

***Title:*** *An investigation into the relevance of shared mental models in youth work settings, supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes.*

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## DECLARATION FORM



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## **ABSTRACT**

*This research demonstrates the relevance of shared mental models (SMMS) in developing the effectiveness of youth work teams. Much of the literature states that SMMs are crucial for team efficacy in healthcare settings, business, and aviation, although there is limited research about their development. Cooper et al. (2016) explored teamwork and collaboration, critical elements of SMMs, specifically in mental health services, and their importance in achieving positive outcomes for young people. Similarly, Fox (2022) researched a team of experts in social work education, discovering that cohesion and team support, again critical factors of SMMs, are essential for positive outcomes. Therefore, given their widespread use, SMMs have proven valuable tools in numerous sectors. However, utilising and developing SMMs in youth work have not received much attention in the literature.*

*Literature was scanned for constructs relating to supporting young people in youth support environments, primarily from UK websites such as the National Youth Agency (2024), The Centre for Youth Impact (2023), The Prince's Trust (2024), Youth and Policy (2024) and What Works for Children's Social Care (2024) were also used.*

*The methodology utilised a quantitative approach, which involved a ranking questionnaire to gauge the alignment of perceptions among team members in a charitable organisation that supports young people. Ten constructs were derived from the literature and used for a questionnaire. The study aimed to determine the extent of shared understanding among small teams in close and supportive environments, ultimately aiding young people in achieving positive outcomes and transitioning to independence. To this end, the presence of an SMM was evaluated.*

*The study revealed a degree of agreement in mental models within the team and significant disparities in priority setting. These disparities present opportunities for enhancing SMMs to boost team effectiveness and facilitate more positive outcomes. These findings underscore the potential of SMMs to address issues arising from restricted resources and the complex support requirements of young people, particularly during the post-COVID recovery period (Jefferies and Smith, 2010; Rhodes and Dubois, 2008) and with the large cohort of young people currently transitioning to independence (OECD, 2024). This potential offers a beacon of hope for improving youth support services.*

*This study offers a new perspective on how to work more effectively with what we already have, given cost-cutting, recruitment and changing governmental priorities, to ensure that young people receive the best available support. It underscores the transformative power of SMMs in bolstering team effectiveness, particularly within youth support services. It asserts that SMMs are critical in enhancing organisational performance, aligning with the literature on the transformative power of integrated team mental models (Jonker et al., 2010). The research advocates for targeted SMM development training as a strategic approach to fortify the functionality of youth support teams. It also calls for further investigation into effective SMM strategies and recommends that*

*organisations invest in training programs that promote comprehensive, mutual understanding among team members. This research has found that SMMs are an important element of effective teams in many support environments other than youth work. Accordingly, the sector should consider its importance in improving the outcomes for young people against a backdrop of ever-decreasing support resources.*

## **ACRONYMS**

YP	young people
SMM(s)	Shared Mental Model(s)
YWWRG	Youth Work in Wales Review Group
CLDSCS	CLD Standards Council Scotland
BERA	British Educational Research Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the rapidly evolving landscape of youth support services, the importance of examining the effectiveness of youth work teams has never been more pressing. This urgency is emphasised by the increasing number of young people (YP) needing support, particularly in the post-COVID era (GOV.UK, 2022). Compounded by a significant reduction in funding, a staggering 64% decrease in real terms between 2011 and 2022 (Hobson et al., 2024), and a shortage of youth workers (YMCA, 2022), it is imperative to optimise the available resources to ensure that YP in supported environments receive the appropriate support for positive outcomes.

Against this challenging backdrop, this study makes a unique contribution by examining the role of teams (Cooper et al., 2016) in supported youth work settings (Rhodes and Dubois, 2008) in aiding YP (Jefferies and Smith, 2010) to achieve positive outcomes. It specifically investigates the significance of a shared mental model (SMM) (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993; Scheutz et al., 2017) in enhancing team support effectiveness, a perspective that has yet to be extensively explored in the existing literature. The study examines the role of teams in supported youth work settings in aiding YP in achieving positive outcomes. It specifically focuses on the significance of an SMM in enhancing team support effectiveness. SMMs are not just a tool but a testament to the power of collaboration within teams. They are an approach to teams working effectively and collaboratively towards a common goal (McComb and Simpson, 2013). According to Cannon-Bowers et al. (1993), an SMM is built on a shared understanding of the team's goals, processes, and individual roles. This shared

understanding enhances communication, decision-making, and performance within the team (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993; Scheutz et al., 2017). Jonker et al. (2010) further underline the relevance of SMMs in team settings, emphasising their role in maintaining performance and ensuring a shared understanding of a specific goal or task, contributing to positive outcomes.

With YP aged 15 to 24 constituting 15% of the global population, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2024), their successful transition to adulthood is a worldwide priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly complicated this transition, emphasising the urgent need for coordinated support. As the largest group facing these challenges, the role of youth work teams in providing this support is more crucial than ever in the post-pandemic era. Additionally, with the Every Child Matters initiative (HM Treasury, 2003) following the tragic fate of Victoria Climbié, collaborative efforts among multiple agencies, working effectively as teams, have become crucial in child and mental health policy. However, issues surrounding service fragmentation and limited cohesion (Children and Young People's Mental Health and Well-being Taskforce, 2015) have negatively impacted children and YP. Therefore, if services aim to prevent the repetition of historical shortcomings, they must embrace innovative approaches to support the substantial cohort of YP currently transitioning into adulthood. This paper, therefore, offers a new perspective on youth work practices in supported environments by focusing on understanding and improving the effectiveness of teams supporting YP transitioning positively to independence.

Although the study is focused on a small cohort from a single organisation, this research is valuable for all individuals in youth work settings working as teams of individuals with different levels of expertise, skills and responsibilities committed to improving YPs' lives. Working in various sectors, such as education, youth work, pastoral support, residential settings, mental health services, and other supportive settings, often with limited or decreasing resources, the research provides a discussion on improving positive outcomes for YP by better understanding the importance of 'being on the same page' or otherwise termed, an SMM amongst the individual team members (Lim and Klein, 2006).

Specifically, exploring the concept of an SMM could be helpful for professionals dealing with complex challenges while supporting YP. This could be especially relevant when there are power imbalances, and individuals are trying to build alliances across partnerships, which may lead to conflicts. According to the literature, SMMs are used in multiple sectors, including healthcare (Edgar et al., 2021), business (Levesque et al., 2001), and aviation (Wilson, 2019), offering new perspectives for team collaboration. However, implementing them has challenges (Tofteng and Bladt, 2020; Rumping et al., 2019). Therefore, by drawing inspiration from industries that have effectively integrated SMMs, youth work teams dedicated to assisting YP have an opportunity to develop more cohesive and effective strategies for supporting this vulnerable demographic and make the obstacles worth overcoming. This is especially important with teams consisting of individuals working without direct dialogue (Dechurch et al., 2010, p. 550), often working on different sites but still part of 'the team'.

The author's extensive experience in the education and charity sectors has fueled her passion for empowering (Youth Work in Wales Review Group (YWWRG), 2022) YP to achieve positive outcomes. With over two decades of direct engagement with YP, many potential obstacles to effective support have been experienced. Accordingly, with a longstanding passion for effective youth development and the drive to constantly improve efficiency and effectiveness, this research looks at what can be improved amongst existing resources rather than focusing on the well-documented impact of reduced resources.

The study explores the role of SMMs in youth work, highlighting their critical role in promoting effective teamwork for supporting YP. It identifies SMMs as crucial for team communication, aligning goals, and informed decision-making, particularly for YP with adverse life experiences. It also points out that effective teamwork, underpinned by a robust SMM, is critical to addressing multifaceted challenges and improving YP's well-being and independence.

**The dissertation's aims and objectives are to:**

- Identify the degree to which an SMM exists amongst team members, working towards a common goal in youth work.
- The relevance of an SMM amongst team members, working towards a common goal in youth work.

The support of YP in supported environments is well-researched in literature (Brady et al., 2020; Berti et al., 2023; Capes, 2017; McDermott et al., 2021).

However, much of this research suggests top-down rather than bottom-up approaches in that YP's views of what is important for their progression to independence are not widely detailed. In youth support environments where different teams work to support YP, a single set of support objectives often forms the basis of what YP require to develop their independence, accepting the local adjustment for individual needs given individual circumstances. The research will look at whether there is a synergy, or collaborative thinking, between YP, the management of an organisation and the direct support environment with respect to the relative importance of these objectives. The term 'shared mental model' is a psychological term that refers to the synergy of 'similar thinking' between the stakeholders of a charitable organisation (Jonker, 2010). The research will look at the degree or otherwise of differences in an SMM and reflect on its relative importance through a wide range of secondary research on SMMs in achieving positive outcomes for YP.

To assess the presence of an SMM, each research participant will be asked to rank ten support-related constructs in order of significance. The degree to which these priorities are ranked will provide a level of similar thinking and prioritisation (an SMM) in achieving a positive outcome for a young person. The research will show how different considerations can be prioritised to provide further insight into how YP can achieve positive outcomes. The researcher created a ranking questionnaire (Appendix E) of approaches to supporting YP. The questionnaire was given to YP, support workers and supported lodgings providers from a charitable organisation. The study's participants were asked to rank ten different constructs based on their importance. The primary focus of

the research was to compare the rankings between the individuals and determine if there was any difference in their opinions and, therefore, whether an SMM existed. As the study participants were recruited from a single charitable organisation, the findings mainly apply to youth work settings involving small teams supporting YP.

The study's quantitative focus, rather than qualitative depth through focus groups, limited the exploration of key constructs important for YP's outcomes. Focus groups were considered but not conducted due to a lack of consent from the charitable organisation. This absence restricted a more profound, nuanced understanding relevant to the organisation's context (Ryan et al., 2014). Instead, the study relied on a single questionnaire, which arguably would not capture the complexity of SMMs.

The research was also limited in examining broader contextual factors, such as cultural and socioeconomic influences on SMMs, due to the scope of the study. Furthermore, the study's design potentially introduced selection bias by only including participants over 18 years old, possibly omitting perspectives from younger individuals. Although limited by scope and methodology, the researcher suggests that more extensive studies, incorporating focus groups and exploring SMMs across various age groups, could improve the findings' robustness and relevance. However, only participants from a specific charitable organisation in England and Wales were invited to the study.

The dissertation explores the importance of youth development, types of youth development, and specific teams and defines a team. It explores teams in youth work and team components before defining an SMM and its importance. It will consider the relevance of SMMs in youth work, the importance of teams working together to achieve positive outcomes for YP and identify the gaps in the literature. The paper will then outline a research study involving stakeholders' level of 'similar thinking' with respect to research-derived constructs from a ranking questionnaire (Appendix E).

Considering the methodology, methods, and data presentation, this study will then identify the level of an SMM among stakeholders—including support workers, YP and supported lodgings providers—all of whom contribute to positive outcomes for YP in a supported youth work environment. A comprehensive discussion, encompassing both the research study and secondary research, is presented regarding the presence and relevance of an SMM and its perceived importance within teams supporting YP. The limitations of the research are detailed before a range of recommendations are presented to enable teams in youth work settings to work more effectively and achieve increased outcomes for YP through more significant consideration of an SMM.

This research study first includes an extensive literature review of the key themes considered within the paper. Literature on the importance and relevance of youth development in various settings is detailed, and the relevance of teams in supporting YP to achieve positive outcomes is discussed. The literature review subsequently looks at the components of an effective team, specifically the concept of cohesion in improving outcomes and the

relevance of SMMs in maximising 'collective' team performance (Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994; Rentsch et al., 2001). Given the lack of literature on SMM within youth work settings, the literature draws on a wide range of examples of the effective use of SMM in similar settings.



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

According to the OECD (2024), the population of young people (YP) aged 15-24 is increasing. With many YP requiring coordinated support, especially after COVID-19 (France, 2016), this review will explore youth development and team effectiveness in fostering YP's transition to adulthood and independence. It will define a team, highlight teamwork examples, and introduce shared mental models (SMMs) and their significance in creating effective teams to achieve positive outcomes for YP, focusing on general and youth work settings.

A systematic literature review was conducted to identify, select, evaluate, and synthesise literature relevant to the research question (Moon et al., 2023) to examine the importance of SMMs in the context of teams working towards positive outcomes for YP transitioning to independence.

Major databases were used to identify the relevant literature (including ProQuest, Public Library of Science (PLOS), SCOPUS, PubMed, UWTSD library, and Google Scholar). No limits were established regarding the year of publication. However, research was focused on studies over the last 15 years. Several combinations of the terms were used, including SMMs, cognition, youth work, youth workers, teams, evaluation, YP, young persons, importance, positive outcomes, impact, and relevance, as well as closely related variations of these terms to establish additional search terms such as shared decision making, same hymn sheet, thinking the same, Agile teams, shared goals, collaborative working, and shared understanding.

Boolean operators AND, OR, NOT in title: and “ were used individually or in combination to define the search for relevant literature better (Rau, 2004). Articles were included for review if they were written in English and published in peer-reviewed journals where available.

## **2.2. Importance of youth development**

Keniston's (1971) theory, alongside Erikson (1968) and Levinson (1978), views youth as a transitional stage of role experimentation in late adolescence to young adulthood. Arnett (2000) introduces "emerging adulthood" as a distinct phase from ages 18 to 25, characterised by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and future possibilities. However, Arnett (2000) notes that not all YP see their late teens and twenties as transformative, with some missing out on this phase due to a lack of opportunities or choosing to limit explorations based on personal or situational factors.

The youth population aged 15 to 24 is the largest ever transitioning into adulthood, comprising 15% of the world's population (OECD, 2024). They have faced recurring crises in the past 15 years, with limited opportunities for engagement in shaping responses and recovery strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated their journey towards positive outcomes (Mexi, 2023). Consequently, YP's issues are increasingly at the forefront of policy discussions, recognising their role as development drivers. However, effectively addressing YP needs involves tackling multifaceted challenges (McCann and Brown, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015), including securing decent

employment, ensuring quality education, providing accessible youth-friendly health services, and fostering active citizenship.

For YP in social services or care, transitioning to adulthood can be incredibly challenging due to abuse, neglect, and disrupted attachments impacting development (Ford et al., 2024; Gonzalez et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2015). Disengagement from parents, school, and risky health behaviours are linked to poorer lifelong health and well-being (Patton et al., 2016). With the rise in children and YP in care (Selwyn et al., 2017), the focus has increasingly turned to understanding the critical elements that individuals, teams, and programs need to provide for better outcomes for these YP as they transition out of support services.

### **2.3. Types of youth development**

Youth work facilitates YP's personal and social development through informal education and voluntary participation (CLD Standards Council Scotland (CLDSCS), 2019; Welsh Government, 2019b), engaging them in motivating activities to reflect, plan, and act on experiences (Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), 2022).

Youth workers' interactions with YP positively affect their mental health, well-being, education, and employment (Wright and Ord, 2015). Referrals to specialist support are more efficient when a team of professionals is working to support YP in achieving positive outcomes (UK Youth, 2022).

Various youth development approaches in the UK aim to enhance YP's skills, learning, development, and well-being. Examples include uniformed groups like Scouts (Scouts, 2024), Guides (Girl Guiding, 2024), and Cadets (Ministry of Defence, 2021), Sports and Arts clubs (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2023), residential programmes (DofE, 2024), and youth-led projects (The Resilience Project, 2024), all utilising team-based support.

#### **2.4. Specific teams**

Look Ahead (2024) is a charity that provides tailor-made support, care, and accommodation services for individuals with diverse needs in southeast England, including London. Employing teams of both paid and volunteer workers, Look Ahead (2024) supports vulnerable YP and care leavers who may have experienced abuse, exploitation or have issues with alcohol or drugs that have impacted their mental health.

Steps Ahead employs teams to help YP develop skills for independence (Youth Employment UK, 2022). Centrepoint (Work For Good, 2022) and The Youth Justice Service (Brighter Futures for Children, 2024) similarly utilise teams to support vulnerable, homeless YP and those at risk of offending, respectively, providing services, accommodation, and aiming to prevent re-offending. Across the UK, youth hubs offer life skills, employment, training, and education advice (Department for Work and Pensions, 2022), with teams dedicated to supporting, encouraging, and aiding YP to thrive.

