

## Annex: ADR England Research Community Catalysts: Youth Transitions

### Context

Existing data allows us to map the journey of young people through school, further and higher education, or other institutions (including care or prison) and into their early career or other endeavours. But this data is of poor quality and limited availability, impeding us from generating the evidence needed to evaluate and influence policy and maximise impact.

Youth Futures Foundation and the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education envision a cross-sector strategy that maps missing, incomplete data and outlines key players and required datasets. This would build a research landscape where we can answer the most pressing questions around what works, support young people through smooth transitions, and reduce inequalities.

### Overview

There are multiple types of 'transition' and defining them can be challenging.

'Standard' transitions are clearly of interest – for example, moving between recognised education programmes and stages. These include: moving from Key Stage Three (KS3) to Key Stage Four (KS4), moving to a new phase of education after KS4, and moving to further or higher education, to work, or to further learning following an apprenticeship or vocational learning. We want to know how these 'standard' transitions may or may not unfold for young people from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds.

To understand what happens to young people at risk of poorer labour market outcomes, we must also consider other transitions:

- 'Extended transitions' from childhood and family to 'relative independence' (including the transition from living in the family home or leaving care). These transitions have become more complex and less predictable over the past 30 years.<sup>1</sup> This complexity affects opportunities and decisions around education and work, which are also affected strongly by personal and household circumstances.<sup>2</sup>
- Transitions relating specifically to factors such as school exclusion, being a looked-after child or child in need, health issues, experiences of homelessness, and engagement with the criminal justice system. We need to know more about how and when young people

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy S (2014) What are youth transitions? Blog post 5 February 2014, Youth Think, [https://youththink.wordpress.com/2014/02/05/what\\_are\\_youth\\_transitions/](https://youththink.wordpress.com/2014/02/05/what_are_youth_transitions/)

<sup>2</sup> Murray S and Gayle V (2012) Youth Transitions, Survey Question Bank: Topic Overview 8, University of Essex, National Centre for Social Research, <http://survey.net.ac.uk/sqb/topics/commentaries.asp>

'slip through the cracks', and how disappearances from official records and processes impact 'standard' transitions to education, learning, work, and independence.

We want to explore not only what the data tells us, but also what we know about the data. As part of this programme of work, we need to better understand how young people with iterative or disrupted journeys show up (or stop showing up) in datasets on education, training, and employment – and where to look for them.

One of the challenges for research in this area is how to limit scope. There are numerous administrative datasets relevant to young people's transitions between work, education, and learning. There are also varying definitions of 'disadvantage', which affects who is captured in these datasets. This is true both of young people with fairly 'standard' transitions, and of those whose journey is more complex and iterative.

Therefore, the Youth Transitions Community Catalyst aims to map the data sources, identify potential avenues for better data linking, and create a community of data users to answer important research questions.

## **About Youth Futures Foundation (YFF)**

YFF's mission is to narrow employment gaps for marginalised young people by identifying what works and why, investing in evidence generation and innovation, and igniting a movement for change. We prioritise young people who face disadvantage or discrimination in the labour market, and were originally set up with a focus on ethnic disparities. Everything we do is guided by robust evidence of what works to support young people from marginalised backgrounds into good jobs – and we are a member of the UK Government What Works Network. We put young people at the heart of what we do and our decision making, and work closely with partners and in coalitions across England.

## **About the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO)**

TASO's mission is to improve lives through evidence-informed practice in higher education (HE). We generate evidence on what works, and influence policy to increase access to HE and ensure ongoing success for young people from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds. Although TASO focuses on eliminating equality gaps in HE, our research follows the experiences and outcomes of young people from education to work.

## **Objectives**

The objectives for this award are in line with those set out in the [main funding opportunity specification](#). Below, you can read more details on how these objectives might be framed in the context of youth transitions.

## 1. Strategic research leadership

In terms of mapping existing research evidence, the successful team should build on what is already known and take into account the key research themes highlighted by YFF and TASO below.

The successful team will coordinate and co-design a research agenda. This should map the research projects required to plug evidence gaps on what works and reduce equality gaps in each of YFF and TASO's thematic research priorities (see below).

YFF's priority themes are:

1. Specific places in England with high risks of youth unemployment and economic inactivity
2. Disparities in employment and education outcomes relating to ethnicity
3. Barriers faced by those with experience of the care or criminal justice systems, mental health challenges, or racial discrimination.

