Bradford City FC Community Foundation Peer Action Collective

Toolkit

Real Voices | Real Change | Youth Leading the Way

BRADFORD CITY
FOOTBALL CLUB
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

PAC
PEER
ACTION
COLLECTIVE

About the Bradford PAC Team

The Bradford Peer Action Collective (PAC) is a group of young people working with Bradford City FC Community Foundation to lead research into issues that matter, including youth crime and violence, safety and barriers to accessing positive activities. Using their lived experience and local knowledge, the team connects with young people across Bradford to listen, learn, and lead change.

Why We Created This Toolkit

This resource has been developed by the Bradford PAC team as a practical guide for organisations working with young people. It captures our learning from youth-led research and social action, with real insight into what's happening on the ground and how to respond. From understanding barriers to taking action, this toolkit supports others to involve young people meaningfully in shaping safer, more supportive communities.

If you would like any further information, please contact:

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Funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, the **#iwill Fund** (a joint investment between The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) and the Co-op, the PAC is here to support young people to take the lead.

Through the Peer Action Collective (PAC) young people are working to make their communities safer, fairer places to live.

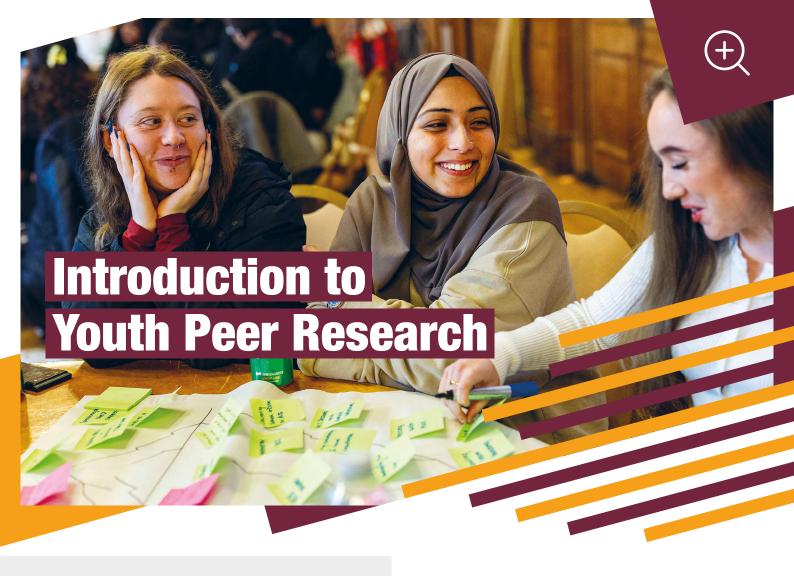# Contents

Introduction to Youth Peer Research

Youth Peer Research is research led by young people for young people. It's about building relationships, fostering understanding, and creating change through lived experience. When young people lead, they bring energy, real-world insight, and a unique perspective to the issues that matter to them.

What is it?

Youth Peer Research involves young people directly researching, reflecting, and sharing insights about the issues they face in their communities. They engage with their peers, share lived experiences, and work together to build a clear picture of the challenges and opportunities in their area.

Why Youth Peer Research Matters

Youth-led research offers insights that traditional approaches often miss. Here's why it's especially valuable for us at Bradford Foundation:

1. Trust & Honesty
Young people trust their peers more than adults. Shared experiences build instant trust, enabling deeper, more authentic conversations about their challenges.

2. Real-World Relevance
It's grounded in lived experience. The findings will reflect the real needs and real issues of young people in their communities, particularly when it comes to accessing local services, positive activities, and youth support.

3. Empowerment
Youth peer research gives young people a platform to shape their own futures. It equips them with the tools to create meaningful change in their communities and advocate for what matters most to them.

Key Takeaway:
The voices of young people are the most valuable resource in making decisions that impact their futures. When young people lead, they drive transformation from within.

Key components to Run Effective Youth Peer Research

Initial video:
Tackling Barriers

To run effective youth peer research, here are our recommendations:

1. Training & Support for Youth Researchers

Top Tip: Provide robust training on research methods, ethical considerations, and how to engage with peers respectfully. Make sure youth researchers feel empowered as co-researchers, not just data gatherers.

