

Emotional Support for Young People

Research programme for the Young people's
future health inquiry



Prepared by

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Applications will be considered on a rolling basis but the current deadline is 12.00 (noon), Monday 6 June 2022.

All applications should be submitted using our [online portal](#).

We advise all potential applicants to familiarise themselves with the application process as early as possible.

We encourage you to submit your application as soon as you can. If we reject your proposal early in the process, you are allowed to revise your application and resubmit it or submit a completely new application before the deadline.

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About the Health Foundation

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The Health Foundation

The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK.

Our aim is a healthier population, supported by high quality health care that can be equitably accessed. We learn what works to make people's lives healthier and improve the health care system. From giving grants to those working at the front line, to carrying out research and policy analysis, we shine a light on how to make successful change happen.

We make links between the knowledge we gain from working with those delivering health and health care and our research and analysis. Our aspiration is to create a virtuous circle, using what we know works on the ground to inform effective policymaking and vice versa.

We believe good health and health care are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people's skills and knowledge, we aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.



Background

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2.1 About the Young people's future health inquiry

In 2017, as part of our **healthy lives strategy** focusing on the wider determinants of health, the Health Foundation set up the **Young people's future health inquiry**: a first-of-its-kind research and engagement project to **build the policy, research and place-based agenda** to improve the future health of young people aged 12-24 in the UK.

As part of the inquiry's action phase, this call builds on previous scoping work on emotional support. It complements our work to build the policy agenda and amplify the voices of young people through policy posts in five organisations.

The **first stage of the inquiry** – which combined rigorous engagement work with young people by Kantar Public and the youth engagement specialists Livity – identified four evidence-based 'assets' which support a young person to transition into a healthy adulthood. A team from the Association for Young People's Health and UCL's Institute of Child Health found further evidence of the importance of these assets, both **in the literature** and using the **LSYPE Next Steps longitudinal cohort study**. These assets are:

The 'right' skills and qualifications

Having the academic or technical qualifications needed to pursue their preferred career.

Personal connections

Having confidence in themselves and access to social networks or mentors able to offer them appropriate advice and guidance on navigating the adult world.

Financial and practical support

Direct financial support from their parents or carers, such as being able to live at home at no cost as well as practical assistance, including help with childcare.

Emotional support

Having someone to talk to, be open and honest with and who supports their goals in life, which could include parents or carers, partners and friends, as well as mentors.

Young people involved in the inquiry linked the importance of emotional support – particularly from their families – to their mental health outcomes. This was true across the age range (12–24 years) and for young people resident with their parents or resident elsewhere. They also recognised the importance of the social and economic contexts of their family life as critical factors in shaping family members’ capacity (or ‘bandwidth’) to provide emotional support.

There is a well-established link between the wider determinants of health, such as economic security, and young people’s mental health outcomes ([WHO, 2014](#)). This has been evident throughout the inquiry and has informed the conceptual framework underpinning this work ([see Appendix A](#)). This framework proposes that psychosocial pathways play a key role in the relationship between wider determinants and mental and physical health outcomes.

Emotional support from family is a key part of these psychosocial pathways. Research has demonstrated that emotional support (especially perceived emotional support) can act as a protective factor or ‘buffer’ when it comes to young people’s mental health outcomes. This call is interested in exploring the combined influence of wider contextual factors (as defined below) on young people’s family relationships and the emotional support that they experience.



2.2 Area of focus

Following a scoping exercise – including engagement workshops with young people, parents and frontline professionals, and a **scoping review** conducted by the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families – we are now seeking high quality proposals exploring one or both of the following priority areas:

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Priority area 1

Understanding the role played by family relationships, and hence the emotional support experienced by young people, as part of the wider determinants of health.

2

Priority area 2

Understanding the specific impact of family members' working lives on the emotional support that young people experience from their families.

The second priority area allows researchers to carry out an in-depth investigation within a defined sector, where there has been recent change and where there is potential for policy influence.