TASO's priority themes are:

1. Effectiveness of widening participation outreach
2. Gaps in the student experience
3. What works for employment and employability
4. What works for mental health and disability.

The successful team will develop a map of the data required to effectively carry out the research projects - this will include (but is not limited to) the datasets listed below.

The [ADR England flagship dataset](#) most relevant to the work of YFF and TASO is the [Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) dataset](#). We want to support better use of this newly linked resource in research and connect the work of the community catalyst to the existing ADR UK funded programme for LEO - [Development and enhancement of Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) data](#) - including via the steering group.

Currently, the higher education (HE) sector has several national tracking services: the Higher Education Access Tracker, Aim Higher West Midlands, and the East Midlands Research and Evaluation Partnership. These all work independently to both each other and the ADR England flagship datasets.

When identifying priority gaps to fill in order to improve the quality, quantity, or accessibility of data for accredited researchers, it would be helpful to also consider the practical obstacles - and potential solutions - that affect access. We should further explore the opportunity for linking national HE data trackers with administrative datasets (including LEO).

In addition to the above, YFF and TASO are keen to explore:

- young people's work and its nature
- the relationship between family, parental experiences, and youth transitions
- consistent approaches to implementing 'flags' in the data that allow us to track certain groups.

Such ideas can be explored once the community catalyst award has started, including via the steering group.

## **2. Build capacity for academic research using administrative data**

Administrative data in this area is underused. Award holders will build the capacity of data users within the sector through a variety of activities and training on accessing and using relevant administrative datasets. Where relevant, this work should consider extending training opportunities to policymakers, practitioners, and evaluators with an interest in data analysis across the sector.

## **3. Develop a diverse administrative data research community**

The sectors supporting youth transitions would greatly benefit from having a centralised team to lead a research agenda that incorporates policy, services, academic institutions, national data tracking services, and sector organisations.

YFF and TASO are particularly interested in discovering effective ways to mobilise knowledge and skills within the sector and can identify relevant stakeholders, facilitate introductions, and co-host the community.

YFF and TASO can also promote strategic collaborations to enhance the quantity and quality of research and evaluation using administrative data, including those identified in the 'Stakeholders of Interest' section below.

## **4. Address research priorities: Embedded Fellowships**

As described in the [main funding opportunity specification](#), the Youth Transitions Community Catalyst will use the delegated research budget to add one or two Early Career Researchers (or an accredited researcher new to administrative data research) to the team.

The Fellow(s) will undertake a project using [ADR England linked administrative data](#) via an ADR UK [trusted research environment](#) that addresses research priorities identified from 'Objective 1: Strategic research leadership'. For example, research into the disparities in employment and education outcomes relating to ethnicity, or research into the equality gaps of student success in higher education.

A member of the community catalyst team should provide supervision or mentorship to the Fellow(s) and work with them to agree the area of research. They should take into account the

Fellow(s)' interests and ideally identify interested stakeholders or opportunities for collaboration across the emerging community. In the spirit of diversifying the community, Fellow(s) from an additional institution are encouraged but not essential.

There is also a research pot available to the community catalyst team to undertake their own small-scale research. This should address priorities identified in the [main funding opportunity specification](#) under 'Objective 1: Strategic research leadership', and generally support Objectives 1 to 3. Research should ideally use ADR England linked administrative data via an ADR UK [trusted research environment](#), but given the scale of funding available this is not essential. Research activities should be suggested at the application stage, then confirmed following consultation with the Steering Group and considering the emerging research agenda.

## Scope

**Population of interest:** Young people aged 14 to 24, considering their experiences and outcomes from education to work including via higher education (and aged 24 and above for groups of interest such as care leavers and mature learners). Within this group we will focus especially on:

- young people from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds, particularly those from certain ethnic minority groups and less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds
- young people who are at risk of marginalisation (YFF is in the process of developing data- and research-driven definitions of 'marginalisation')
- young people with experiences of specific services and/or challenges (and the services associated with these challenges), such as around physical or mental health issues
- young people whose records across different administrative datasets are disrupted.

**Datasets of interest:** There are many explorable datasets on young people's transitions from education to work via higher education. There are also many relevant national-level linked datasets from the [ADR England flagship data portfolio](#), which are now (or soon) available for research via an ADR UK [trusted research environment](#). These include:

- Ministry of Justice – Department for Education Linked Dataset
- [Data First](#)
- Growing Up in England Dataset
- Longitudinal Education Outcomes Dataset
- ECHILD and extended ECHILD Dataset as well as
- [The Personal Cost of Health Conditions in Childhood Dataset](#).