Support System: Ensure that trusted adults (youth workers, mentors, or facilitators) are available to provide ongoing support, guidance, and encouragement.

Example: One peer researcher shared:

"I never thought I could lead a research project, but this training gave me the skills and confidence to do so. I feel proud of what we achieved."

2. Creating Safe, Inclusive Spaces

Top Tip: Foster a safe, inclusive environment where young people feel respected and valued. Confidentiality and peer support should be integral to the process.

Trusted Adults: Involve trusted adults to create safe spaces. These adults should listen, support, and help resolve any issues that arise, ensuring that young people feel heard.

Example: Quote from a youth participant:

"Having a trusted adult in the group helped me feel more confident. I knew I could share my thoughts without judgment, and they always listened."

3. Defining the Research Questions Together

Top Tip: Encourage youth-led discussions to define the research questions. This ensures that the research is relevant and meaningful to the group.

Collaborative Design: Make sure the young people have a say in the design of the research and that the questions focus on issues that are important to them.

Support for Action: Let the young people know that their insights won't sit on the shelf, support them to turn findings into real change through social actions.

Example: Bradford PAC started with the question: "**What are the barriers that prevent young people in Bradford accessing positive activities, that can prevent them from violence?**" which helped frame their project and address a pressing issue in their community.

Steps for Successful Youth Peer Research Projects

Step 1: Set Clear Objectives

Top Tip: Make sure the project has clear goals and an action plan. What do you want to achieve? What specific problem are you aiming to address? This will help guide the process and ensure the research leads to real-world solutions.

Example: The goals we had for our research were to identify barriers preventing young people from attending positive activities in the local area and recommend solutions.

Step 2: Select the Right Participants

Top Tip: Recruit a diverse group of young people who represent different backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives to ensure the research is inclusive and comprehensive.

Actionable Insight: Think about the different groups you want to engage, young people from different areas of Bradford, those who use local services, and those who may not be as engaged in formal activities.

Example: Involving youth participants from a range of social backgrounds to ensure that the research reflected the full spectrum of young people's experiences.

Step 3: Build Trust Through Mentorship

Top Tip: Pair young researchers with trusted adults who can provide mentorship, guidance, and emotional support. These adults will help the group stay focused and provide advice throughout the research process.

Real-World Insight: "The trusted adults we worked with were more than just facilitators. They were mentors who helped us stay focused on our goals and gave us the confidence to speak up when we needed to." Peer Researcher

Step 4: Conduct Interviews & Data Collection

Top Tip: Ensure that the interviews are open-ended and flexible. Encourage youth to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Use interactive and visual methods to make data collection engaging.

Actionable Insight: Use interactive tools like maps, posters, or activity trackers to help participants visualise and share where and why they engage with (or avoid) certain services or activities.

Example: In Bradford, researchers used mapping exercises to identify where young people hang out and pinpoint areas that lack accessible services. This visual approach helped them identify activity "hot spots" and "deserted" areas.

Step 5: Analyse and Reflect

Top Tip: Once data is collected, bring the group together to reflect on the findings. Analyse the data as a group and discuss the implications for change.

Collaborative Review: Ensure youth researchers review and interpret the results together to identify the underlying issues and potential solutions that they can take forward.

Impact & Real -World Examples

Youth researchers from Bradford City FC Community Foundation Peer Action Collective uncovered several barriers that young people face when it comes to engaging in positive activities:

Lack of Awareness: Many young people didn't know about the activities available to them in the area.

Transport Barriers: The cost of travel, limited awareness of discounted fares, and challenges with accessibility made it difficult for many young people to take part in local activities.

Lack of Safe Spaces: Young people expressed the need for safe spaces where they could connect with peers and trusted adults.

These insights led to several changes and initiatives that addressed these needs:

Digital Map for Local Youth Activities

One of the first initiatives that emerged from the research was the **Digital Map**, created to help young people easily find local positive activities in Bradford. This map was made accessible via mobile phones and desktop devices to ensure that young people could engage with it on their preferred platforms.

Bradford Council's Support: After its creation, Bradford Council played a key role by distributing the map to all schools in Bradford and uploading it onto Bradford Schools Online. The map was officially launched on 3rd February 2025 at Bradford City Hall, which was well-attended by key stakeholders and young people who had been consulted during the research process.