#### **2.5. General Definition of Teams**

Van Rensburg et al. (2022) argue that despite dedicated, skilful individuals collectively working together, teams can only be successful with strong teamwork skills. Defining teamwork has been debated over time, resulting in various categories, themes, and constructs (Salas et al., 2008). These include inputs, outputs, team competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Fernandez et al., 2020). Teamwork involves at least two people interacting to complete a task, characterised by effective communication, social skills, and collaborative processes like problem-solving and negotiation, aiming for a collective goal (Driskell et al., 2018; Fernandez et al., 2008; Lower et al., 2017). Work teams consist of members committed to a common objective (Holcomb et al., 2002), using diverse skills, roles, and responsibilities within a larger organisation to achieve specific goals through decision-making and task coordination (Moorthy et al., 2006; Reznick et al., 2003), relying on mutual dependency for success (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006; Salas et al., 2008).

Extensive psychological research over 50 years accentuates that even when teams possess high levels of expertise, resources, and a strong commitment to success, they can still fail if teamwork skills or cohesion are lacking (Hackman, 1998). More recent literature emphasises that a team's characteristics, the individual elements of the team, play a critical role in determining its effectiveness (Griffith and Dunham, 2017).

## **2.6. Teams in youth work**

The literature emphasises the importance of teamwork skills for YP's success and positive development (Gould and Carson, 2008; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2014; Cater and Jones, 2014). Youth workers employ tools like sports

(Haudenhuyse *et al.*, 2012), conversations (Jeffer and Smith, 2010), and activities (Hart, 2016) to build relationships with YP, fostering reflection, growth, and well-being. Collaboration is central to achieving effective outcomes, as it enables support workers and YP to understand each other's perspectives and align their intentions and actions within a group or team (Larson, 2007, *cited in* Cater and Jones, 2014).

Heffernan *et al.* (2017) highlight the integration of youth-adult partnerships in healthcare settings to enhance effectiveness. They acknowledge the challenges in environments like schools or research teams, where YP may be seen more as consumers than stakeholders due to potential power imbalances. The literature indicates that successful partnerships require flexibility, mentorship, genuine decision-making, and a mutual commitment to collective learning (Ramey and Rose-Krasnor, 2015). Such partnerships necessitate adaptability in skill demonstration and goal setting and an understanding that all participants bring unique skills, moving beyond prejudiced views of youth-adult interactions. Heffernan *et al.* (2017) emphasise that empowerment involves both parties, demanding a collective commitment to learning. However, attention is needed to address power imbalances that might hinder open communication, essential for effective problem-solving and positive outcomes (Ramey and Rose-Krasnor, 2015).

## **2.7. Team components**

In the general sense, there is extensive literature on what makes a team effective, considering both the psychological aspects and the interrelationship

of 'multi-agent systems' (Jonker et al., 2010, p. 2): teams of multiple individuals with their own decision-making capability that contribute to the overall outcome of the collective.

Much of the literature emphasises that team cohesion is essential for pursuing shared goals (Tekleab et al., 2009), while team learning is vital for collective problem-solving by transforming knowledge and skills from shared experiences (Ohlsson, 2013). Tekleab et al. (2016) note that both are vital for team performance and effectiveness and are essential for achieving successful outcomes. However, Fernandez et al. (2008) argue that a team's effectiveness can be compromised without an SMM among team members, sometimes at a high cost to resources and individuals (Kichuk and Wiesner, 1998). Yet, the benefits of teamwork include increased flexibility (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006) and creativity (Men et al., 2019), particularly when diverse individuals collaborate towards common goals. Therefore, organisations should focus on maximising team potential by encouraging the development of agreed SMMs. Langan-Fox et al. (2001) suggest that getting the team members to consider, reflect and establish agreed mental models would aid in achieving this.

## **2.8. Importance of SMM**

The definition of SMMs is presented in Chapter 1, and several authors purport that the presence of SMMs is effective in teams for communication, shared understanding of goals and decision-making (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993; McComb and Simpson, 2013; Scheutz et al., 2017; Jonker et al., 2010).

The extensive research literature on SMM (Lim and Klein, 2006) broadly divides several types of SMM into two main areas: team-related and task-related (Pia, 2021).

Team-related SMM is best considered where individuals work closely together and must consider social interactions, communication, and team dynamics. Task-related SMM is related to the understanding of what is needed by individuals working as a team to achieve a specific task. This element is more focused on team roles and responsibilities of individuals and is considered to have a more significant correlation with specific goals and positive performance outcomes (Mathieu et al., 2000; Mathieu et al., 2005).

According to Van Rensburg et al. (2022), SMMs are vital in helping team members within challenging and changing work environments. They are crucial for improving team performance across many sectors, including healthcare (Edgar et al., 2021), sports (Raue et al., 2021), business (Levesque et al., 2001) and aviation (Wilson, 2019). In emergency medical services, Fernandez et al. (2020) point out that effective teamwork is crucial for patient safety, and SMMs are critical regarding team coordination. Their study within primary care teams discovered that SMMs helped in unpredictable situations where teams shared a similar understanding of tasks.

SMMs within a team are shaped by both individual cognition and team dynamics, including how members interact and collaborate on new ideas and communication (Lee et al., 2004). The external environment also plays a



significant role in shaping the SMM and the team's performance. However, SMMs are dynamic; they evolve as external conditions, team roles, tasks, and goals change, necessitating adjustments in the team's mental model (Mohammed et al., 2010). The key to effective SMMs is not just adaptability but ensuring that changes in the mental model are consistently understood and accepted by all team members, maintaining a shared perception of the goal even when faced with changing circumstances.

Decision-making is crucial for supporting and developing YP in youth work settings (Gootman and Eccles, 2002). While the literature extensively discusses the role of SMMs in effective decision-making, the specific nature of this role varies across different studies (Denzau and North, 1994). The literature indicates that merely understanding a team-directed goal does not automatically lead to an SMM (Van den Bossche et al., 2011), partly because team members might interpret instructions differently due to varying perspectives (Badham and Bammer, 2017). Consequently, team members often form unique understandings of task requirements. Therefore, teams must agree on meanings and interpretations (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003), facilitating a convergence towards an SMM (Van den Bossche et al., 2011) on which the team can then work effectively towards a common goal that guides subsequent actions (Floren et al., 2018).

In exploring SMMs' importance in youth work with marginalised YP, the literature reveals a broad field emphasising the need for a shared goal understanding. Tofteng and Bladt (2020, p.112) introduce 'Upturned

Participation,' advocating for collaborative spaces in research and social work to shift power dynamics towards more collaborative efforts. This approach suggests that opening up to new perspectives can promote shared thinking among professionals who work with YP. Yet, challenges persist, as Rumping et al. (2019, p. 294) note that “norms, values, and individual characteristics” in youth and social work can hinder collaboration, even with agreed common goals. Ineffective communication, varied commitment levels, and past negative teamwork experiences can impact team effectiveness in supporting YP, leading to differing action priorities.

## **2.9. Relevance in youth work**

Research shows that SMMs benefit small, agile teams with diverse expertise aiming for a shared outcome. Hinds and Mortensen (2005) discovered that teams with an established SMM demonstrate greater coordination, adaptability, and problem-solving efficiency. In youth work, where YPs' needs and preferences quickly evolve, teams with SMMs are arguably more equipped to proactively address challenges and seize opportunities due to a shared understanding of goals despite varying approaches to work and action.

The need for adaptability and flexibility is evident in the complex issues youth workers and YP face, including placement breakdowns, school transitions, peer integration and family trauma, which intensify vulnerabilities, especially in social environments (Bryson et al., 2017; Parry and Weatherhead, 2014). These situations demand a deeper team understanding than other teamwork contexts. Youth workers, motivated by their commitment to improving YP's well-being and driven by care and compassion, view their roles as opportunities to enact

meaningful interventions (Sercombe, 2010). Thus, the focus shifts to the criticality of a team's shared understanding in realising these goals. It highlights the importance of creating strong, lasting relationships between mentors and YP, promoting positive development through team members working from the same cognitive model (Rhodes and Dubois, 2008).

#### **2.10. The importance of teams working together to achieve positive outcomes for YP**

Cooper et al. (2016) explored the impact of teamwork and collaboration among YP's mental health service professionals, emphasising its importance on service quality and YP's outcomes. In the aftermath of Victoria Climbié's death and the Every Child Matters initiative (HM Treasury, 2003), multi-agency collaboration became integral to child and mental health policy, aiming to offer "seamless services" (Cooper et al., 2016, p.325). Nonetheless, the UK Department of Health and NHS England (Children and Young People's Mental Health and Well-being Taskforce, 2015, p3) reported service fragmentation and a "lack of cohesion," adversely affecting children and YP.

Therefore, team mental models are highly valuable for individuals attempting to enhance team effectiveness. The literature suggests that individuals who adjust to accommodating effective teamwork rather than just following rules and directives contribute to teams' efficiency and productivity. Accordingly, over the past decade, teamwork has seen significant growth, with many workers now participating in team training in work environments (Langan-Fox et al., 2001). However, little research suggests extensive discussion around the importance of SMMs in achieving an effective team.

The literature indicates that a team's SMM of a task enhances performance by fostering similar cognition, enabling individuals to work independently yet collaboratively (Van den Bossche et al., 2011). In a small study (Fox, 2022), six youth work experts participated in a workshop to explore their lived experience of involvement in social work education. Participants found that cohesion and team support are essential to their positive experience of involvement. In addition, they identified their motivations for involvement, which encouraged them to challenge YP to improve their practice. According to existing literature, including an SMM in establishing cohesion and promoting team support appears to enhance the effectiveness of positive outcomes for YP.

A further study by Erasmus University Rotterdam examined YP's care workers' perspectives on effective teamwork, identifying three main aspects: inter-team member interactions, consistent team communication, and individual contributions (Buljac-Samardžić et al., 2011). However, variations in these viewpoints indicate diverse opinions among YP's care teams on what defines effective teamwork. This variation is central to this research, highlighting how differing perspectives can influence a team's efficacy in securing optimal outcomes for YP.

Carr (2022) discusses the difficulties youth workers face when collaborating with other services, especially for YP referred to mental health services or involved with youth justice. She highlights the importance of forming alliances across agencies and partnerships for cultural and systemic change, reducing

the risk of YP returning to harmful situations. However, Carr (2022) does not suggest how this can be done by establishing common shared thinking around a particular challenge, as seen in the literature in this research, which is essential to creating effective teams that can problem-solve independently against a common aim.

Carr (2022) examines how youth workers prioritise tasks daily to foster positive outcomes. Central to this study, the literature reveals that individuals naturally prioritise without an SMM based on their understanding of what is crucial for success. Mohammed et al. (2010, p.877) highlight how not being "on the same page" complicates coordinated efforts to support YP. Additionally, the rise of remote working—though beyond this research's scope—can further affect team coordination, task prioritisation, and overall effectiveness.

### **2.11. Gaps in literature**

The literature review reveals several gaps in research on SMMs in general and their use in youth work team settings.

Extensive research lacks an understanding of how SMMs develop in teams, especially in complex teams with constructive and co-construction conflict (Van den Bossche et al., 2011). Further investigation in these areas would lead to better developmental approaches to establishing better team performance and arguably better outcomes for YP in youth settings who rely on the effectiveness of the team they are part of or supported by.

In addition, interpersonal conflict among team members concerning SMMs, which may impact an individual's engagement and commitment, is poorly researched (Vîrgă et al., 2014). Understanding how this would impact teams in a youth setting where interpersonal dynamics can be complex, not least relating to a supported young person, would lead to better formation of effective youth support teams.

The impact of personality traits on developing and maintaining shared SMMs is notably lacking in existing research (Vîrgă et al., 2014). Although the broader literature acknowledges the role of varying personalities in team performance, there's a gap in understanding how these differences influence thought processes and action prioritisation, especially in support actions for YP in youth work contexts and requires further research given the link between cohesiveness and team effectiveness.

The literature on SMMs concerning their measurement and conceptualisation is wide and not agreed upon. Often measured in very specific, contextualised situations, the research suggests there needs to be a consensus on the best approach to capture the complexity of SMMs in teams (Van den Bossche et al., 2011). In youth work settings where team dynamics interact with wide-ranging challenges, often time-bound and complex, whilst simultaneously individual-specific and nuanced, further research could benefit positive outcomes for YP.

The literature addresses occupational and professional roles in team dynamics and SMM development. However, more needs to be researched on power,

control, and authority in establishing and maintaining SMMs, indicating a need for further study (Schilling et al., 2022). This is crucial in youth work settings, where YP are integral to their development team and interact with staff who arguably possess greater hierarchical power.

Further investigation into team dynamics, especially in youth work settings with varying power dynamics, could enhance the development, maintenance, and measurement of SMMs in areas where significant research gaps appear. Exploring the link between individual personality types and SMMs could also improve the selection and formation of teams and more effectively support YP in achieving positive outcomes.

## **2.12. Conclusion**

A literature review was conducted to identify, select, evaluate, and synthesise studies on the significance of SMMs in teams aiding young people transitioning to independence, including those from supported settings, estranged from families, and with histories of abuse, neglect, and disrupted attachments impacting their development and move to adult independence (Gonzalez et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2015; Moon et al., 2023).

Given the recent rise in the number of children in care (Selwyn et al., 2017), attention has rightly shifted toward a better understanding of the essential components that best support these individuals. This includes the importance of effective teams surrounding them if these increasing numbers are to leave their supported environment to achieve positive outcomes.

The literature highlights factors for effective teams, like members' knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Fernandez et al., 2020) and the value of diverse perspectives for better problem-solving and outcomes (Aranzabal et al., 2022; Belbin, 2010). It highlights the importance of including YP in the team and enhancing their teamwork skills for their success (Gould and Carson, 2008; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2014; Cater and Jones, 2014). Moreover, effective interaction between adults and YP necessitates flexibility, mentorship, genuine decision-making, and a shared commitment to collective learning (Ramey and Rose-Krasnor, 2015). The literature emphasises the critical role of individual beliefs, norms, and values in the team support process. Variations in these elements among team members affect team effectiveness, with divergences, despite shared goals, hindering cohesion and performance (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993). For teams supporting YP, this implies a decrease in their ability to secure positive outcomes for YP.

The literature not only discusses the varying actions of team members (Twemlow et al., 2023) but also emphasises the need for a shared understanding within the team (Jonker et al., 2010), a concept central to the formation of an SMM (Denzau and North, 1994; Lee et al., 2004). Research on how differences in SMMs affect team performance is extensive, yet applying general principles for identifying, measuring, and developing SMMs in specific contexts has proven challenging (Van den Bossche et al., 2011). This study contributes to expanding knowledge on SMMs' significance in youth work teams, an area underexplored despite the acknowledged impact of teamwork



and collaboration on service delivery and outcomes for YP (Cooper et al., 2016).

### **3. METHODOLOGY REVIEW**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will detail the methodological approach to the research and the methods used to collect data from three groups: YP, support workers, and supported lodgings providers, the hosts for YP. Understanding the researcher's rationale for their chosen methodological approach is crucial as it sets the context for the research and aids in comprehending the study's logic. Recognising the differences between research approaches (Taherdoost, 2022) is a crucial step in this process, as it allows the researcher to determine which approach best addresses the research question: investigating the relevance of shared mental models in youth work settings and supporting YP to achieve positive outcomes.

#### **3.2. Methodological Approaches**

##### **3.2.1. Quantitative research**

Quantitative research involves collecting and analysing numerical data using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques (Cresswell, 2014). The objective analysis and numerical interpretation of data aim to measure specific variables to generalise findings to a broader population (Trochim et al., 2016).

Quantitative research, with its ability to measure numeric differences, associations, and occurrences and predict outcomes across a population (Bryman, 2016), offers a structured framework that can lead to higher reliability (Field, 2013). However, it's essential to acknowledge its drawbacks, such as the need for more consideration of the complexity of human behaviour and

social phenomena (Cresswell, 2014) and its potential to be time-consuming, costly, and not offer meaningful insights when exploring new or unquantified phenomena (Trochim et al., 2016).

