



Lessons from Collaborative Research

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Adapted by Rammiza Akhtar from a study by the Centre for Youth Impact delivered for the Cornerstone project

Partnerships in research are beneficial. They can help provide a space for discussing ideas, collaborate across projects and work towards a collective goal. The aim of this study was to gain a deeper insight into motivations, enablers, and barriers of collaborative research

This brief provides an overview about developing partnerships in youth work research, as well as key takeaways from doing collaborative youth work research. The aim of this brief is to aid practitioners' understanding of developing partnerships in research and the lessons learnt from this.

This brief...

- Provides an understanding of what collaborative research is and its benefits within the youth work sector
- Helps determine some of the key lessons that emerge from doing collaborative research thus help develop more robust methods doing this going forward
- Clearly lays out fundamental practice guidelines for collaborative research

What is collaborative research?

Broadly speaking, collaborative research involves the coordination between researcher, institutions, organisations, and/or communities.

Collaborative research is important because:

- By combining resources an organisations can maximise the volume of output generated by their sector as a whole. This in turn will help attract more funders and contribute to long term policy change.
- Saving money and time.
- Establishes effective communication through partnerships.

Benefits of collaborative research in the youth sector

For youth organisations	For researchers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To fill capacity and skills needs within a community organisation• To reach people to take part in the research• To expand networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To reach people to take part in the research• Desire for research to be useful• To improve research practice and the evidence landscape

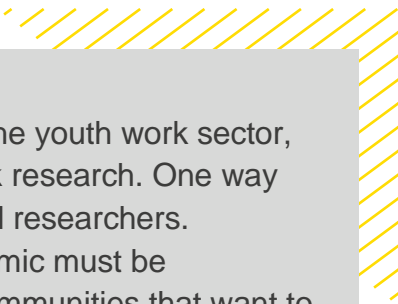
Key findings

Motivations affect the research's nature - when doing research, a relationship is formed between the motivations to do research and the type of research carried out. For instance, if the reason for doing the research is to fill a skills gap then it is more likely focussed on the organisation's delivery.

Strong relationships and mutual benefit are vital - though some relationships between collaborators are sometimes more transactional (like client-consultant), forming a strong relationship that is based on shared values and respect is key to the collaboration being successful. Many of those asked stated that regardless of the formation of the relationship, it is important it is mutually beneficial.

Increase in reach and engagement is a key motivation - one of the key motivations of collaborative research was to expand reach and engage with new people through research. Community organisations and researchers both felt that collaborative research allowed the sharing different perspective.

Collaborative research can challenge power imbalance - academic researchers acknowledged shortcomings of carrying out collaborative research in academia, whereby "doing research **on** people and **not with** people" creates a power balance. As a result academics who took part in collaborative research said they would make efforts to challenge the power imbalance and improve research by making it more participatory



Due to the growing demand of evidencing work in the youth work sector, there is a drive to enhance the quality of youth work research. One way this can be achieved is by working with professional researchers. Therefore, it is important that the work of the academic must be actionable within a community. Working with the communities that want to make a change is a way of achieving this.

How to develop successful partnerships?

Be clear and respectful about goals from the start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect other people's experiences and expertise • Agree on timelines and research aims before starting • Establish how the research conducted will benefit all involved
Set clear boundaries and roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be upfront about intentions of the research e.g. is this a long term or short collaboration? • Know your own strengths and weaknesses and be aware of when you may need someone else to step in • Ensure everyone knows which aspects of the research are flexible and which are not
Align research activities with the practices of the youth organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful of other people's priorities and aims • Embed safeguarding into your research with young people • Ensure that there are opportunities for youth voice to drive the research
Be transparent and iterative during the research process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create spaces to discuss what isn't working and what is • Keep lines of communication open • Listen to concerns and work towards solutions • Establish a shared accountability system that fosters openness to critical feedback