of-the-value-of-youth-work https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/assets/rethinking-impact/valuing-youth-work-research-informed-practical-resources-for-youth-workers.pdf</p>
<p><u>Purpose of youth work:</u> How do we develop stronger narratives around specialist areas of youth work (not just adapting to the latest funding call)?</p>	<p>This connects with the question about the nature and purpose of youth work. This question could explore the impact of targeted youth work, what does targeted youth work do?</p>	<p>Youth work sectors and other sectors such as prisons, NHS, social work, police, fire service, drugs and alcohol services, third sector organisations etc.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>		<p>Researchers at KCL have recently developed resources for youth workers to aid in helping decision makers to understand the value of youth work. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/new-resources-to-improve-understanding-of-the-value-of-youth-work https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/assets/rethinking-impact/valuing-youth-work-research-informed-practical-resources-for-youth-workers.pdf</p>
<p><u>Mental health:</u> What is the impact of youth work on young peoples' ability to have agency in their own life? (inner repertoire of skills etc. that build up "resilience"/emotional intelligence)</p>	<p>1. What difference does youth work make to young people's lives? 2. Does involvement with youth work lead to sustained change in young people's lives?</p>	<p>Young people and/or adults who have engaged with youth work as young people</p>	<p>This could make an interesting retrospective or longitudinal study</p>		

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

<p>Mental health: To what extent can youth work replace or substitute other services in terms of resilience and wellbeing? (for YP who do not meet threshold for CAMHS)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand role of youth work in supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing. 2. Mapping youth work practice in mental health and wellbeing. 3. Understanding role of other services in supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing (including specialised services and schools etc). 4. Examine the role that youth work could play in this space. 	<p>Youth work sector, mental health sector including CAMHS, young people (particularly accessing mental and wellbeing services or on waiting lists)</p>	<p>Mixed method</p>		<p>YouthLink Scotland, Northern Star and University of St Andrews are conducting an evaluation of youth information workers being trained in counselling skills to support young people's wellbeing in schools in Dumfries and Galloway</p>
--	---	---	---------------------	--	---

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

<p><u>Role of youth work in schools</u>: What is the added value (including but not only cost savings) of youth work and youth awards in education (schools) (achievement, not just wider achievement)?</p>	<p>This could focus on 'youth work in education' or 'youth work including youth awards' - youth awards is a part of youth work but so is group work etc, so need to think about why youth awards and not other youth work approaches.</p>	<p>Youth work sector and schools</p>	<p>Mixed method</p>	<p>Possibly YouthLink Scotland who are already leading on some of this work</p>	<p>This is part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge work that YouthLink Scotland are leading on - they have produced guides for schools that articulates the role of and added value of youth work in education. YLS has also completed a national case study evaluation to examine the value of youth work on the impact on educational outcome for children and young people in poverty. Annette Coburn and Sinead Gormally have completed work on youth work and schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A book chapter on Youth Work and Schools Coburn & Gormally (2015) Youth Work in Schools.pdf • An article on creating educational synergies https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/creating-educational-synergies/ • Podcast on a wellbeing economy and the role of our education system as a means to wellbeing https://www.buzzsprout.com/1581676/7979716-37-thoughts-on-the-wellbeing-economy-with-dr-annette-coburn <p>An independent review commissioned by the NYA: 'Better together: Youth Work in Schools' illustrates how a holistic approach involving youth workers, teachers and pastoral staff can positively impact upon outcomes including attendance https://www.nya.org.uk/new-research-highlights-positive-impact-of-youth-work-with-schools/</p> <p>https://www.nya.org.uk/youth-work-with-schools/</p>
---	---	--------------------------------------	---------------------	---	---

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

<p><u>Role of youth work in schools:</u> Developing an evidence base around youth work approaches (voluntary participation, etc.) in schools (youth work in parity with schools)</p>	<p>Mapping evaluation and research activities and examining the impact of youth work approaches in schools and what it is about that approach which contributes to the impact. What distinguishes youth work from formal education.</p>	<p>Youth work sector and schools</p>	<p>Mixed method - including desk based</p>	<p>YouthLink Scotland are completing work in this area so could lead or support another organisation.</p>	<p>YouthLink Scotland have produced a national case study evaluation - to examine the value of youth work on the impact on educational outcome for children and young people in poverty</p>
<p><u>Development of the profession:</u> How can youth work adapt to a changing society, job market and education system?</p>	<p>This could focus on the needs of youth workers - what do they need? E.g. professional learning/funding etc</p>	<p>Youth workers</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>		<p>YouthLink Scotland is working on employability/wellbeing economy currently</p>
<p><u>Integrating all young people:</u> What is the impact of targeted youth work on intersectional issues?</p>	<p>1. To explore intersectionality and intersectional issues impacting on young people. 2. The role of targeted youth work in supporting young people's intersectional identities</p>	<p>Youth work sector and young people (particularly with protected characteristics)</p>	<p>Mixed method</p>		

Youth Work Research Priorities Online Workshop, 4th May 2023

<p><u>Role of youth work in communities:</u> How do we identify and engage with communities that youth work are currently not reaching?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mapping young people who are accessing youth work - demographics etc 2. Mapping young people not reached through youth work. 3. Understanding how youth work can engage with young people not currently reached by youth work. 	<p>Youth work sector, other sectors which could include social work, police, schools/colleges, other third sector orgs, young people - particularly with protected characteristics</p>	<p>Mixed method</p>		
---	---	--	---------------------	--	--

Table 3. Other research questions identified and their placement in the importance/urgency grid (n=15)

Grid quadrant	Research area and question
High importance/low urgency	<p><u>Integrating all young people:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we identify the developmental and transformative outcomes of the youth work process? What resources are needed to implement this? • What are the barriers and enablers for those young people who don't participate in youth work provision? <p><u>General impact:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do young people feel about how youth work benefits their overall wellbeing? • How do we enable young people to identify the impact that youth work has had on their wider life/profile their learning? <p><u>Development of the profession</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we maintain the integrity of youth work and workforce development in a changing society?
Low importance/high urgency	<p><u>Families</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact of youth work as a partner service/sector on the family unit? (from the perspective of the family) • What is the discrete role that youth work has in supporting families to meet positive outcomes for young people? • What do we need to do to effectively engage and sustain families/home unit in youth work support?
Appeared in two quadrants during the Jamboard exercise, potentially indicating a	<p><u>Development of the profession</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure that other sectors value and recognise the cross-sectoral youth work approach? [high importance/low urgency & low importance/high urgency]

lack of agreement in relation to positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do we maintain the integrity of youth work and workforce development in a changing society? [High importance/high urgency & low importance/high urgency]• What can we learn from other sectors to enhance the role and value of youth work? [high importance/low urgency & Low importance/low urgency] <p><u>Role of youth work in communities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the perceptions of youth work in a diverse selection of communities in Scotland? [High importance/low urgency & Low importance/low urgency]• Do other sectors and local communities know the role and value of youth work? [High importance/Low urgency & high importance/high urgency]• What impact does youth work have on young people and families in local communities? [High importance/Low urgency & high importance/high urgency] <p><u>Mental health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does youth work add to other services in terms of increasing positive wellbeing? [High importance/Low urgency & high importance/high urgency]
--	--