Quantitative research is effective for testing hypotheses and determining causality in psychology, sociology, and education, where objective data is needed for informed decisions (Bryman, 2016; Field, 2013).

In the context of this research, the use of a ranking is quantitative, discrete and ordinal. Discrete data are specific counts within a given range, while ordinal data are categorical data with significant value ranking (Agresti, 2012). As explained by Cresswell (2014), this specific application of quantitative methods involves collecting and analysing numerical data from different rankings. By clarifying this, the reader can better understand the specific application of quantitative methods in this study.

### **3.2.2. Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research explores human behaviour and experiences in natural contexts, emphasising meanings, concepts, and descriptions of things (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cresswell and Poth, 2018).

Qualitative research has the potential to unearth nuanced and comprehensive insights into the human experience (Patton, 2015), as it permits the researcher to explore the context and social meaning or social constructs and understand how individuals perceive their own experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It also offers flexibility for exploring complex topics and discovering new questions (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

However, qualitative research findings can be difficult to generalise due to smaller sample sizes and specific contexts studied (Maxwell, 2012). Qualitative research involves analysing non-numerical data, which can be time-consuming due to the extended periods of fieldwork, data collection, and analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Additionally, researcher bias can significantly impact data interpretation based on their perspective (Cresswell and Poth, 2018).

Qualitative research is a method for gaining insights into the lived experiences of individuals and communities and is commonly used in fields such as sociology, psychology, education, and health studies (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2015).

Utilising qualitative methods in a single study provides a holistic understanding of research problems. (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). This method combines data and narratives to analyse complex issues and overcome their weaknesses (Johnson et al., 2007).

Types of qualitative research include phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, case studies, and action research (Goulding, 2005). This type of research includes observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys. However, the researcher could not conduct in-depth research due to time and ethical constraints.

### **3.2.3. Mixed Methods Approach**

Using a mixed methods approach provides adaptability to diverse data types and sources, comprehensive insights into complex issues, and confirmation of research outcomes through triangulation. This approach enhances the credibility and reliability of results (Teddie and Tashakkori, 2009) while revealing

connections between variables and providing insights into statistical patterns (Creswell, 2014).

Effective research requires time, expertise, and finances. It is crucial to balance qualitative and quantitative elements and integrate complex data for meaningful analysis (Bryman, 2016).

Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research to address complex research questions, accommodate multiple perspectives and generate actionable insights (Greene, 2007). It is commonly used in health sciences, education, psychology, and social sciences, particularly in evaluations, policy research, and studies that explore multifaceted or new issues (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

Due to time and ethical approval constraints, this research study adopted a quantitative approach as it was impossible to adopt a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach would have been more beneficial given that it is a small-scale, nuanced study exploring human experiences. Focus groups would have ascertained the questionnaire's constructs and arguably been more in-depth and nuanced. However, those constructs may have been organisationally centric outcomes to what this study attempted to achieve - a more comprehensive study of youth work and supporting YP. Therefore, deriving them from a wide range of literature and secondary qualitative research offers more relevant constructs to broader youth work settings.

### **3.3. Theoretical Perspectives and Philosophical Considerations**

Ontology and epistemology are critical elements in research methodology. Ontology explores the nature of existence and beings, focusing on entities present in research and their interrelationships (Suddaby, 2016). Epistemology concerns the theory of knowledge, specifically the methods, validity, and scope of knowledge acquisition (Bryman, 2016). These philosophical foundations shape the research approach, design, and methodology.

Ontology and epistemology are critical in ensuring research is conducted coherently and systematically, providing a philosophical framework guiding the entire research process. Recognising and articulating one's ontological and epistemological positions is crucial for the transparency, rigour, and validity of research findings (Bryman, 2016; Suddaby, 2016).

Research projects can have a realist or constructivist perspective. Realism suggests that entities exist independently of our perception, while constructivism argues that reality is subjective (Crotty, 2015). This distinction shapes research questions, objectives, and interpretation of findings.

Epistemology refers to how researchers believe knowledge can be acquired and verified, influencing the methodology choice. Positivism aligns with quantitative methods, relying on observable, measurable facts. Interpretivism aligns with qualitative methods, emphasising subjective experiences and meanings (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

The researcher has taken a constructive perspective alongside a positivist epistemology for this research study, combining quantitative and qualitative or thematic analysis methodologies. While the study uses quantitative data as a questionnaire, the constructs used to design the questionnaire to gather the

data were taken from secondary qualitative research. The researcher's positivist epistemology relied on measurable facts to generate knowledge about the existence of an SMM. However, the researcher acknowledges that there are limitations to the study as a mixed methods approach would have been more beneficial. A qualitative research method like focus groups would have collected more specific and nuanced data (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). However, focus groups would have produced a narrower list of constructs for the ranking list, which would have been more specific to the organisational setting of the study. A mixed methods approach would have allowed an interpretive epistemological stance that fits more morally with the researcher, explicitly allowing for deeper immersion in the study to understand the research participants' experiences and perspectives.

### **3.4. Design and Methods**

#### **3.4.1. Sample Size**

The researcher studied peer-reviewed articles, papers, and journals over the last ten years. Specific keywords such as youth work environments, youth workers supporting YP, YP achieving positive outcomes and Boolean strings for efficient literature searching were used to produce a list of constructs to include in a ranking questionnaire to be completed by twenty-one individuals from three discrete groups of seven individuals. The groups represented support workers, YP aged 18-21, and supported lodging providers who accommodated YP estranged from family support.

Literature was scanned for constructs relating to supporting YP in youth support environments, primarily from UK websites such as the National Youth Agency (2024), The Centre for Youth Impact (2023), The Prince's Trust (2024), Youth and Policy (2024) and What Works for Children's Social Care (2024) were also used.

There are disagreements on ways of gathering information with respect to the level of SMM within a team, not least given the complexity and disagreement of the constructs relating to a positive SMM (Mohammed et al., 2010). Questionnaires that use Likert scales (Levesque et al., 2001) and ratings of actions presented in brief scenarios (Webber et al., 2000) are helpful in measuring shared cognitive content among team members. However, they do not capture the underlying organisational structure of the knowledge area, which limits their ability to provide a complete understanding of the subject matter being studied. According to Mohammed et al. (2010), paired comparison ratings are the most commonly used method in measuring mental models.

The researcher designed a ranking questionnaire (Appendix E) of approaches to supporting YP to collect data from three groups: YP, youth support workers, and supported lodgings providers. The participants are part of a charitable organisation providing supported accommodation for YP across England and Wales as they transition towards adult independence. By analysing the different rankings, which represented different views of prioritisation of approaches and, therefore, different ways of thinking, the research aimed to explore the degree to which common thinking, or an SMM, existed between each group.



The research groups consisted of support workers employed by the organisation, who provide direct support to YP daily; supported lodgings providers employed by the organisation, who provide accommodation within their own homes to YP; and YP themselves, whom both the supported lodgings providers and the organisation support. The researcher invited all participants, regardless of gender, to complete the questionnaire. Invitations were sent to potential participants via a manager to uphold their anonymity.

Ten constructs were selected as the most common after reviewing extensive secondary research. The selection was made from an initial list of 30 constructs through a thematic analysis. The constructs included authenticity, developing resilience, employability, integrity, interpersonal skills, money management, practical independent skills, problem-solving and self-motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem and teamwork. The participants from three research groups were asked to rank various important constructs, with the highest ranking being the most important. The research primarily focused on comparing the rankings between three groups to assess the presence or absence of an SMM.

#### **3.4.2. Data Analysis Methods**

The research looks at both elements of SMM. Still, it is best seen as a study of mainly task-related SMM, where individual team dynamics, team interactions, and communication patterns are secondary to the cognitive understanding of roles, responsibilities and prioritisation of actions of team individuals. Task-related SMM argues that team individuals can better coordinate and organise task and team-related knowledge and more effectively prioritise priorities and

strategies to achieve better outcomes, where the value of shared task knowledge is critical (Mathieu et al., 2000, p. 275).

The aim was to provide a basis for discussion that facilitates a structured approach to understanding differences and creating team environments where different perspectives can come together to ensure shared goals in youth work environments, especially environments where small teams are used to achieve positive outcomes for YP.

The existence of an SMM can be assessed using statistical approaches to compare the ranking of activity prioritisation between the three groups (Mohammad 2010).

Invites for the research study were sent out through the organisation across Wales and England. The researcher did not know the identity of the participants. The study participants were signposted to complete the questionnaire (Appendix E) online via MS Forms.

The participants were asked to rank ten constructs relating to supporting YP from 1 (highest) to 10 (lowest).

The researcher collected the first seven responses that represented each of the three groups (YP, Support Workers and Supported Lodgings Providers), totalling twenty-one responses. All replies via MS Forms were anonymised.

Once the data was gathered, the results from the seven individuals in each group were combined to provide a single mean-averaged ranking list that represented each group (3 rankings).

Each group's three averaged ranking lists were then assessed for their relative similarity of the ten prioritised constructs.

Specifically, the mean-averaged rankings were statistically analysed for similarities, using two statistical methods to increase the validity of the ranking correlation assessment (Shekhovtsov, 2021).

The analysis compared the correlation of the mean average ranking of the three groups' seven rankings using a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test (Zimmerman and Zumbo, 1993), Spearman Rank Correlation, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) test (Shekhovtsov, 2021). Each test compared two ranking combinations for similarity (i.e. Rank 1 vs. Rank 2, Rank 1 vs. Rank 3, Rank 2 vs. Rank 3). Rank 1 represented 'Young People' (YP), Rank 2, 'Support Workers' and Rank 3, 'Supported Lodgings Providers'.

Additionally, the rankings were tested for individual constructs that differed by three or more places amongst the three rankings to ascertain if there were any significant differences in specific constructs.

Limitations to using a mean average ranking to represent a particular group on which a similarity test was carried out were considered. Accordingly, within each group, the rankings of the seven participants were statistically analysed for similarity using a Friedman Test. The Friedman test was chosen as it is better suited to statistical analysis of more than two ranks or lists (Sheldon et al., 1996).

Again, the rankings were further analysed in addition to the general Friedman correlation test by looking for occasions where there were specific ranking differences of constructs of three places or more.

This allowed the researcher to see if a general correlation (using a Friedman Test) existed, to test for statistical significance (alternative hypothesis,  $H_a$ ), or if the null hypothesis could not be rejected ( $H_0$ ), in that the statistical correlation test proved inclusive and could be considered as occurring other than by chance. It is worth noting that not being able to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) does not confirm that a correlation does not exist; there may be a correlation, but specifically, it cannot be shown statistically to exist within a given statistical study.

### **3.5. Ethical Considerations**

According to Alderson and Morrow (2020), researchers must uphold ethical standards that respect human rights and dignity while contributing positively to knowledge of the study project. The ethical considerations are consent and privacy, data integrity, citation and plagiarism, confidentiality and anonymity, misuse of data, compliance with laws and regulations, societal impact, equity and representation (Bos, 2020; Haggerty, 2004; Israel, 2014).

Regarding consent and privacy, informed consent involves informing participants about the research project and allowing them to choose whether to participate (Appendix C) (Wiles, 2012). To protect participants' privacy and consent, researchers must ensure the proper use of data. An information sheet outlining research aims (Appendix D) was provided, and participants were invited to complete a questionnaire via a link to MS Forms. The information sheet addressed participants' rights, stating that participation was voluntary and that responses would only be collected upon completing the questionnaire.

As a secondary researcher, it is essential to assess the quality and reliability of the data used to ensure data integrity and accuracy. To accomplish this, the researcher followed the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) guidelines, scrutinised the methods used to gather the data, identified any potential biases, and verified the accuracy of the results. Using data selectively or misinterpreting it can result in ethical problems such as misrepresentation or misinformation.

Data is valuable information used for analysis. It can include facts, figures, and descriptions of objects, situations, or conditions (Coates, 2014). The data for this study was collected online and stored on an encrypted computer.

The anonymity of the internet allows researchers to study marginalised groups where participants may be wary of outsiders (Woodfield, 2017). Therefore, the researcher used an online tool, a questionnaire accessed via MS Forms, to minimise the risk that participants would not engage with the study.

Proper attribution to data sources is fundamental concerning citation and plagiarism, as failure to cite can be plagiarism and intellectual property theft, disrespecting original researchers (Bruton, 2014).

Another ethical consideration is that the researcher must maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the research subjects (Wiles, 2012). Secondary researchers need to exercise caution and avoid disclosing sensitive information that may lead to the identification of individuals. The participants' responses for this study were anonymised, as they received a link to an online form to complete the questionnaire. No sensitive data was collected besides age, role, ethnicity, and gender.

For compliance, various jurisdictions have laws governing data use, and the *Data Protection Act 2018* sets out the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Researchers must ensure that their use of secondary data complies with all relevant laws and ethical guidelines. The researcher was guided by their university supervisor and the university protocols regarding ethical compliance.

Researchers need to consider the societal impact of their work, including its contribution to public knowledge, policy, and the well-being of various communities (Pittaway et al., 2010). Although the risk to participants was minimal, the researcher included the contact details of the university representative in the information sheet. Participants could use these details to complain about the researcher's conduct during the study.

For equity and representation considerations, it is crucial to ensure that the research data accurately represents all the diverse groups in the study, as relying too much on specific datasets might lead to biases and underrepresentation of minority or marginalised groups (Pittaway et al., 2010). For the questionnaire, the researcher included questions that gathered statistics on participants' age, ethnicity and gender to ensure that the researcher did not inadvertently marginalise or exclude certain groups.

### **3.6. Research Limitations**

There were several limitations to the research study.

In both quantitative and qualitative research, there is a risk of generalising or over-generalising the results (Delice, 2010; Neusar, 2014). Due to the limited sample size of this research study, the findings may only apply to some youth

work settings where small teams work to achieve positive outcomes for YP. However, as the study merely aimed to explore whether an SMM exists, a small-scale study was more appropriate, and the recommendations for further research would address sample sizes for future studies.

The researcher acknowledges that the study was limited by quantitative rather than qualitative research and that focus groups were considered to establish the key constructs most relevant to achieving positive outcomes for YP. However, as the researcher required consent from the charitable organisation, the organisation could not approve focus groups. Although focus groups would have given a more nuanced list of constructs to rank, they could have potentially provided factors focussing on the specific context of the organisation where the research was being conducted. The researcher acknowledges that the absence of focus groups limited the depth of qualitative insights and that interactive discussions and diverse perspectives could have enriched the study (Ryan et al., 2014).

The constructs for the ranking questionnaire were obtained through extensive secondary research over the last ten years. This research provided a broader youthwork-centric list of constructs on which youth workers focus to achieve positive outcomes for YP, thus widening the relevance of this research.

The researcher acknowledges that relying solely on one questionnaire may not fully capture the complexity of SMMs. However, the research involved a single contact with the sample population to gather data, which minimised costs and allowed the researcher to complete the study within the time frame.

The researcher recognises that examining contextual factors, such as cultural and socioeconomic factors, that influence SMMs may be limited. A broader investigation involving diverse age groups and contexts would be necessary for a more comprehensive understanding. However, this would have involved a more extensive study and was not feasible within the scope of this research.

The study's design had the potential to introduce selection bias as it only included participants over 18 years old, who may have different perspectives than younger individuals. The steps taken to mitigate bias, such as random sampling and participant recruitment strategies, would be recommended for further research.

The researcher acknowledges that conducting larger-scale studies, including focus groups or exploring mental models across different age cohorts, can enhance the findings' robustness and applicability. However, this study was broad as invitations were sent out to recruit participants from within a specific charitable organisation across England and Wales.

### **3.7. Self-care**

The researcher recognised that the time spent conducting the study had a significant emotional impact. She established clear boundaries between work and personal life to safeguard her physical health and overall well-being. She sought assistance and guidance and turned to her university's dissertation supervisor and study support assistants. Additionally, to cope with the research, she sought support from fellow students, family members, and friends who empathised with her challenges while juggling a full-time job and academic pursuits.