Other standalone datasets include:

- [National Pupil Database](#), including School Census
- [Individualised Learner Record](#)
- [Higher Education Statistics Agency data](#)

- Department for Work & Pensions data on benefits use and involvement in programmes
- HM Revenue and Customs data on earnings and income
- UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) data
- [Inter-Departmental Business Register](#).

Beyond this, and depending on the research questions developed during scoping, further datasets of interest might include:

- The Children in Need Census and the SSDA903 data return, and any other statutory returns that might be relevant to our groups
- [Ministry of Justice offending management statistics](#)
- Health data
- Data from higher education national tracker services:
  - Higher Education Access Tracker
  - Aim Higher West Midlands
  - East Midlands Research and Evaluation Partnership.

**Related research projects or activity:** Below are samples of known related research or activities which could potentially inform the Youth Transitions Community Catalyst:

- The existing ADR UK-funded programme for LEO - '[Development and enhancement of Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) data](#)' - including via the Steering Group
- Work using the LEO dataset, such as the ADR UK-funded LEO pilot on [Social Exclusion and Educational Attainment](#) (YFF are part of the advisory group for this project)
- The Department for Work & Pensions Employment Data Lab
- YFF's [Connected Futures](#) programme, which funds local partnerships to use data in planning services for young people.

**Stakeholders of interest:**

- What Works Centres, in particular the Youth Endowment Fund, What Works for Early Intervention and Children's Social Care, Education Endowment Foundation, What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, the Centre for Homelessness Impact, and the What Works Network run by the Evaluation Task Force in the Cabinet Office.
- University networks, practitioners, evaluators, and associated relevant research centres
- Other relevant independent social and economic research organisations (such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the National Foundation for Educational Research, the National Centre for Social Research, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Nesta, the Office for National Statistics, RAND Europe, and Resolution Foundation)
- The [Youth Employment Group and its sub-groups](#)
- The ["operational companies" who receive Dormant Assets funding](#)

- Other funders and commissioners working in the youth and/or employment space (such as Nuffield Foundation, the National Lottery Community Fund, and government departments)
- Organisations delivering services directly to young people, and the infrastructure organisations who support them (such as Prince's Trust, Catch 22, UK Youth, National Youth Agency, Centre for Youth Impact, The Brilliant Club, and The Sutton Trust)
- Employers and employer infrastructure bodies interested in recruiting and retaining more young people, and in the evidence base (such as CIPD, the Federation of Small Businesses, British Chambers of Commerce, CBI, Social Mobility Commission, and Social Mobility Foundation)
- Relevant administrative dataset user groups (such as those using LEO data)
- Government departments with a stake in youth transitions, namely the Department for Work & Pensions, the Department for Education, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, HM Treasury, No. 10 Downing Street, and the Cabinet Office (NB: the focus of YFF is England only, rather than the UK, but we do want to bring in knowledge from outside England)
- Regional and local government, especially in areas of the country where we have active projects (to be advised)
- UCAS
- Higher education national data tracker services:
  - Higher Education Access Tracker
  - Aim Higher West Midlands
  - East Midlands Research and Evaluation Partnership
- Higher education institutions and academic researchers
- Higher education charities and sector organisations (such as The Brilliant Club and The Sutton Trust)
- YFF Evaluation Advisory Panel and Expert Advisory Group, which oversee its programmes evaluating youth employment and education interventions.

### **Additional support from Youth Futures Foundation and the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education**

- Supporting the establishment of a steering group
- Being a member of both the relevant steering group and overarching Monitoring and Evaluation Group
- Hosting the successful team with desk space whenever they need in either London, Leeds, or Birmingham hubs of Youth Futures Foundation
- Providing access to meeting rooms at the [Evidence Quarter](#) in London for steering group or other themed meetings

- Promoting information and insight sharing, including providing access to newsletter and dissemination channels
- Co-hosting community events
- Identifying relevant stakeholders and facilitating introductions
- Assisting with activities and events
- Sharing knowledge of the evidence gaps under each research theme
- Contributing to a proposal on the sustainability of the outputs and momentum generated during the community catalyst award, as well as recommendations for the future strategic direction of the use and development of data and translation of evidence into practice.