2.3 Working definitions

Young people involved in the inquiry defined emotional support as ‘having someone to talk to, be open and honest with and who supports their goals in life. This could include parents or carers, partners and friends, as well as mentors.’ Building on the definition given by those young people, we define ‘emotional support’ in this research programme as the *psychological resources (including empathy, caring, reassurance, and trust) that young people perceive to be available to them, or that are actually provided to them, through their familial and other interpersonal relationships.*

For this call, we take a broad approach to the definition of family. We define ‘wider family’ as *parents/guardians, siblings and grandparents, as well as aunts, uncles and cousins.*

We define ‘contextual factors’ as *macrolevel contextual factors such as political and economic factors, sociodemographic factors such as age and gender, and socioeconomic ‘stressors’ such as housing (see **Appendix A for fuller list**).*



Call for proposals

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3.1 Priority areas

The Emotional Support for Young People programme will provide funding to research teams for 12–18 months to complete research projects focusing on one of the above-mentioned priority areas. We have highlighted indicative research questions for each of the priority areas below, but we will consider any research questions that fit within either priority area.

Priority area	Example research questions
Priority area 1: Understanding the role played by family relationships, and hence the emotional support experienced by young people, as part of the wider determinants of health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How and to what extent do the wider determinants of (mental) health also have an impact on young people’s relationships with their families? If so, what is the subsequent impact on the emotional support experienced by young people?• How do these effects vary depending on the social characteristics of the family?
Priority area 2: Understanding the specific impact of family members’ working lives on the emotional support that young people experience from their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do family work and family working patterns across the socioeconomic spectrum affect young people’s relationships with their family and the subsequent emotional support experienced by young people?• To what extent are these shaped by employment policies and practices and to what extent by wider sociocultural and economic factors?• How do these effects vary depending on the social characteristics of the family?

3.2 Potential research approaches

We expect researchers to identify appropriate hypotheses relating to these priority areas. We expect many of the proposals to consider association and causality. We also want researchers to think carefully about issues such as age (eg the experiences of young people aged 12–16 years may be considerably different to those aged 21–24) and other demographic factors.

The open call will fund applied research, ie findings with direct relevance to policy decisions relating to young people’s mental health outcomes or ‘family-friendly employment’ ([Dex and Smith, 2002](#)). We will only fund research that meets our assessment criteria, which means we may not necessarily fund projects under both priority areas.

We will require researchers to adopt an inclusive approach in their proposals. This applies to the research design, including consideration of social stratification (eg impacts for different types and backgrounds of households) and use of participatory research methods. It also applies to the way in which the project will be carried out, eg involving young people in the governance or delivery of the project (with clear plans to support this involvement). We expect proposals to be written in a way which would be accessible to young people, including those on our youth panel.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ways in which researchers can currently collect data (especially qualitative research methods), so we encourage researchers to be creative and inclusive but pragmatic when selecting research methods for their projects. For both priority areas, we suggest that researchers consider the impact of the pandemic as a variable or event in a natural experiment.

3.3 Scope of this programme

The following parameters are within the scope of this programme

Upstream activities (eg social policy) and their impacts on the wider determinants of health, and their subsequent impact on the emotional support experienced by young people.

Trends in the wider determinants of health and the implications of these for the emotional support experienced by young people.

The associations or causal links between contextual factors (eg employment or housing) and family relationships, and their subsequent impact on the emotional support experienced by young people.

Ecological approaches, eg systems-based or place-based research (including virtual spaces).

Specific groups or cohorts of young people, eg age subgroups, where these groups are believed to be differentially affected by particular contextual factors.

Specific groups or types of families where these are shown to be differentially affected by particular contextual factors (eg an exploration of whether the emotional support received by the young people in one type of family is particularly affected by a policy shift).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a variable or event in a natural experiment.