## **4. PRESENTATION of DATA and RESULTS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The data from three groups, YP, Support Workers, and Supported Lodgings Providers, each consisting of seven individuals ranking ten constructs, were mean-averaged and initially statistically analysed for similarities using a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test (Zimmerman and Zumbo, 1993), Spearman Rank Correlation, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) test (Shekhovtsov, 2021). Each test compared two ranking combinations for similarity (i.e. Rank 1 vs. Rank 2, Rank 1 vs. Rank 3, Rank 2 vs. Rank 3). Rank 1 represented 'Young People' (YP), Rank 2, 'Support Workers' and Rank 3, 'Supported Lodgings Providers'.

### **4.2. Mean average ranking of constructs from questionnaire returns on which statistical correlation comparisons were carried out.**

#### **Rank 1: Young People (YP) ( $n=7$ )**

1. Develop Resilience (Average Rank: 3.14)
2. Practical Independent Skills (Average Rank: 3.57)
3. Self-Confidence (Average Rank: 4.43)
4. Money Management (Average Rank: 4.86)
5. Integrity (Average Rank: 5.14)
6. Problem-Solving (Average Rank: 5.71)
7. Interpersonal Skills (Average Rank: 5.86)
8. Authenticity (Average Rank: 6.14)
9. Employability (Average Rank: 7.29)
10. Team-Working (Average Rank: 8.86)

**Rank 2: Youth Workers (*n*=7)**

1. Self-Confidence (Average Rank: 3.0)
2. Develop Resilience (Average Rank: 3.43)
3. Interpersonal Skills (Average Rank: 4.43)
4. Practical Independent Skills (Average Rank: 5.43)
5. Problem-Solving (Average Rank: 5.43)
6. Money Management (Average Rank: 5.86)
7. Employability (Average Rank: 6.14)
8. Integrity (Average Rank: 6.57)
9. Authenticity (Average Rank: 6.57)
10. Team-Working (Average Rank: 8.14)

**Rank 3: Supported Lodgings Providers (*n*=7)**

1. Practical Independent Skills (Average Rank: 2.0)
2. Self-Confidence (Average Rank: 3.57)
3. Develop Resilience (Average Rank: 4.43)
4. Money Management (Average Rank: 5.0)
5. Problem-Solving (Average Rank: 5.29)
6. Integrity (Average Rank: 5.57)
7. Interpersonal Skills (Average Rank: 5.86)
8. Employability (Average Rank: 6.29)
9. Authenticity (Average Rank: 8.14)
10. Team-Working (Average Rank: 8.86)

The data (Figure 1) represents the mean average rank position of each of the three groups against each criterion. The mean average rank on the X-axis represents the level of viewed importance, with 1 (1st) being considered the most important and 10 (10<sup>th</sup>) the least important.

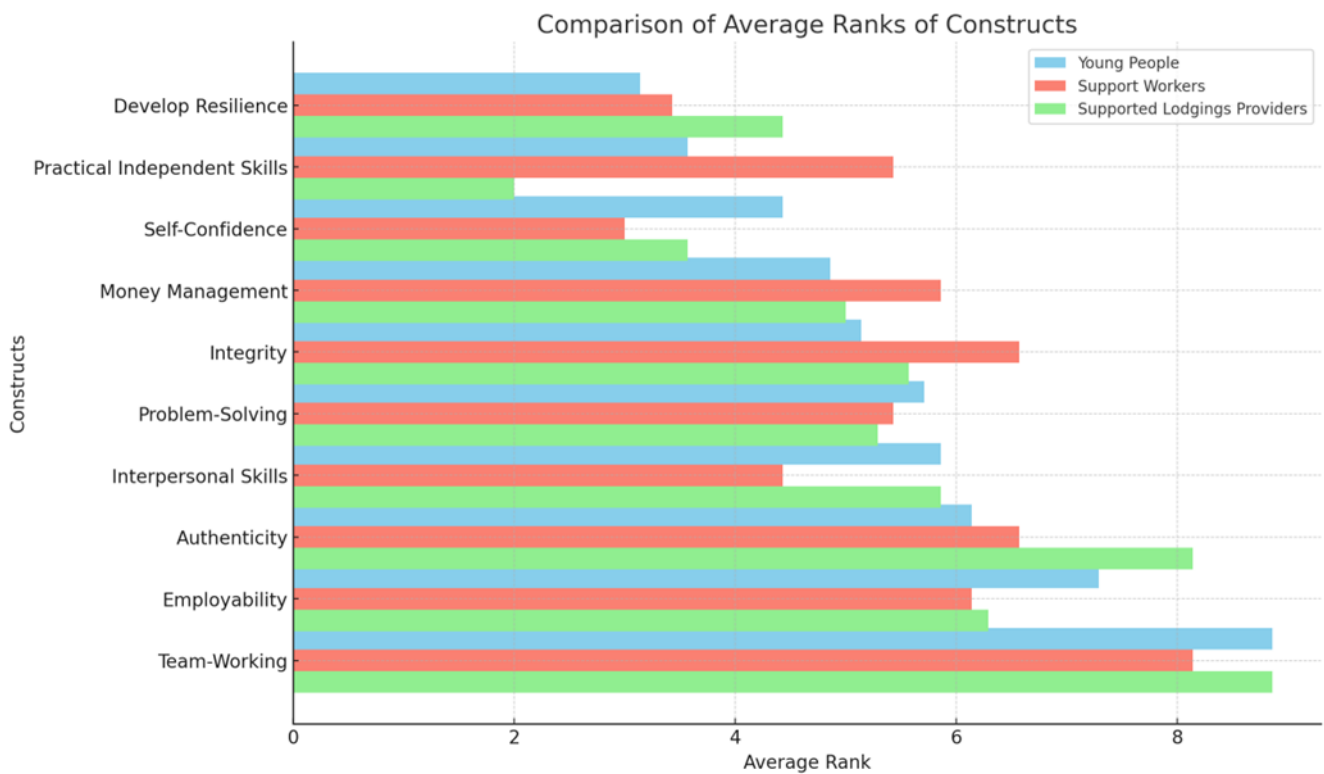


Figure 1

The data (Figure 1) shows YP ranked 'Practical Independence Skills' 2<sup>nd</sup> overall, considering the average ranked position of the seven rankings for the group ( $n=7$ ) with a mean average ranking ( $M$ ) of 3.57 ( $M$  3.57), with Supported Lodgings Providers ranking the construct 1<sup>st</sup> ( $M$  2.0). However, Support Workers, as a group, ranked 'Practical Independence Skills' 4<sup>th</sup> ( $M$  5.43).

All three groups consider 'Self-Confidence' important, with the construct placed in the top three for each. YP rank the construct 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $M$  4.43), Support Workers 1<sup>st</sup> ( $M$  3.0), and Supported Lodgings Providers 2<sup>nd</sup> ( $M$  3.57).

Similarly, all three groups consider 'Develop Resilience' important, with each group considering it to be in the top 3 of their average rankings. (YP. 1<sup>st</sup>. (*M* 3.14); Support Workers. 2<sup>nd</sup>. (*M* 3.43); Supported Lodgings Providers. 3<sup>rd</sup>. (*M* 4.43).

'Money Management' ranked at a similar level among the three groups, with very similar mean rankings (YP, 4<sup>th</sup> (*M* 4.86); Support Workers, 6<sup>th</sup> (*M* 5.86); Supported Lodgings Providers, 4<sup>th</sup> (*M* 4.43).

'Problem-solving' is also ranked similarly across the three groups of the mean averaged representative rankings: YP, 6<sup>th</sup> (*M* 5.52); Support Workers, 5<sup>th</sup> (*M* 5.43); and Supported Lodgings Providers, 5<sup>th</sup> (*M* 5.29).

'Integrity' is ranked similarly by both YP (5<sup>th</sup>. *M* 5.14) and Supported Lodgings Providers (6<sup>th</sup> *M* 5.57), while Support Workers rank it lower (8<sup>th</sup>. *M* 6.57).

'Interpersonal Skills' are again ranked in general agreement between YP (7<sup>th</sup>. *M* 5.56) and Supported Lodgings Providers (7<sup>th</sup>. *M* 5.86), with Support Workers (3<sup>rd</sup>. *M* 4.43) considering the construct to be of higher relative importance.

Support Workers rank the construct of 'Employability' higher than the other groups (7<sup>th</sup>. *M* 6.14), with Supported Lodgings Providers ranking it at 8<sup>th</sup> with a similar ranking mean average (*M* 6.29). YP rank it second last (9<sup>th</sup>. *M* 7.29).

'Authenticity' is ranked similarly across all three groups (YP, 8<sup>th</sup> *M* 6.14; Support Workers, 9<sup>th</sup>. *M* 6.57; Supported Lodgings Providers (9<sup>th</sup>. *M* 8.14). However, Supported Lodging Providers' significantly lower mean ranking (*M* 8.14) would indicate that it has been consistently ranked lower across the seven individuals within that group compared to the other two groups (YP and Support Workers).

'Team-Working' is consistently ranked the lowest in importance across all three groups, both in terms of their relative positions and their mean averaged scores (YP, 10<sup>th</sup>. *M* 8.86; Support Workers, 10<sup>th</sup>. *M* 8.14; Supported Lodgings Providers. 10<sup>th</sup>. *M* 8.86).

Overall, comparing the mean averaged ranking of constructs indicated a general positive correlation of ranking positions between the three groups (YP, Support Workers, and Supported Lodgings Providers). However, the data showed three areas with individual significant ranking differences (three places or more).

### **Interpersonal Skills**

- YP (Ranked 7<sup>th</sup>) vs. Support Workers (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- Supported Lodgings Providers (Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> vs. Support Workers (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>)

### **Integrity**

- YP (Ranked 5<sup>th</sup>) vs. Support Workers (Ranked 8<sup>th</sup>)

Scatter plots for these three constructs (Figure 2) visualise the variation in ranking across the three lists. Each axis represents one ranking list, and each point represents the ranking of the construct.

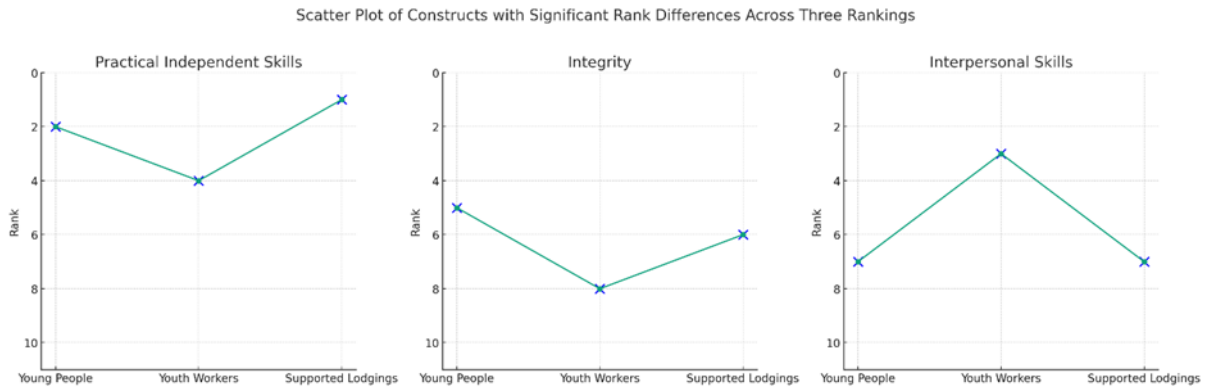


Figure 2

The graph (Figure 2) shows the constructs with the largest and most significant weakest correlation between the three groups.

Three statistic models were then applied to the three rankings to ascertain the level of statistical correlation.

### 4.3. Statistical Models

#### 4.3.1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

- Rank 1 vs. Rank 2: Wilcoxon Test statistic =16.5, P-value: 0.469

The p-value is greater than 0.05, failing to reject the null hypothesis (that there is no statistical difference). Thus, no statistically significant difference exists between Rank 1 and Rank 2.

- Rank 1 vs. Rank 3: Wilcoxon Test statistic: 21.0, P- value 0.687

The p-value is greater than 0.05; therefore, it fails to reject the null hypothesis (fails to reject that there is no statistical difference), and therefore, there is no statistically significant difference between Rank 1 and Rank 3.

- Rank 2 vs. Rank 3: Wilcoxon Test statistic: 18.0, P-value: 0.564

The p-value exceeds 0.05, so it fails to reject the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant difference between Rank 2 and Rank 3

The p-value is greater than 0.05; therefore, it fails to reject the null hypothesis (fails to reject that there is no statistical difference), and therefore, there is no statistically significant difference between Rank 2 and Rank 3.

Rank 1: YP, Rank 2: Support Workers, Rank 3: Supported Lodgings Providers

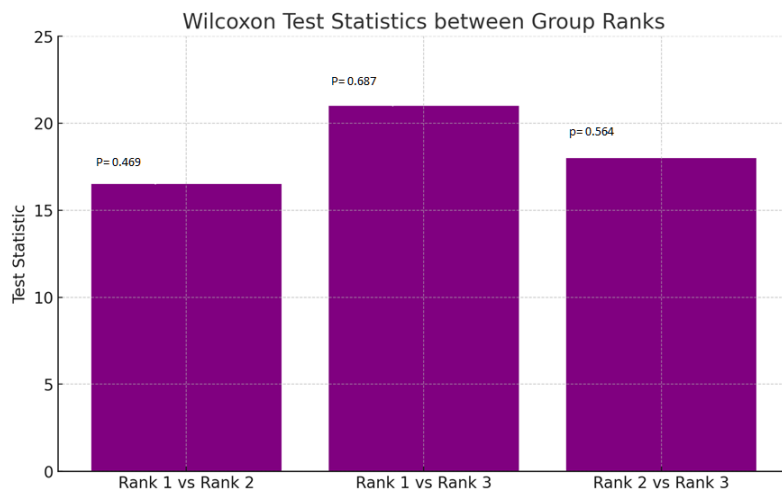


Figure 3

The bar graph shows the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test results for the comparisons between Rank 1 vs. Rank 2, Rank 1 vs. Rank 3, and Rank 2 vs. Rank 3. The test statistics are shown as purple bars, indicating the size of the test results and the p-value above.

Although the results indicate a strong positive linear correlation between each pair of ranking lists, with correlation coefficients close to 1, all p-values are above  $p=0.05$ , indicating that none of the tests are statistically significant between the ranks compared. The graph shows that the null hypothesis (i.e. no shown statistical difference between the ranks) fails to be rejected in all the ranking comparisons, suggesting that these ranks do not differ significantly from one another, suggesting that there is no statistical evidence that the rankings are dissimilar across the three groups: YP, Support Workers, and Supported Lodgings Providers.

#### **4.3.2. Pearson's r Test**

Producing a result between 1 (strong positive correlation) and -1 (strong negative correlation) with 0 suggesting no linear correlation, the following data results were found:

- Rank 1 vs. Rank 2: Correlation coefficient = 0.976, P-value < 0.000001

The p-value is significantly less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (results are unlikely to be by chance) and indicates a statistically significant correlation between Rank 1 and 2.

- Rank 1 vs. Rank 3: Correlation coefficient = 0.964, P-value < 0.000001

The p-value is significantly less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (results are unlikely to be by chance) and indicates a statistically significant correlation between Rank 1 and 3.

- Rank 2 vs. Rank 3: Correlation coefficient = 0.915, P-value  $\approx$  0.0002



The p-value is significantly less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (results are unlikely to be by chance) and indicates a statistically significant correlation between Rank 2 and 3.

These results indicate a strong positive linear correlation between each pair of ranking lists, with correlation coefficients close to 1.

The very low P-values in all three comparisons confirm the statistical significance of these correlations. This suggests that the rankings are very similar across the three groups: Rank 1: YP, Rank 2: Support Workers, and Rank 3: Supported Lodgings Providers (null hypothesis rejected).

