

Authoring Our Own Stories



Briefing Sheet

This programme is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and is being delivered by Partnership for Young London, Youth Focus North West, Youth Focus South West and the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Youth Work Unit.

The Project

Authoring Our Own Stories is a youth recovery project examining how young people's identities impact on their access to services. Over the course of 5 years we will deliver arts-based workshops with young people and youth work professionals to explore how we reshape services locally, regionally, and nationally to improve the offer in place to young people and break the cycle of inequality.

This builds on our pilot in 2019 -2020 which engaged over 400 young people from across the county, their views have formed the shape and content of this programme. More details about this work can be accessed via [this link](#).

There will be 4 components to our proposal which will take place over the duration of the programme:

- **Young Leaders** 100 young people trained in co-production, leadership, facilitation and research skills
- **Youth Outreach** Delivery of 20 youth voice and youth-led research projects with over 500 young people
- **Workforce Development** Training and peer support for 600 youth workers
- **Regional Partnerships** The establishment of 4 cross-sector regional partnerships aiming to drive up outcomes for young people by influencing policy and practice. This builds on the two existing partnerships from the pilot (London and the North West) and extends the programme to Yorkshire and Humber and South West

Each year we will train 20 paid, part-time, young leaders to co-produce a national, multi-media project in each region over 10 weeks that provides a platform for participants to author their own stories. Participants will explore how they want their identities to be understood by professionals and their peers and capture their findings through a range of media formats including videography, creative writing, graphic art and photography.

The outcomes of their work will provide a rich body of material based on their lived experiences around identity. This will be used to develop resources, training programmes and youth led events, delivered to the youth sector, to upskill the workforce. This initiative will be developed on a rolling programme, over a five-year period, where new regional partnerships are formed each year.

Authoring Our Own Stories will enable young people to take increased roles in defining future provision. Services will develop more effective partnerships to the changing needs of young people, in line with the impact of COVID19. Additionally, the youth sector will have the skills to be able to respond more effectively to the developing needs of young people. This will help mitigate against future systemic inequalities, highlighted through the lived experiences of respondents in our pilot project, and 'build back better' as part of the recovery mission, out of the pandemic. This work will be supported by Dr Tom Loughran from the University of Liverpool and there will be a research and evaluation process applied across the 5 years.

Our Ambitions

Across the duration of this project we aim to:

Create a Platform for Youth Voice and Youth-Led Research We will utilise the skills and resources of young people, cross-regionally to build a cohesive picture of how to articulate the civic identities of young people on a national level and how this data should inform the youth sector's recovery mission.

We want to produce knowledge from new places with young people who would otherwise have little to no opportunity to share their lived experiences and influence a recovery programme moving forward. This work aims to disrupt the orthodox ways that policymakers conduct decision making processes, so that young people are meaningfully engaged in the strategic development process.

Develop Services Post COVID-19 Authoring Our Own Stories is being developed in response to assertions from young people, gathered through our pilot, to work with them as co-producers and provide safe spaces for them to express their multiple identities. This is so that their experiences are more accurately understood by service providers. Our intention is to use this knowledge as a catalyst for advancing the delivery of youth provision. Findings from evidence-based research reinforces the need for the youth sector to harness more nuanced and sophisticated understandings of how young people's identities impact their potential to fully contribute to their environments - this work seeks to change this.

Develop Cross Regional Collaboration We will create greater equity across regions in terms of the distributions of resources and the sharing of knowledge about how young people create openings to thrive. The work seeks to create bridges for young people to advance their knowledge about their peers in different regions across the UK and build partnerships through these connections that will generate opportunities for them in terms of social networking and increasing transferable soft and hard skills through the process.

Re-Frame the Future This initiative will seize the current 'unprecedented moment' to recalibrate the culture of the youth sector by becoming more progressive and 'fit for purpose'. Fundamental

to this progress is challenging the constraining methods used to categorise young people and position them within a system that limits their life chances by not fully meeting their needs. We aim to co-produce this work with young people so that they engage in a democratic process where they share knowledge around the core issues that affect their lives.

More Information

For more information about the programme please contact your regional leads or the project lead:

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This work is supported by Dr Tom Loughran as our research and evaluation partner

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**Youth
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SOUTH WEST

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Improving the lives of young people



This work is generously supported by the National Lottery Community Fund