Current Efforts: We are now conducting surveys to gather feedback from organisations listed on the map to assess whether their footfall has increased. In addition, we are running surveys for young people to determine whether the map has been a useful tool in finding local activities.

Unlock **Bradford's** potential!

Roundtable on Travel Issues

In response to transportation challenges faced by young people, Bradford PAC hosted a roundtable event in March 2025, where youth, local services, and transportation providers discussed the lack of awareness around available public transport deals. Young people expressed that they were unaware of cheaper public transport options available to them.

⚑ **Transport Providers' Involvement:** Representatives from LNER, Northern Rail, and First Buses attended the event and contributed valuable insights. Following this meeting, First Buses expressed interest in setting up a youth forum with Bradford PAC. This forum will allow young people to share their experiences and provide input on public transport services.

🗟 **Quarterly Meetings:** A significant outcome of this roundtable is the decision to hold quarterly meetings with the First Buses marketing team. These meetings will provide a platform for continued consultation and collaboration with young people.

Tackling Barriers 2

Transport roundtable

PAC Bradford's Growing Role in Youth Advocacy

Bradford PAC has gained recognition for its ongoing work and is now part of the Bradford Youth Voice Team, which meets monthly with other youth service providers. This platform allows Bradford PAC to share youth insights, discuss ongoing initiatives, and ensure young people's voices are heard in decisions that affect their futures.

🗟 **Collaboration with Delivery Partners:** Through these monthly meetings, Bradford PAC Lead continues to connect with other delivery partners, ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of opportunities and resources available for young people in Bradford.

Next Steps: Call to Action

As we move forward with these initiatives, the Bradford City FC Community Foundation Peer Action Collective will continue to:

- **Evaluate the impact of the Digital Map, making necessary adjustments based on the feedback from both young people and organisations.**

- **Use the Travel Forum and quarterly meetings with First Buses to develop solutions that make transportation more accessible and affordable for young people.**

- **Engage with new stakeholders through the Bradford Youth Voice Team to build stronger, more supportive systems for young people.**

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Top Tips for Maximising Impact

1. **Empower the Youth:**

Give young people ownership of the project. The more responsibility they take, the more committed they'll be to achieving meaningful change.

2. **Involve Trusted Adults:**

Trusted adults should act as guides, not gatekeepers. They should create a supportive environment where young people can express themselves freely and make decisions together.

3. **Make it Relevant:**

Focus on the issues that matter most to young people in their local areas, from the lack of local activities to the need for more youth-led spaces. Ensure that the research leads to tangible, actionable results.

4. **Keep Feedback Loops Open:**

Allow young people to provide ongoing feedback on the research process and the findings. This ensures the research remains relevant and encourages continuous engagement.

Action Checklist for Youth Peer Research

- Recruit a diverse group of researchers
- Define the problem you want to address
- Provide training and support for youth researchers
- Create safe spaces for collaboration
- Use visual aids and interactive tools for data collection
- Analyse the results together to develop solutions
- Implement change based on findings

Concluding Thoughts

Bradford City FC Community Foundation Peer Action Collective is more than just a research project; it's a movement led by young people, for young people. When you give youth the tools and support to lead research, you create a platform for real change in your community.

Remember: Youth-led research isn't just about data collection, it's about building trust, empowerment, and transformation in the lives of young people.

10 Must-Do's

Bradford City FC Community Foundation recommendations to create a Safe Community for Young People

While having a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), robust safeguarding policies, and mandatory DBS checks is essential, organisations working with young people should also focus on enhancing these foundations by addressing barriers to participation and actively building a culture of safety, trust and accessibility. This means going beyond compliance to create environments where all young people feel welcome, heard and supported.

1. Strengthen Safeguarding Awareness Among Young People

Reasoning

While staff and policies are in place, young people must also understand their rights, recognise risks, and know how to report concerns in a way that feels safe and accessible to them.

Example Actions

- Develop youth-friendly safeguarding materials (posters, leaflets, videos) in plain language and multiple languages.
- Deliver workshops to educate young people on safe relationships, online safety, and recognising abuse or exploitation.
- Create a youth-friendly reporting system, including an anonymous option, so they feel comfortable raising concerns.