Rank 1: YP, Rank 2: Support Workers, Rank 3: Supported Lodgings Providers

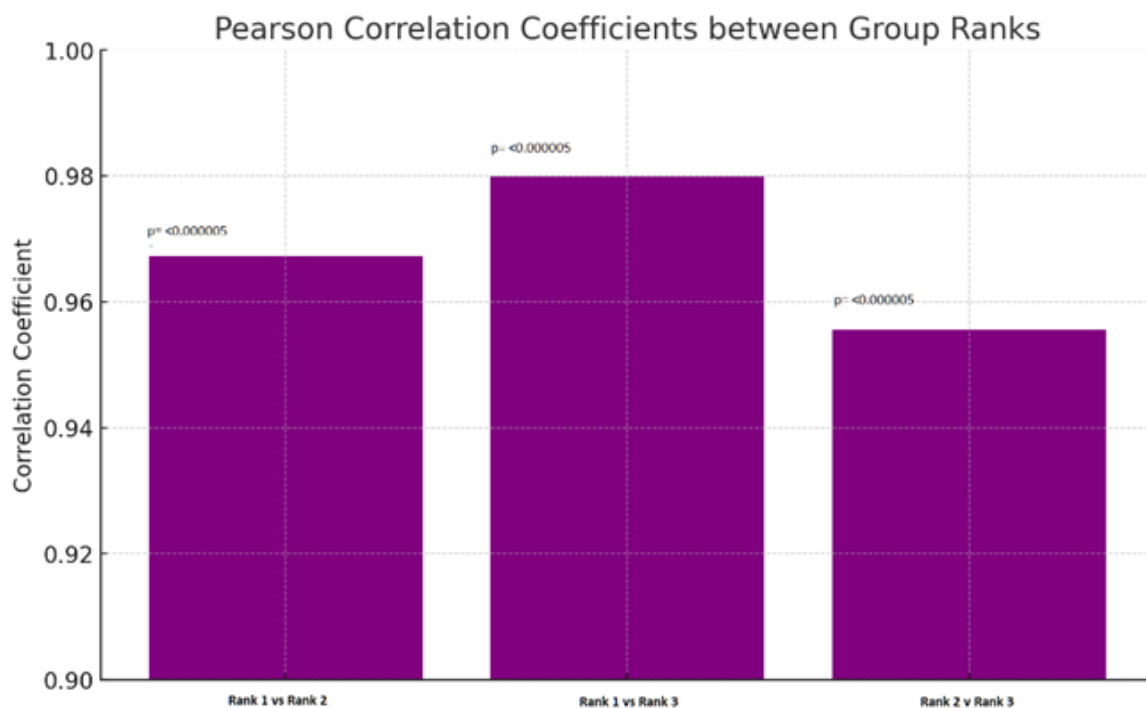


Figure 4

Each bar, coloured purple, represents the correlation coefficient for each comparison (YP vs Support Workers, YP vs Supported Lodgings Providers, Support Workers vs Supported Lodgings Providers). Each bar has the p-value annotated above it, indicating the statistical significance of the correlation. The correlations between each group ranking are extremely strong (all above 0.95), reflecting a high level of agreement in rankings across these different groups. The annotated p-values above each bar confirm that these correlations are statistically significant, strongly suggesting that the rankings are consistently similar, not just by random chance.

#### **4.3.3. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient**

Similar to Pearson's r Test, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient produces a range of 1 (strong positive correlation) to -1 (strong negative correlation), with 0.95 considered a high correlation.

- Rank 1 vs. Rank 2: Spearman correlation coefficient = 0.976, P-value < 0.000001

The p-value is significantly less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (results are unlikely to be by chance), indicating a statistically significant strong correlation (close to +1) between Rank 1 and Rank 2.

- Rank 1 vs. Rank 3: Spearman correlation coefficient = 0.964, P-value < 0.000001

The p-value is significantly less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (results are unlikely to be by chance), indicating a statistically significant strong correlation (close to +1) between Rank 1 and Rank 3.

- Rank 2 vs. Rank 3: Spearman correlation coefficient = 0.915, P-value < 0.000001

The p-value is significantly less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (results are unlikely to be by chance), indicating a statistically significant strong correlation (close to +1) between Rank 2 and Rank 3.

Rank 1: YP, Rank 2: Support Workers, Rank 3: Supported Lodgings Providers.

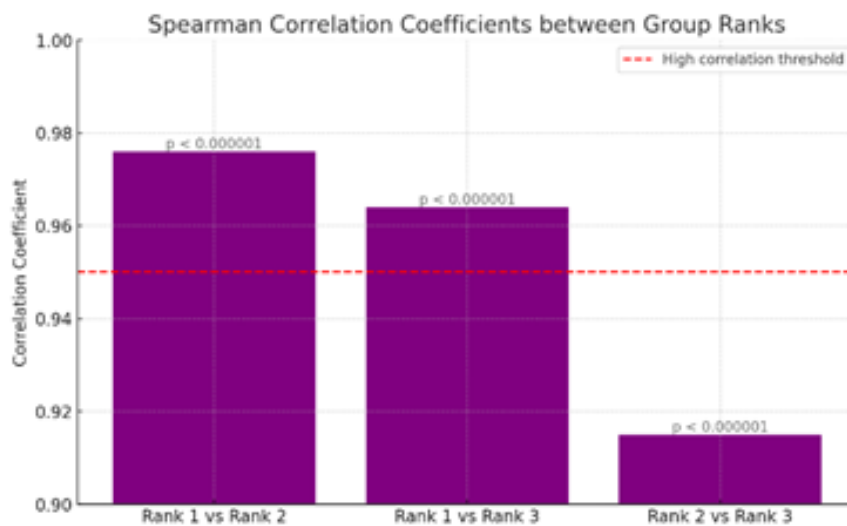


Figure 5

The graph details each ranking comparison, with each representing the correlation coefficient for a specific rank comparison. The red dashed line (value 0.95) details the rank above which there is a strong positive correlation between the ranks. Each bar has an annotation above indicating that the p-value is less than 0.000001, confirming the statistical significance of the strong correlation between the ranks.

These results indicate a strong positive correlation between each pair of ranking lists, with correlation coefficients close to 1. The very low P-values in all three comparisons confirm the statistical significance of these correlations, suggesting that the rankings are very similar across the three groups: YP, Support Workers, and Supported Lodgings Providers.

#### **4.4. Further Analysis**

##### **4.4.1. Correlation of rankings within each group**

The ranking data was further analysed to check if using a mean average (*M*) to represent each group smoothed out any relevant construct differences among the individual groups. Each group was, therefore, subjected to the Friedman Test to discover any statistically significant differences in the seven rankings within each group. The Friedman test was used as a test considered more suitable for comparing multiple rankings (Sheldon et al., 1996).

##### **4.4.2. Friedman Test**

This analysis aims to determine whether a statistically significant distinction exists in ranking these items within the seven distinct ranks within each group. The Q statistic is a relative assessment of the lack of correlation or agreement between ranks. It does not state the strength of any difference other than relative to other calculations with similar constructs and ranks.

**YP (7 Ranks): Q statistic = 13.35. P-value = 0.1475**

With a relatively low Q statistic but with a p-value of 0.1475 (greater than 0.05), there is no statistically significant difference in the rankings between the Young

People group as the null hypothesis cannot be rejected (no statistical evidence there is a difference).

**Support Workers (7 Ranks): Q statistic = 22.11. P-value = 0.8885**

The Q statistic would suggest a statistical difference in the rankings. However, the p-value is much greater than 0.05, suggesting no statistically significant differences in the rankings provided by Support Workers. Therefore, any differences are not statistically significant and could be expected by chance, as the null hypothesis cannot be rejected (that there is no statistical evidence of a difference in ranking).

**Supported Lodgings Providers (7 Ranks) Q statistic = 38.25. P-value < 0.00001**

The low p-value indicates that the differences in rankings among Supported Lodgings Providers are statistically significant. A high Q statistic would statistically indicate disagreements within this group on where items are ranked, unlike the other two groups analysed. The null hypothesis is rejected (the differences in rankings are considered statistically significant).

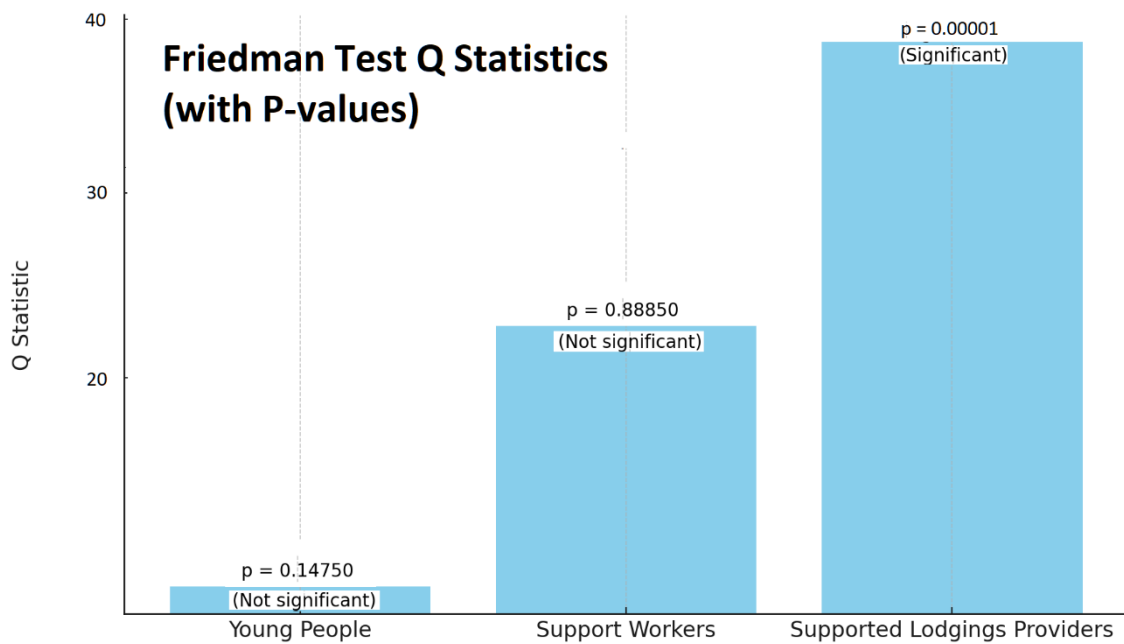


Figure 6

Therefore, the Friedman test proved inconclusive when considering the three groups of seven individuals and their level of agreement, with only Supported Lodgings Providers (n=7) showing statistically significant similarity in the ranking order of constructs. A further test was therefore undertaken to take a closer look at any significant ranking prioritisation of specific constructs to identify any specific patterns of correlation, particularly any significant individual construct differences.

#### 4.5. Analysis of specific constructs within each group

After assessing the general relative correlation of rankings within each group, the individual constructs were analysed to ascertain if there were any individual anomalies or differences in prioritisation of specific constructs that would indicate differences in prioritisation of specific areas not detailed in the higher-level analysis of Friedman Test (See Figures 7, 8, and 9).

The following graphs detail each construct and how each group member prioritised it within each of the three groups.

## YP

The graph (Figure 7) depicting the results of the questionnaire for YP does show some variation. However, most YP ranked 'Self-Confidence', 'Practical Independent Skills', and 'Developing Resilience' relatively highly, with moderate agreement. Five out of seven individuals scored 'Interpersonal Skills', five and above, suggesting a high level of overall agreement. 'Team-Working' has been ranked low by most YP, similar to the other graphs, replicating the results for Support Workers and Supported Lodgings Providers. However, again, there is some variability across all the constructs.

## YP

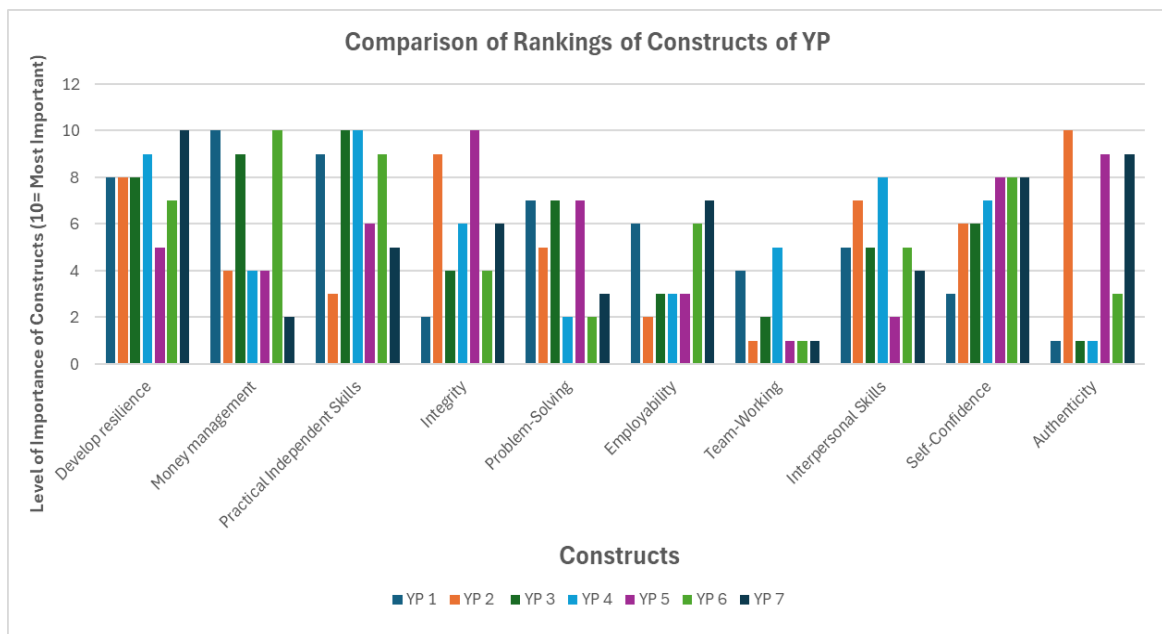


Figure 7

## Support Workers

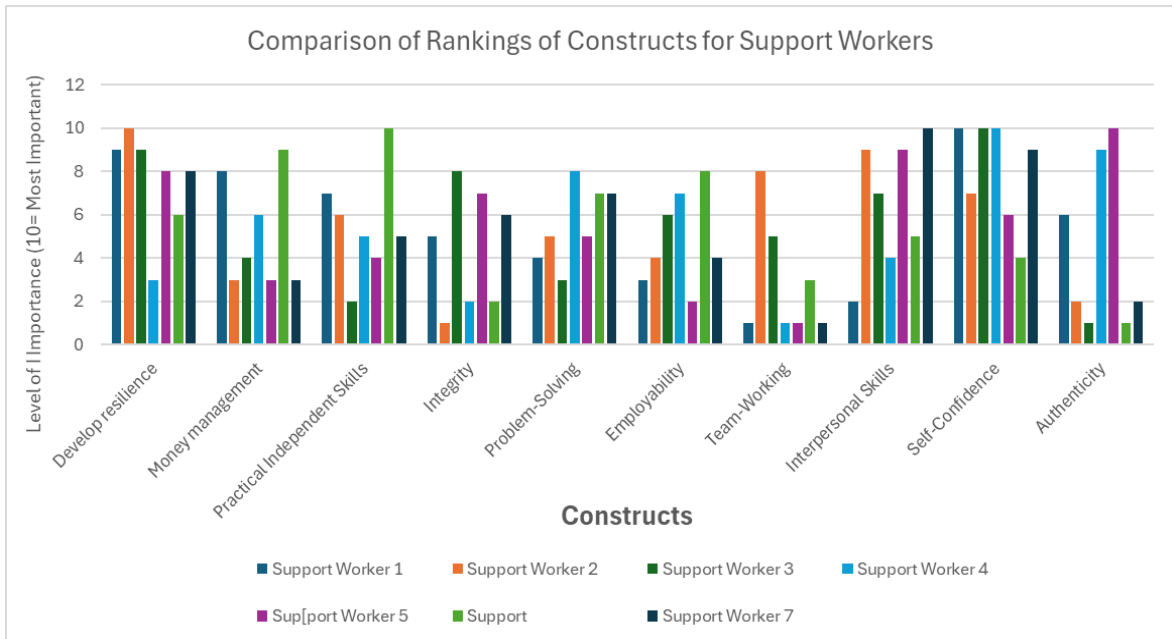


Figure 8

For Support Workers (Figure 8), ‘Develop Resilience’, ‘Interpersonal Skills’ and ‘Self-Confidence’ are considered highly important and are generally agreed upon across most of the group. However, the graph shows high variability in ‘Team-Working’ and ‘Authenticity’, showing some disagreement within the group.



