

Young Lives, Young Futures

What is Young Lives, Young Futures?

Young Lives, Young Futures, is a major national 5-year study being carried out by a team of researchers at King's College London and the Edge Foundation. The study is investigating how England's vocational education and training system can better support the education-to-work transitions of the 50 per cent of young people who don't go to university. Routes into further education, training and employment for this diverse group of young people are often characterised by complexity, instability and uncertain prospects. Currently, 12 per cent of 18-24 year olds are not in any form of formal education, employment or training.

How are we doing this research?

The research team is using a combination of different data collection methods across the life of the project, including:

- National-level statistical analysis of student destinations.
- A national longitudinal survey of over 10,000 young people living in different places, asking them to report on their values and aspirations, the support and resources they feel able to draw on to as they make their education, work and future life choices and the barriers they encounter.
- 500 in-depth interviews with policy makers, practitioners, young people and their parents/carers in contrasting areas. These interviews will provide more detailed insights into who is getting access to which opportunities, what young people value, how they exercise their agency, their experiences of navigating a transitions landscape in which they are differently resourced and positioned, and the implications of all of this for equality, policy and professional practice.

Who is funding this research?

This project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which is the UK's largest funder of research on economic and social issues. Read more about their work [here](#).

Who are we doing this research with?

The project and its data collection are focussed on the 15–20-year-old age group and have a particular emphasis on engaging with the perspectives of young people themselves, including those who are more marginalised and whose voices are not often heard in policymaking.

Interviews are also being conducted with the parents/carers of some of the young people who are participating in the research and with policy makers and practitioners active in different areas of England.

What do we hope to get out of this research?

This research is guided by the principle that, to make education-to-work transitions more equitable, we need to fully engage with:

- Different dimensions of equality and the challenges of realising equality in practice.
- Combinations of different kinds of advantages and disadvantages experienced by young people across England.
- How the range of possible opportunities open to different young people interacts with their life experiences, values and agency.

The research will help policymakers develop greater insight into young people's lives and support reflection on how the tensions involved in simultaneously addressing different dimensions of inequality can best be managed. This will in turn help to ensure that policy is more sensitive to the complexity both of young people's experiences and of inequality; and hence more successful in creating more navigable and equitable education-to-work transitions for young people not taking the university route.

The research team will also engage closely with practitioners working in vocational education settings, in organisations that play a role in supporting young people, and in grant-making organisations in the field. This engagement will be focussed on:

- Helping to improve support for learners in schools and colleges.
- The career development and learning of young people in the workplace.
- Careers guidance and transitions support for those not in formal education or, for other reasons, unlikely to engage with school or college-based advice.
- Building capacity in the effective use of research to inform policy and practice development.
- Providing evidence of the kinds of initiatives young people experience as most effective.

In addition, we will work collaboratively with groups of young people to help them reflect on their transitions, increase awareness of effective strategies for navigating transitions and support the development of their advocacy skills.

How can you stay up to date with project?

You can read more on the most recent project developments via the Young Lives, Young Futures [official project website](#), or through our social media channels ([Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)).