2. Recruit Staff & Volunteers Who Reflect the Community

Reasoning

To build trust, young people should see role models who understand their lived experiences, culture, and challenges.

Example Actions

- Prioritise hiring diverse staff from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Involve young people in staff selection panels to ensure recruits resonate with their needs.
- Provide cultural competency training for all staff to ensure inclusivity in communication and practice.

3. Enhance the Emotional & Psychological Safety of Young People

Reasoning

Young people may face mental health challenges, past trauma, or anxiety, which can prevent them from fully engaging in activities. The organisation must ensure they feel emotionally secure and supported.

Example Actions

- Train all staff in trauma-informed care so they understand behaviour linked to past trauma and know how to respond sensitively.
- Implement a Mental Health First Aider system at every session.
- Provide safe spaces within facilities for young people to retreat if they feel overwhelmed.

4. Reduce Financial Barriers to Participation

Reasoning
Many young people, particularly in disadvantaged areas, cannot afford to participate in sports and community activities. Removing financial barriers ensures equal access.

Example Actions
- Offer free or heavily subsidised programmmes for those from low-income families.
- Create a funding pot for essentials like transport, kit, and equipment.
- Work with local businesses and sponsors to fund bursaries for young people to join programmes.

5. Improve Transport Accessibility & Safety

Reasoning
A lack of safe and affordable transport can prevent young people from attending activities, especially in the evenings or from high-risk areas.

Example Actions
- Offer free or subsidised travel passes for participants.
- Partner with local transport services to secure safer, well-lit routes to venues.
- Establish a 'Safe Walk Home' initiative, where staff or volunteers accompany young people after evening sessions.

6. Foster Peer Support Networks & Mentorship

Reasoning
Having trusted adults is vital, but peer relationships also play a crucial role in making young people feel safe, supported, and engaged.

Example Actions
- Establish a Peer Mentor Program, where older or more experienced participants support new or vulnerable members.
- Train mentors in basic safeguarding and mental health first aid to identify and refer concerns.
- Encourage young people to take leadership roles in community events, helping them feel empowered.

7. Strengthen Community Partnerships to Support Young People

Reasoning
Collaboration with schools, youth services, and safeguarding agencies ensures a safety net for young people beyond football activities.

Example Actions
- Work with schools to identify at-risk young people who would benefit from Foundation mes.
- Partner with mental health organisations, youth services, and social care for wrap around support.
- Host joint training sessions with safeguarding and youth development professionals to share best practices.

8. Introduce Digital Safeguarding & Online Safety Training

Reasoning
Young people face increasing risks from online grooming, bullying, and exploitation. Digital safeguarding must be a core part of protection efforts.

Example Actions
- Run regular workshops on online safety, covering social media risks, cyberbullying, and responsible digital behaviour.
- Educate staff on spotting signs of online abuse and how to respond.
- Implement a social media policy for all staff and volunteers, ensuring safe and appropriate interactions with young people online.

9. Create an Open-Feedback Culture with Young People

Reasoning
For safety measures to be effective, young people must feel heard, valued, and involved in shaping policies.

Example Actions
- Set up a Youth Advisory Panel where young people can suggest improvements and raise concerns.
- Regularly survey young participants to assess their sense of safety and accessibility.
- Establish a 'You Said, We Did' system, showing how feedback is used to make real changes.

10. Continuously Review & Improve Safety Measures

Reasoning
A community's needs evolve, so safety strategies must be regularly evaluated and updated to remain effective.

Example Actions
- Conduct annual safeguarding audits, ensuring policies stay up to date with best practices.
- Hold quarterly review meetings with staff, young people, and parents to assess effectiveness.
- Use case studies and real incidents (anonymised) to reflect on lessons learned and improve response strategies.

By building on the existing safeguarding foundation, these actions ensure that the Bradford City FC Community Foundation continues to be a safe, accessible, and trusted place for young people. Addressing financial, emotional, transport, and digital barriers will help even more young people engage in positive activities with confidence.

"**I never thought I could lead a research project, but this training gave me the** skills and confidence **to do so. I feel proud of what we achieved.**"

Peer Researcher | Bradford

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