## Supported Lodgings Providers

Supported Lodging Providers (Figure 9) regard 'Developing Resilience', 'Self-Confidence', and 'Problem-Solving' as highly important, as evidenced by their top scores with a general positive correlation of ranking across the group. 'Practical Independent Skills' is also rated very highly by most providers, with several giving it the maximum importance ranking, and shows a generally high level of agreement across the group. 'Team-Working' has received the lowest ranking by several providers, but notably, 2 group members have ranked it relatively high, with one member ranking it 2<sup>nd</sup> most important (8 out of 10 importance).

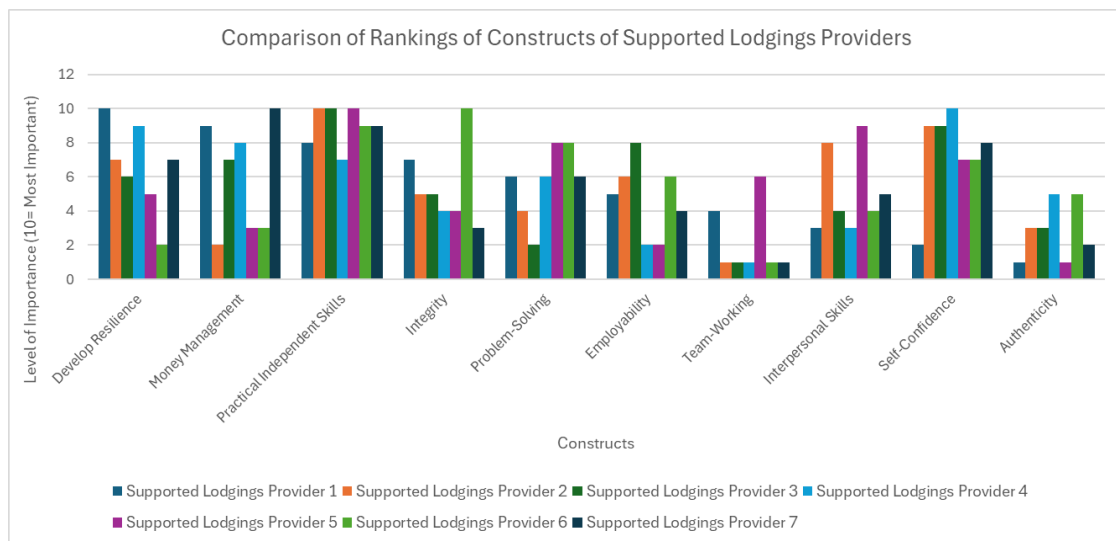


Figure 9

## 5. DISCUSSION

This research has provided insight into the importance of SMMs amongst individuals within teams in helping YP in a supported environment progress successfully to independence. The small research study should not be interpreted independently to draw definitive conclusions. The small sample size, the discussion, and the conclusions as a whole combine both primary and secondary research to offer insights into the role of SMMs in effective teamwork and producing better team task outcomes. What should be noted are research findings that highlight the increasing usage of SMMs in other areas of support or care, where individuals are supported by individuals working as a team to effect successful outcomes. The limitations of the research are discussed before detailing several recommendations for further research.

After collecting the questionnaire data (Appendix F), a positive correlation was found, combining the seven rankings for each group (YP, Supported Lodgings Providers and Support Workers) into three mean averaged rankings to represent each group for subsequent comparison. Using three statistical models, the positive correlation of prioritised rankings would indicate a positive correlation, or agreement, in 'team thinking' through indicated task prioritisation across each of the three representative mean averaged rankings. However, upon further analysis, looking at specific construct differences rather than an overall correlation, two constructs differed by at least three places, suggesting exceptions, at least in these areas, to the overall similarity of thinking.

The two constructs that showed significant differences in prioritisation were 'Interpersonal Skills' and 'Integrity'. The rankings for these constructs varied

between YP and Support Workers (Integrity; YP (Ranked 5th) vs. Support Workers (Ranked 8th); Interpersonal Skills; YP (Ranked 7th) vs. Support Workers (Ranked 3rd)) and Supported Lodgings Providers (Interpersonal Skills; Supported Lodgings Providers (Ranked 7th vs. Support Workers (Ranked 3rd))). These differences are noteworthy as they highlight potential variations in the perception of these constructs among different groups, which could impact the support processes for YP, even if the overall correlation indicated agreement.

Although the research initially indicates a general positive correlation, the differences in construct prioritisation are not to be overlooked. They hint at potential variations in prioritising processes for supporting YP, which could be problematic for small teams. These differences suggest the need for further investigation and understanding of the impact when bringing together a team, as they may impact the effectiveness of support for YP.

It was important not to rely on the three mean-averaged representative rankings to judge the similarity of thinking and prioritisation of the three groups. Looking at each specific construct and its different prioritisation across the three groups, considering a difference of three places or more to be significant, gave greater insight into a similarity of prioritisation than may have been the case with just relying on a mean-averaged ranking. Accordingly, this gave a more accurate assessment of similar thinking on assessing an SMM.

Additionally, it was important to test the similarity of the individuals in a group to understand how representative the mean-averaged rankings were of each group again. If conclusions were made about the similarity of thinking, it was important that the mean-averaged ranking could be trusted to represent the

similarity of thinking across the individuals in a group and that an SMM existed within each group could be assessed.

The results were inconclusive in applying the Friedman test to each of the seven rankings to ascertain the level of ranking agreement within each of the three groups. Indicating similarity across individuals within each group but with little statistical significance ( $p > 0.05$ ) other than the Supported Lodgings Providers group that showed a significant positive correlation of prioritisation amongst its seven members, indicating a similarity of agreement, thought and, therefore, SMM ( $p < 0.00001$ ) amongst the seven individuals.

Again, an analysis of individual construct variability across the seven rankings within each individual was carried out. This similarly showed significant differences in the ranking prioritisation of particular constructs, therefore differences of thinking and potential differences in an SMM (see grouped bar graphs in Chapter 4).

When comparing the variability of individual contracts against the mean average representative ranking, the following was found: Within the YP group, Authenticity (SD 3.94), Money Management (SD 3.14), and Integrity (SD 2.64) varied considerably. Within the Support Worker Group, Authenticity (SD 3.58), Interpersonal Skills (SD 2.77), and Integrity (SD 2.56) show the most significant variation in construct ranking. Money Management (SD 3.02) shows considerable variation within the Support Worker group.

This is significant because although the rankings indicate a positive agreement within each group of seven, significant differences existed regarding specific

constructs. This is important when considering putting together a team with what may be regarded as having a similar level of overall task-thinking agreement. Critical differences in task agreement on specific constructs may lead to different prioritisation and focus on those tasks relating to the contract, which may lead to disagreement, especially where others may feel a particular contract to be particularly important. For example, when a young person may feel that their declared gender, relating to their 'authenticity', is the most crucial contract, but others think it is the least important, conflict may arise. Careful analysis of individuals' task-prioritisation 'thinking' before bringing them together as a team would seem necessary if a YP person is to be supported effectively.

It is important not to consider SMM as similar to 'groupthink'. These are entirely different concepts, particularly concerning task-orientated SMM. Groupthink results in poor decision-making, with team members conforming without voicing dissenting opinions or effectively solving problems (Janis, 1982; Riordan and Riordan, 2013).

SMMs involve shared knowledge that 'enhances' decision-making through improved coordination and communication among team members (Mohammed et al. 2010). This alignment reduces misunderstandings and personal conflicts but not necessarily task disagreements, often considered important for critical analysis and problem-solving and effecting better team outcomes (Burke et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2000). It is also worth noting that conflict can indicate a lack of an SMM on which to act to enhance the SMM (Bearman et al., 2010; Cronin and Weingart, 2007). The difference between task understanding and

agreement, against group dynamic agreement or compliance, is critical to understanding the difference between SMM and groupthink.

Groupthink is marked by a preference for unanimity and conflict avoidance. It suppresses critical viewpoints and overlooks potential pitfalls, resulting in poor decision-making (Janis, 1972; Riordan and Riordan, 2013). A strong SMM leads to better decision-making by ensuring team consensus, resulting in well-informed choices (Mohammed et al., 2010). In contrast, groupthink undermines decision quality by limiting critical thinking and dissent, prioritising reducing social conflict, often resulting in poor team decisions (Janis, 1972). One primary distinction is in critical thinking. Groupthink restricts it, while a robust SMM enhances it, significantly improving decision-making processes, team actions, and shared understanding of tasks (Edmondson, 2018). However, to establish the importance of SMM in creating positive outcomes for YP, it is important to establish the relevance and importance of teams in YP's development.

The literature on the benefits of including YP in decision-making processes that directly impact them is extensive (Charles and Haines, 2014; Franklin and Sloper, 2005). Accordingly, the inclusion of YP within the team of three for this research was deliberate, arguing that youth work teams should consider YP as team members to achieve better outcomes for them. The study, therefore, links the importance of what team members are involved in a team and their level of similar task understanding and knowledge, demonstrated through their ranking prioritisation, but had to consider the actual relevance and importance of a team approach to YP development.

The literature highlights the importance of teams and team skills in achieving positive task outcomes in a youth work setting. Van Rensburg et al. (2022) make the case that strong teamwork skills are essential for team success, with effective teamwork linked to harnessing diverse skills and aligning them cohesively toward common goals (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993). This is precisely why teamwork skills are highly regarded in fostering positive growth among YP. Youth workers must employ various tools and techniques to cultivate collaborative environments and foster strong relationships (CLDSCS, 2019), empowering (YWWRG, 2022) YP to attain positive outcomes that often rely on effective teamwork.

Work teams comprise dedicated members who share a common goal (Holcomb et al., 2002). These teams utilise their unique skills, roles, and responsibilities to accomplish specific objectives through effective decision-making and coordinated tasks (Moorthy et al., 2006); Reznick et al., 2003). Hackman (1998) further highlights the critical role of teamwork skills and the importance of cohesion in a team's success. Even if the team members are individually committed to achieving their goals, the lack of effective collaboration, shared thinking and coordination can hinder their progress and ultimately lead to failure. This emphasises the need for teams to develop strong interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities to succeed, again highlighting the importance of cohesion and common thinking in achieving this success.

The importance of teams within youth work settings is similarly well documented. Youth workers who work with YP use various methods of support,

such as engaging in activities (Hart, 2016), conversations (Jeffer and Smith, 2010), and sports (Haudenhuysen et al., 2012), to foster meaningful connections that promote YP's personal development, self-reflection, and overall well-being. Teams in youth work address YPs' evolving challenges, such as placement breakdowns, school transitions, family trauma and peer integration, all scenarios which require a range of individuals working together to achieve positive outcomes.

The significance of specific teams, such as Look Ahead (2024), Brighter Futures for Children (2024), and Llamau (2024), cannot be overstated in providing assistance to YPs at risk of homelessness, offending, or abuse. The literature also widely acknowledges the importance of all teams in supporting young and vulnerable groups (Estyn, 2024; Welsh Government, 2019a).

Additionally, youth workers, motivated by their commitment to enhancing the well-being of YP and driven by care and empathy, consider their roles as opportunities to make significant differences and support YP to achieve positive outcomes (Sercombe, 2010). This highlights the cognitive and affective elements of supporting YP and the importance of similar values to attain team cohesion and shared goals.

The concept of team cohesion, not to be confused with 'individual full agreement', is crucial for achieving shared goals (Tekleab et al., 2009) and team learning. It is essential for collective problem-solving by exchanging knowledge and skills from shared experiences (Ohlsson, 2013). Team cohesion is about a shared understanding and agreement to achieve specific outcomes through team members working from the same cognitive model (Rhodes and



Dubois, 2008), highlighting the importance of SMM to a team's performance. Although much literature on SMMs in a wide range of settings states that SMMs are crucial for team efficacy in healthcare settings, business, and aviation, there is limited research about their development.

Cooper et al. (2016) explored teamwork and collaboration, critical elements of SMMs, specifically in mental health services, and their importance in achieving positive outcomes for YP. Fox (2022) researched a team of experts in social work education, discovering that cohesion and team support, again critical factors of SMMs, are essential for positive experiences. Therefore, in their wider use, the concept of SMM has found its way into improving teams and outcomes in numerous sectors, yet in youth work settings, SMM is not well-researched. Therefore, an important aspect of this research is to present data and findings, highlight literature, and provide a basis for ongoing conversations and new discussions about SMM as a team-enhancing concept that may help deliver better outcomes for YP in a youth support environment.

Regarding teams and their relevance in support and youth settings, youth workers can face significant challenges when working with other professionals in mental health services, particularly when forming alliances to promote positive outcomes for YP in their care (Carr, 2022). Individuals tend to prioritise what they believe is essential in achieving a positive outcome based on their understanding of a situation. These challenges can be attributed to people's different goals or priorities (Mohammed et al. 2010), not working toward a common task goal, and, therefore, not having an SMM. The research study,

thus, looked at this concept of individuals with different roles and responsibilities working together to achieve an outcome.

When analysing the level of prioritisation of approaches and tasks, there was a significant positive correlation between the groups, indicating the presence of an SMM. Although limited in scope, the findings may suggest that the organisation on which the research was based considers the views, skills, and knowledge and ensures task agreement before putting the team together, thus ensuring an SMM. However, given the size of the study, care must be taken to make broader assumptions. Still, it is the researcher's experience that extensive care is taken within the organisation used for the research to ensure the best possible matching of team members.

Therefore, team mental models matter when considering the wider literature on SMM and its use across a wide range of health, care, and business settings and reflecting on the small case study included in this research. Numerous questions remain, but the current findings aim to advance an understanding of the importance of shared cognition in teams, arguing that continuing research on team SMMs will likely yield new theoretical insights and practical interventions to enhance team performance in youth work settings.

Moreover, the literature highlights that without an SMM among team members, a team's effectiveness can be compromised (Fernandez et al., 2008). This can lead to significant costs to both resources and individuals (Kichuk and Wiesner, 1998), given the reliance on teams to support individuals with complex challenges (McCann and Brown, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015), often requiring flexible, bespoke answers derived from effective team problem-solving and

action. The level to which this is effective is dependent on the effectiveness of the team supporting a YP and, accordingly, as an essential element of that effective team, an SMM.

Furthermore, exploring approaches such as an SMM could be beneficial as the number of YP seeking care increases (Selwyn et al., 2017). SMMs can ease the financial burden on services, optimise a team's potential and lead to more efficient and positive outcomes for YP transitioning out of support services (Langan-Fox et al., 2001; Men et al., 2019; Selwyn et al., 2017).

### **5.1. Limitations**

The study's scope was limited, not only by size, but it did not thoroughly investigate a broader range of influences on SMM, such as beliefs, values, and cultural differences, which are crucial in comprehensive SMM evaluations, suggesting any further studies that include these factors. The researcher also acknowledges that several prescribed ways have been proposed for assessing SMM. Although ranking lists were considered the most appropriate for this study, using a range of assessments would have provided more additional data on which to draw conclusions.

The researcher explored a behavioural approach that would have considered the support systems surrounding YP extensively through focus groups. However, time restrictions and individual availability did not allow for this.

The researcher acknowledges that some participants may have required additional explanation regarding the survey questions and constructs. Focus

groups could have addressed misunderstandings regarding the questionnaire and what participants were expected to do.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research investigates the role of SMMs in enhancing team effectiveness within youth work settings, specifically focusing on teams that support YP to achieve positive outcomes, especially against a backdrop of ever-decreasing youth work resources. Combining empirical research with an analysis of secondary literature, the study assesses how an SMM, the collective understanding among team members regarding goals, procedures, and roles, contribute to more cohesive and effective team dynamics to achieve more effective outcomes.

The wide range of secondary research indicates the importance of SMMs in various settings outside of youth work, contributing to superior communication, decision-making, and overall group performance (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993). This is particularly crucial in diverse team settings, with individuals with different experiences, skills, and knowledge coming together to achieve a single outcome. While various views of how this outcome may be achieved may exist, the alignment of common thinking is beneficial and necessary for effective team dynamics.

This is arguably more important when the stakes are high and the outcome is the future of YP. Preparing YP for independent adulthood often requires a wide range of support, solutions, and problem-solving, both practical and emotional, not least because many of the YP come from adverse backgrounds (Hughes et al., 2024). Therefore, the research explores whether teams employing an SMM

approach are more effective in fostering supportive environments that promote the well-being of YP and achieve more positive outcomes.

Moreover, the study underscores the potential benefits of implementing SMMs in youth work settings. It discusses the consequences of an inadequate SMM for the individuals supporting YP and the YP themselves, highlighting the potential for early intervention strategies that could lead to more positive outcomes, such as a young person's ability to thrive independently as an adult within their community. While the research was conducted within a single organisation, its implications extend to general team management practices and the integration of SMMs in all youth work settings.

Consequently, the research critically examines the broader application of SMMs beyond the immediate organisational context, highlighting current literature and practice gaps within youth work environments. It discusses the importance of being more effective with what presently exists in supporting YP, the challenges of diminishing resources, recruitment, and funding and the acute need for enhanced mental health support as YP transition towards independence. The analysis extends to the impact of team diversity, emphasising the importance of aligning varied experiences and skills towards a unified goal of similar 'thinking' to improve outcomes for YP in supported environments.

The research concludes with several recommendations for future studies. It advocates for a broader exploration of SMM within youth work and suggests

incorporating diverse methodologies to assess and develop these models. It recommends that organisations consider team beliefs, norms, values, and task prioritisation when assembling teams to strengthen an SMM, thereby improving teamwork and leading to better outcomes for YP. This study emphasises the potential for an SMM to be a factor in the effective support of YP, advocating for its more comprehensive application and further exploration within the field.

### **6.1. Limitations**

The study was small in scale and focused solely on one aspect of SMMs, specifically the prioritisation of constructs. It did not account for beliefs, values, and cultural differences, which are significant factors in comprehensive SMM assessments. Additionally, the researcher acknowledges that this study did not explore other approaches to evaluating SMMs.

Another approach the researcher considered was a behavioural study that takes into account YP's intricate support system. However, the researcher opted for this approach to explore the presence of an SMM within an organisation that directly supports YP in achieving positive outcomes and transitioning to independence.

The researcher recognises that some individuals may have required further clarification about the questions and understanding of the constructs. However, if focus groups had been allowed, the researcher would have been able to address any misunderstandings regarding the questionnaire and what participants were expected to do.

Despite its limitations, including a narrow focus on one dimension of SMMs and a small-scale study design, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions about improving the effectiveness of youth workers, particularly in resource-limited settings. It also suggests potential avenues for optimising existing capabilities to achieve better outcomes for YP.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

Future research on youth work should emphasise the following:

- The significance of SMMs and the expansion of the scope of studies to include diverse methods for assessing SMM levels
- More investigations are needed into how SMMs develop, mainly through training and understanding their formation
- To ensure that youth organisations are trained around SMMs
- Organisations are advised to consider beliefs, norms, values, and task prioritisation when assembling teams. This consideration can enhance SMM levels, thereby improving cohesion and teamwork, which leads to better outcomes for YP
- Conflicts within teams should be viewed as potential indicators of insufficient SMMs, prompting the use of varied approaches to address and resolve differences



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## 8. APPENDICES

### A. Ethics Form

#### APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

##### RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

##### RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to [pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk) , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

##### STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES

should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

**In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.**

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

**Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.**

**This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.** Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

#### **SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)**

1	Full Name:	Karen Shepherd			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Honorary research fellow:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Undergraduate Student	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taught Postgraduate Student	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Education and Humanities: Centre for Childhood, Youth and Education			
4	Campus:	Carmarthen			
5	E-mail address:	1806377@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:				
<b>For students:</b>					
7	Student Number:	<b>1806377</b>			
8	Programme of Study:	<b>MA Youth Work and Social Education</b>			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	<b>Angharad Lewis</b>			

### SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
					<b>Date</b>
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): <b>Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval</b>	Research Degrees Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Institute Research Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Other Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee BREC <i>(copy of the application to BREC submitted with this Ethical Approval Form)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Approved Date: 31.01.2024

### SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any
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	specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	<b>UWTSD Research Ethics &amp; Integrity Code of Practice</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	<b>UWTSD Research Data Management Policy</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	<b>British Sociological Association Ethical Guidelines</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	N/A				
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		Employed	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Investigation into the relevance of shared mental models in youth work settings supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes.
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2	Proposed start date:	01.01.2024	Proposed end date:	30.04.2024
	<p><b>Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section)</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i></li> <li>• <i>Proposed Research Question</i></li> <li>• <i>Aims of Research Activity</i></li> <li>• <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i></li> </ul> <p>Demonstrate, briefly, how <b>Existing Research</b> has informed the proposed activity and explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i></li> <li>• <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i></li> </ul>			
3	<p><b>Purpose of Research Activity</b></p> <p>Shared mental model (SMM) refers to a common understanding among team members regarding the team’s goals, processes and individual roles. Research indicates that strong SMM positively impact team communication, decision-making and overall performance, and the development of a SMM is crucial for effective collaboration and responsiveness to the dynamic needs of young people (Cannon-Bowers <i>et al.</i>, 1993).</p> <p>Understanding the impact of a lack of a SMM with the individuals who support them, but also with the individual being supported, can give insight into future early interventions to support young people achieve positive outcomes.</p> <p>A positive outcome relates to, but is not limited by, the relative success of a young person to contribute effectively as an independent individual in their immediate environment.</p> <p>Additionally, finding different paradigms on which to look at the ‘team’ involved in the support of the young person could allow for a different perspective of how the team should or should not operate. This research will look at the benefits of considering the team working towards a common goal (positive outcomes) from the perspective of an Agile team (Peeters, <i>et al.</i>, 2022).</p> <p>The term ‘Agile Team’ grew out of software development in the late 1990’s (Larman and Basili 2003). Agile Teams are synonymous with self-organisation and flexibility (Martin, 2002), organising workload amongst themselves depending on the specific task requirements (Highsmith, 2004).</p> <p>By understanding the degree to which a SMM exists, or does not exist, <b>the research will look at any benefits of viewing and organising groups working together to support a young person or persons or group</b> of young people as an Agile team (Peeters, <i>et al.</i>, 2022), this research will give some insight.</p> <p>The research will use a single organisation to establish <b>empirical research as to the level of SMM between stakeholders</b> but will also <b>draw extensively</b> on secondary research, including <b>the application of ‘realistic evaluation’</b> (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) <b>where differences in SMM exist</b> in similar settings.</p>			

	<p>References</p> <p>Cannon-Bowers, J. A., Salas, E. and Converse, S. (1993) 'Shared mental models in expert team decision making', <i>Individual and group decision making: Current issues</i>. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Available at: <a href="https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1993-98047-012">https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1993-98047-012</a> (Accessed: 11 November 2023).</p> <p>Highsmith J (2004) <i>Agile project management: creating innovative products</i>. Addison-Wesley: USA</p> <p>Larman, C. and Basili, V.R. (2003) 'Iterative and incremental developments; a brief history', <i>IEEE Computer</i>, 36(6), pp. 47–56. Available at: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1109/mc.2003.1204375">https://doi.org/10.1109/mc.2003.1204375</a> (Accessed: 24 November 2023).</p> <p>Martin R (2002) <i>Agile Software Development: principles, patterns, and practices</i>. Pearson Education: NJ.</p> <p>Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997) <i>Realistic evaluation</i>. London: Sage.</p> <p>Peeters, T., Van De Voorde, K. and Paauwe, J. (2022) 'The effects of working agile on team performance and engagement', <i>Team Performance Management</i>, 28(1/2), pp. 61–78. Available at: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/TPM-07-2021-0049">https://doi.org/10.1108/TPM-07-2021-0049</a> (Accessed: 18 November 2023).</p>
4	<p><b>Research Questions</b></p> <p>What is the relevance of SMM in youth work teams working in a singular organisation?</p> <p>What are the benefits of viewing the team members as part of an Agile Team, allowing for the application of extensive research on Agile Teams to better support young people in a youth work setting?</p> <p>What relevance is there in <b>applying</b> 'realistic evaluation' in the context of young people's support?</p>
5	<p><b>Aims of Research Activity</b></p> <p>The aim of this research is to establish the importance of a SMM amongst team members, doing different roles, similar to an Agile team, whose team role is to provide positive outcomes for a young person who is under the support of the organisation. For the purpose of this research, a young person or young people refers to individuals between the ages of 16 to 21 years. Although the research covers this age group, no individual presently under the age of 18 will be directly active within the research, <b>but will have received support within the full age range of the research</b>. Therefore the term young adult will be used when referring to the young people participating in the research.</p> <p>The research will look at teams working within a larger organisation to provide an organisational agreed outcome <b>with respect to achieving</b> positive outcomes for the young people <b>it supports or have supported</b>. Although the research will focus on one organisation, the research will look at the general question of SMM and teamwork <b>between groups</b> in a youth work setting and provide insight into both the importance or otherwise of an SMM. Additionally, the research will look at</p>

	<p>considering youth work teams in this context as Agile Teams, incorporating the breadth and depth of research that already exists in this area, albeit not in a youth work setting. <b>Where a lack of SMM exists, the benefit or otherwise of using 'realistic evaluation as a different paradigm in assessing positive outcomes will be considered.</b></p> <p>The research is not a critical review of performance, nor does it seek to pass comment on specific behaviours or actions within any specific organisation. The research is best viewed as a discussion paper that allows for an insight and a different perspective as to how youth work in general could be viewed and improved <b>by taking a different view of both the way individuals consider the relative priorities of how they support young adults (SMM), the way these individuals work and are managed (Agile team) and how the positive outcomes of young people are subsequently evaluated (realistic evaluation).</b></p>
6	<p><b>Objectives of Research Activity</b></p> <p>The research objectives will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the degree to which a SMM exists amongst team members, working towards a common goal in youth work.</li> <li>• The relevance of a SMM amongst team members, working towards a common goal in youth work.</li> <li>• Establish the benefits of viewing the team members as part of an Agile Team, allowing for the application of the extensive research on Agile Teams to better support young people in a youth work setting.</li> <li>• Ascertain the relevance of 'realistic evaluation' in the context of young person support, an evaluation that takes into account not only the mechanisms, behaviours and actions in evaluation, but allows for a greater focus on the context in which evaluation takes place, often underappreciated in youth work evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>To establish the degree to which an SMM exists, each group will be asked to prioritise a set of 10 constructs related to support activities from most importance to least through a ranking system on a simple anonymised questionnaire. Constructs will be obtained through secondary research, considering extensive research over the last 10 years into what activities and actions are considered important in achieving positive outcomes for young adults moving to adult independence.</b></p> <p>The degree to which these priorities are ranked will provide the level of similar thinking, prioritisation and, therefore, the level of a shared mental model in achieving a positive outcome for a young person.</p> <p>Drawing on literature from key areas; SMM, evaluations of individuals in youth work settings, Agile Teams and 'realistic evaluation'.</p> <p>The research will look to investigate the importance of SMM in youth work settings, the advantages of looking at both evaluation and team management and coordination of teams in a youth work setting from a new perspective. Accordingly, through a different perspective, the research will look to show how different considerations can be prioritised to give greater insight into how young people can achieve positive outcomes.</p>
	<p><b>Proposed methods (maximum 600 words)</b></p>



	<p>Provide a brief summary of all the methods that <b>may</b> be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.</p>
7	<p>The participants of the study will include young adults, staff and supported lodgings providers and the research will aim to identify if there is a difference between how three individual groups view positive outcomes for young people. The three groups are members of staff from a supported lodgings service, the providers of the supported lodgings who provide placements for young people, and the young adults in supported lodgings.</p> <p>A thematic approach will be used to derive a list of constructs identifying recurring themes across existing literature by considering recurring themes, patterns, and approaches in the area of supported youth work settings. From the research a maximum of 30 constructs will form the basis of the anonymised questionnaire on which 10 of the most common, or agreed, will be used in the questionnaire.</p> <p>Questionnaires:</p> <p>The questionnaire will be disseminated through MS Forms through the researcher's UWTSD account.</p> <p>The questionnaires will consist of 10 constructs or actions derived from the thematic review of the literature. Individuals will be asked to rank them in order of importance.</p> <p>From this ranking, a simple comparative analysis will show the relative difference of the prioritisation of each of the different groups.</p> <p>This difference will determine the level of similarity in prioritisation and the subsequent level of a shared mental model.</p> <p>Subsequent analysis will be derived to extend the findings into the context of youth work in similar settings, where teams work together to achieve positive outcomes for young people.</p> <p>Where a SMM does not exist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its relevance and importance are discussed through secondary data research.</li> <li>• The benefit of treating individuals from each organisational team as an Agile Team, in that a provider, support worker and the young person are a semi-autonomous team working within an Agile framework.</li> <li>• The relevance of further research into applying the concept of 'realistic evaluation' to youth work settings.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Location of research activity</b> Identify all locations where research activity will take place.</p>

8	Online.
	<p><b>Research activity outside of the UK</b>  If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.</p>
9	N/A

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents <b>NOT</b> publicly available?	<b>NO</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	<p>If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales.</p> <p>N/A</p>		

	<b>Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
12	A prosperous Wales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	A resilient Wales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	A healthier Wales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	A more equal Wales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18	A globally responsible Wales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	<p>A prosperous Wales through supporting young people more effectively to improve skills and outcomes.</p> <p>A resilient Wales through supporting young people to adapt to change and their environments by improving their outcomes.</p> <p>A healthier Wales through supporting young people's mental well-being through improving their outcomes.</p> <p>A more equal Wales through supporting young people to fully reach their potential.</p>		



1	Students or staff at the University?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Prisoners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Young offenders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: NA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

### SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	<b>Participant numbers and source</b> Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	Between 30 and 40 participants are expected. A minimum of 10 in each group.
11	Who will the participants be?	Young people aged 18 years and over, supported lodgings providers and supported lodgings support workers.
12	How will you identify the participants?	Through my Barnardo's line manager (agreed) and the Children's Services Manager (agreed).

	<b>Information for participants:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>N/A</b>
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	Research is not observational			

	<b>Information for participants:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>N/A</b>
24	Will participants be paid?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			

## SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	<b>Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.</b>					
	If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.					
1	<b>Full risk assessment completed and appended</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Yes</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>No</b></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>No</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
2	<b>Risks to participants</b>					

	For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information	
	Risk to participants:  Emotional distress	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i>  Permitted to withdraw from the study and offered support and advice.
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	N/A	
4	<b>Risks to the investigator</b> For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator:  Conflict of interest	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i>  I will seek advice and support from the university regarding any conflict of interest and will address the limitations of my research within the content of my dissertation.
5	<b>University/institutional risks</b> For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University  Reputational risk	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the University:</i>  I am in the process of obtaining permission from my university and I have obtained permission from Barnardo's.  I will conduct myself professionally in line with my university's policies, procedures and guidelines.  I will ensure that participants are aware that I am not working for the university, but in my own capacity as a student.
6	<b>Environmental risks</b> For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment:	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to environment:</i>

	N/A	
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<b>Disclosure and Barring Service</b>				
		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.			
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.	<b>001636477985</b>		

### **SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality**

1	<p><b>Feedback</b> What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?</p>
	<p>Once the research has been completed, I will offer all participants access to my findings. All feedback will be available to participants immediately after completion. Once the dissertation has been marked and I have graduated, <b>all data (questionnaires) will be destroyed other than those included in the research paper used for illustrative purposes (anonymously presented).</b></p> <p>The data will be stored encrypted on a computer.</p>
2	<p><b>Informed consent</b> Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.</p>
	<p><b><u>What is informed consent?</u></b></p> <p>This is where participants give their permission for their data to be collected and stored alongside agreed guidelines.</p> <p><b><u>How will you ensure this is done?</u></b></p> <p>The guidelines will be agreed between the researcher and the participants both verbally and in written form prior to any research activity.</p> <p><b><u>How will you inform the participants this will be done this way? (via the letter of explanation prepared by the Researcher)</u></b></p> <p>The researcher will explain the guidelines and the <b>activity (questionnaire)</b> before providing an informed consent form which each participant will agree and sign before <b>starting the questionnaire.</b></p>

	<p><b><u>What is Confidentiality?</u></b></p> <p>This is where the participants and their data are treated with respect, not disclosed to third parties and stored in an encrypted fashion (Denscombe, 2021).</p> <p><b><u>How will you ensure this is done?</u></b></p> <p>I will follow the university’s code of practice (UWTSD, 2022) and respect the rights of the participants involved in the research by encrypting all data and not disclosing any of the information collected to a third party.</p> <p><b><u>How will you inform the participants this will be done this way? (via the letter of explanation prepared by the Researcher)</u></b></p> <p>The researcher will explain <b>in writing</b> that the participants’ data will be treated confidentially.</p> <p><b><u>What is Anonymity?</u></b></p> <p>The participants will be protected as their data will be anonymised. It will not be possible for the participants to be identified.</p> <p><b><u>How will you ensure this is done?</u></b></p> <p>The researcher will use pseudonyms (<b>where necessary, although not expected</b>) to ensure their data, their personal information, is protected.</p> <p><b><u>How will you inform the participants this will be done this way? (via the letter of explanation prepared by the Researcher)</u></b></p> <p>The researcher will explain <b>in writing</b> that the participants’ data will be stored anonymously, abiding by all the criteria of GDPR (<i>Data Protection Act 2018</i>).</p> <p>References</p> <p><i>Data Protection Act 2018, c. 12.</i> Available at:  <a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted</a> (Accessed: 11 November 2023).</p>

**SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage**

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined		
1	<p><b>“Personal data”</b> means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.</p>	□	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		



2	NA		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	<p><b>“Special category data”</b> means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ –</p> <p>(a) racial or ethnic origin,</p> <p>(b) political opinions,</p> <p>(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,</p> <p>(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),</p> <p>(e) physical or mental health or condition,</p> <p>(f) sexual life,</p> <p>(g) genetics,</p> <p>(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	NA		

	<b>Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?</b>	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	University computers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Private company computers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Home or other personal computers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	Other – specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My computer equipment is password-protected</li> <li>• Encrypted portable backup drive used to back up work in case of computer failure.</li> <li>• No names will be used</li> </ul>		

<b>Data Protection</b>			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
19	Use of data management system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
20	Data archiving?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	N/A		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	The researcher and university supervisor.		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The researcher.		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	The data will be stored on my encrypted computer <b>and encrypted portable back-up drive</b> , kept for the length of the project then the raw data will be destroyed. Once the dissertation has been marked and I have graduated all data will be destroyed.		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see <a href="https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/">https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/</a> ). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A - MA Dissertation Project		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see <a href="https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/">https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/</a> )	<b>YES</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	<b>YES</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.	
	In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: <a href="https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/">https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/</a>	
1	<b>Signature of applicant:</b>	<b>Date:</b> 26.11.2023

### For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Angharad Lewis	<b>Date:</b> 29.11.23
3	Signature:		

### For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		<b>Date:</b>
5	Signature:		

**Checklist:** Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I have completed <b>ALL RELEVANT</b> sections of the form in full.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation ( <b>where appropriate</b> )
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) <b>ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

### RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at <https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>.

**RESEARCH STAFF ONLY**

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to [pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk) , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

**STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES**

should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

**B. Ethics Form (BREC)****Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee (BREC)****Response to Applicant**

This form provides feedback from Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee (BREC) against the criteria described in the BREC Guidance document. It informs you whether or not your application has been approved by BREC.

If you wish to discuss any aspects of the feedback given, or to arrange for re-submission of your application, please contact the Lead Reviewer that sent you this form.

**Title of research**

Investigation into the relevance of shared mental models in youth work settings, supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes.

**1. Purpose and value of research****1.1 Research aims and objectives**

- This section has been completed satisfactorily  
 This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

**Comments/suggestions****1.2 Research questions**

- This section has been completed satisfactorily  
 This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

**Comments/suggestions**

As the scope of the research has changed, what are the new research questions?

**1.3 Value of research**

- This section has been completed satisfactorily  
 This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>1.4 Dissemination of findings</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
The dissemination plan should include sharing the findings back with Barnardo's and the participating services

<b>2. Research methodology</b>
<b>2.1 Sample and recruitment</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>2.2 Data collection and fieldwork</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>2.3 Interpretation of data</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>

<b>3. Responsibilities towards participants</b>
<b>3.1 Competency of researcher(s)</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>

<b>3.2 Voluntary, informed consent of participants</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.3 Consent of parents/carers</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
N/A
<b>3.4 Participant comfort</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.5 Safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.6 Confidentiality</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.7 Recording and storing data, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK/EU GDPR</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.8 Anonymity of findings</b>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.9 Concluding relationships with participants</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.10 Recognition of participants' time and effort</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>3.11 Complaints procedures</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
There is nothing in the participant information sheet or questionnaire about making a complaint, this should be added before proceeding with the research

<b>4. Researcher welfare</b>
<b>4.1 Researcher's physical welfare</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>
<b>4.2 Researcher's emotional welfare</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This section has been completed satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)
<b>Comments/suggestions</b>

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

### 5.1 Agreement with gatekeepers

- This section has been completed satisfactorily
- This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

#### Comments/suggestions

N/A

### 5.2 Agreement with Barnardo's service(s)

- This section has been completed satisfactorily
- This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

#### Comments/suggestions

### 5.3 Agreement/contract with sponsors/funders

- This section has been completed satisfactorily
- This section needs more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

#### Comments/suggestions

N/A

## 6. Fieldwork tools and attachments

### 6.1 Fieldwork tools and attachments

- Fieldwork tools/attachments are satisfactory
- Fieldwork tools need more attention (see comments/suggestions below)

#### Comments/suggestions

*The questionnaire will include a line that advises they can withdraw from the research. However, again, the questionnaire is anonymous and voluntary and provides data that draws no inference of judgment on the individual. – how will you achieve this if the questionnaire is anonymous? This either needs to be removed, or participants need to be assigned with an ID number*

Participants should be provided with a date up to which they can withdraw from the research

## Review outcome

### LEAD REVIEWER'S RESPONSE (ON BEHALF OF COMMITTEE)

**Your application has been approved**



I am satisfied that this research conforms to Barnardo's ethical research guidelines, and you may proceed with your research

I am satisfied that this research conforms to Barnardo's ethical research guidelines. We request that comments above are addressed before proceeding with your research, but you do not need to re-submit your application

**Your application has been declined**

Your submission requires amendments before it conforms to Barnardo's ethical research guidelines. Your research should not proceed at this time. Please refer to the comments given above if you wish to re-submit your application

<b>Name</b>	Laura Parkes
<b>Position</b>	Research and Evaluation Lead
<b>Date</b>	31/01/2024

## C. Consent Form



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  
**Y Drindod Dewi Sant**  
UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
**Trinity Saint David**

Rhif Adnabod Cyfranogwr:

Participant Identification

Number:

**FFURFLEN GANIATÂD  
CYFRANOGIAD**

**PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM**

**Teitl Y Prosiect: / Project Title: Investigation into the relevance of shared mental models in youth work settings, supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes.**

**Enw'r Ymchwilydd / Name of Researcher: Karen Shepherd, MA student at the University of Wales Trinity St David.**

**Blwch Cychwynnol / Please initial box**

<b>1</b>	<b>Cadarnhaf fy mod wedi darllen a deall y daflen wybodaeth dyddiedig XXXX ar gyfer yr astudiaeth uchod.</b>	<b>I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study.</b>	
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2	Deallaf fy mod yn cymryd rhan o'm gwirfodd.	I understand that my participation is voluntary.	
3	Deallaf y gellir defnyddio unrhyw wybodaeth a roddir gennyf mewn adroddiadau, erthyglau neu gyflwyniadau gan y tîm ymchwil.	I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research team.	
4	Deallaf na fydd fy enw'n ymddangos mewn unrhyw adroddiadau, erthyglau neu gyflwyniadau.	I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.	
5	Cytunaf i gymryd rhan yn yr astudiaeth uchod.	I agree to take part in the above study.	
Enw'r Cyfranogwr Name of Participant	No name required	Llofnodwyd Signature No signature required	
Ymchwilydd Researcher	Karen Shepherd	Llofnodwyd Signature Karen Shepherd	

<b>ENW A CHYFEIRIAD YR YMCHWILYDD</b>	<b>NAME &amp; ADDRESS OF RESEARCHER</b>  <b>Karen Shepherd</b> <b>MA Student at University of Wales</b> <b>Trinity St David</b> <b>Carmarthen Campus, Carmarthen.</b>
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**11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

## D. Information Sheet

Dear Research Candidate

My name is Karen Shepherd, and I am a support worker for Barnardo's. I am studying for an MA in Youth Work in the School of Institute of Education and Humanities: Centre for Childhood, Youth and Education at the University of Wales Trinity St David.

As part of my MA, I would like to invite you to participate in my research project.

This project will research how relevant individuals contribute to supporting young people, specifically looking at what relevant individuals (young people, support workers and support lodgings providers) feel are the most essential constructs or activities in helping young people achieve positive outcomes.

Your participation involves completing a questionnaire. Your consent is required at the beginning of the questionnaire. If you choose not to respond to the questions after reading them, you have the option to withdraw from the study. Please note that the study cannot be completed until you answer question 7, which is a simple evaluation of the questionnaire.

You will not be required to give your name. The questionnaire will be shared with you via an email that will include a link to MS forms. The information you will be required to give is your role within Barnardo's, for example, young person, supported lodgings provider or supported lodgings support worker; the gender by which you identify, your ethnicity and your age. Drop-down boxes will allow you to select from each category.

After careful and precise analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires, I will gladly provide you with a copy of the research findings at your request. Hopefully, the results and findings will improve understanding of the importance of teams working and thinking the same (having a shared mental model) in youth work settings.

Please complete the questionnaire by 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Your participation will help inform my research study and I would like to thank you for your contribution.

If you have any complaints regarding any part of the research, please contact my dissertation supervisor. Her name is Angharad Lewis and her email is [angharad.lewis@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:angharad.lewis@uwtsd.ac.uk).

Kind regards  
Karen Shepherd

## **E. Questionnaire**

### **Research Study Questionnaire**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Kind regards

Karen

### **Questionnaire information**

This questionnaire is a simple selection process. The researcher is investigating whether a shared mental model exists in settings where individuals directly support young people in the transition to independence. Your answers are anonymised and will not be shared externally.

The researcher is Karen Shepherd, an MA student at the University of Wales Trinity St David. Her email is

[1806377@student.uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:1806377@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

Her dissertation supervisor is Angharad Lewis and her email is

[angahrad.lewis@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:angahrad.lewis@uwtsd.ac.uk)

Please be aware that the questionnaire will only be available for 2 weeks.

1.

I consent

I do not consent

Please select the box if you give consent to participate in this research study. Your data will not be shared externally. The questionnaire is anonymous and will only collect specific data relating to your role in supported lodgings, your age, gender and ethnicity.

2.

#### **What is your role within a Supported Lodgings Service?**

Supported Lodgings provider

Young Person within the Supported Lodgings Service

Support Worker within the service

3.

#### **Please select the gender with which you identify.**

Woman

Man

Transgender

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

4.

#### **Please select your age.**

18 - 25  
26 - 35  
36 - 45  
46 - 55  
> 55  
Prefer not to say

5.

**Please select your ethnicity.**

**Asian or Asian British**

(including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, or any other Asian background)

**Black, Black British, Caribbean or African**

(including Caribbean, African, and any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background)

**Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**

(including White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, and any other Mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds)

**White**

(including English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma or any other White background)

**Other ethnic group**

(including Arab or any other ethnic group)

**Prefer not to say**

6.

**The questions.**

Please consider the following question within your role in a supported lodgings service. Please use the arrows to move your selections up and down.

Please rank the following in the order you consider to be the most important. Please select each suggestion and rank the most important at the top. Your answers can be changed multiple times. Your completed questionnaire will only be submitted once you answer question 7.

Money management (including budgeting, savings and economic self-sufficiency)

Employability and training (including knowledge of and access to services that support)

Practical independent living skills (including cooking, cleaning, health and safety and personal hygiene)

Interpersonal skills (including positive communication, positively relating to others, and working to maintain positive "peaceful" relationships in discussions)

Developing resilience (including an awareness of self, one's mental well-being and coping in different situations)

Problem-solving and self-motivation

Self-confidence and self-esteem

Authenticity (for example, your identity, values and beliefs)

Integrity (for example, doing the right thing morally, abiding by the rules)

Team-working (including working with others to achieve the best outcomes)

7.

**Please rate how easy it was to complete the questionnaire.**

1 to 5, where 5 was very easy.



## F. Table of responses from questionnaire

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Providers	1 Develop resilience	Practical Independent Skills	Practical Independent Skills	Self-Confidence	Practical Independent Skills	Integrity	Moneymanagement
	2 Money management	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Develop resilience	Interpersonal Skills	Practical Independent Skills	Practical Independent Skills
	3 Practical Independent Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Employability	Moneymanagement	Problem-Solving	Problem-Solving	Self-Confidence
	4 Integrity	Develop resilience	Money management	Practical Independent Skills	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Develop resilience
	5 Problem-Solving	Employability	Develop resilience	Problem-Solving	Team-Working	Employability	Problem-Solving
	6 Employability	Integrity	Integrity	Authenticity	Develop resilience	Authenticity	Interpersonal Skills
	7 Team-Working	Problem-Solving	Interpersonal Skills	Integrity	Integrity	Interpersonal Skills	Employability
	8 Interpersonal Skills	Authenticity	Authenticity	Interpersonal Skills	Moneymanagement	Moneymanagement	Integrity
	9 Self-Confidence	Moneymanagement	Problem-Solving	Employability	Employability	Develop resilience	Authenticity
	10 Authenticity	Team-Working	Team-Working	Team-Working	Authenticity	Team-Working	Team-Working
Workers	1 Self-Confidence	Develop resilience	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Authenticity	Practical Independent Skills	Interpersonal Skills
	2 Develop resilience	Interpersonal Skills	Develop resilience	Authenticity	Interpersonal Skills	Moneymanagement	Self-Confidence
	3 Money management	Team-Working	Integrity	Problem-Solving	Develop resilience	Employability	Develop resilience
	4 Practical Independent Skills	Self-Confidence	Interpersonal Skills	Employability	Integrity	Problem-Solving	Problem-Solving
	5 Authenticity	Practical Independent Skills	Employability	Moneymanagement	Self-Confidence	Develop resilience	Integrity
	6 Integrity	Problem-Solving	Team-Working	Practical Independent Skills	Problem-Solving	Interpersonal Skills	Practical Independent Skills
	7 Problem-Solving	Employability	Money management	Interpersonal Skills	Practical Independent Skills	Self-Confidence	Employability
	8 Employability	Moneymanagement	Problem-Solving	Develop resilience	Moneymanagement	Team-Working	Moneymanagement
	9 Interpersonal Skills	Authenticity	Practical Independent Skills	Integrity	Employability	Integrity	Authenticity
	10 Team-Working	Integrity	Authenticity	Team-Working	Team-Working	Authenticity	Team-Working
YP	1 Money management	Authenticity	Practical Independent Skills	Practical Independent Skills	Integrity	Moneymanagement	Develop resilience
	2 Practical Independent Skills	Integrity	Money management	Develop resilience	Authenticity	Practical Independent Skills	Authenticity
	3 Develop resilience	Develop resilience	Develop resilience	Interpersonal Skills	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence
	4 Problem-Solving	Interpersonal Skills	Problem-Solving	Self-Confidence	Problem-Solving	Develop resilience	Problem-Solving
	5 Employability	Self-Confidence	Self-Confidence	Integrity	Practical Independent Skills	Employability	Integrity
	6 Interpersonal Skills	Problem-Solving	Interpersonal Skills	Team-Working	Develop resilience	Interpersonal Skills	Practical Independent Skills
	7 Team-Working	Moneymanagement	Integrity	Moneymanagement	Moneymanagement	Integrity	Interpersonal Skills
	8 Self-Confidence	Practical Independent Skills	Employability	Employability	Employability	Authenticity	Employability
	9 Integrity	Employability	Team-Working	Problem-Solving	Interpersonal Skills	Problem-Solving	Moneymanagement
	10 Authenticity	Team-Working	Authenticity	Authenticity	Team-Working	Team-Working	Team-Working