Widening or narrowing inequalities (eg are there differences between parents who are able to work from home and those who aren't, in terms of the emotional support that young people experience? Does this exacerbate existing inequalities?)



The following parameters are out of scope for this programme

Young people under the age of 12 or over the age of 24 (although context from before the age of 12 and outcomes beyond the age of 24 may be considered).

Direct influences on young people's mental health (eg bullying), rather than influences on the young people's relationships with their families.

Characteristics of the relationship (eg parenting style) between family and young people (unless this characteristic is believed to change as a result of contextual factors).

Emotional support where it is not perceived to come from the family (eg emotional support from peers, romantic relationships or professionals in the young person's life).

Downstream activities (eg service evaluations or individual interventions).

Family Hubs as a focus of research (but these will be considered as conduits for change).

Specific family members (eg fathers or grandparents) as the object of study (but they may be considered as variables).





Outputs, audience
and dissemination

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4.1 Outputs

The formal outputs from each project will be an annual award report and a final research report. We will also encourage the grant holders to publish their work in academic journals and blogs, and to present their work at meetings and conferences.

We strongly encourage interim outputs (including blogs, working papers and briefings) to contribute to the live discussion among policy audiences.

We will assess the outputs and impact of this programme through several metrics including the number of publications in academic journals and citation figures, tracking the influence of ideas that emerge from the research in policymaking and future research agendas, and invitations to present the work at meetings and conferences. Grant holders will capture these metrics as part of the impact reports for their projects.

4.2 Audience

1

Priority area 1

Key audiences for outputs will include those involved in policy discussions on family policy and youth policy, and youth organisations who express an interest in young people's mental health.

2

Priority area 2

Key audiences will include organisations with an interest in employee wellbeing and innovative working practices, including relevant employers, trade unions and employer bodies.

We strongly encourage proposals to demonstrate engagement with these audiences as part of the planning processes for the work. Partnerships which ensure greater impact with these audiences are more likely to be considered.

4.3 Dissemination

We expect the research funded through the Emotional Support for Young People programme to be widely disseminated both during and beyond the formal end of the programme. Where appropriate, the Health Foundation will explore ways to synthesise and disseminate learning from the research programme in line with our wider organisational objectives. This will include thinking about how we bring grant holders together and disseminate early findings. This is likely to involve stakeholder influencing work in the relevant sectors, including the youth and families sector, and the employment sector.

We will use the outputs to help design a programme of influencing activities targeted at different decision makers. The plan for this remains adaptable to the findings of the work and the changing external context, but possible activities may include:

Publications

Including briefings, reports, good practice guides and local area 'toolkits'.

Events

Including roundtable events targeting the UK government or devolved governments and speaking slots at relevant sector conferences.

Partnership opportunities

Including commissioning interested organisations to design a contact programme for decision makers.



Budget

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5.1 Budget

The overall programme budget is £750k, which will be used to fund four to six research projects with budgets of £100k–£200k over a 12–18 month timeframe.

As a charitable foundation, we will only fund the directly incurred costs of the research. We do not fund overheads. The research will be supported through a charitable grant, which is not liable for VAT.



Governance arrangements

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6.1 Research governance

A lead Research Manager will oversee the rapid open call and the programme, monitoring progress against programme milestones and objectives with support from within the Health Foundation.

We expect each project team (grant holder) to set up a project advisory group and/or steering group to guide or steward delivery of their project against agreed milestones.

We encourage project teams to involve young people in these groups. We strongly expect the grant holders to meaningfully engage with young people in the design and delivery of their projects and will require details of the plans for this at application stage.

6.2 Information governance

We expect the proposed projects to meet organisational and legal information governance requirements. We will assess this during the application process.

6.3 Advisory groups

The programme will be guided by two advisory groups:

Group

1

Our existing youth panel (convened by **Leaders Unlocked**) has been involved from the outset of this programme. The youth panel is made up of young people aged between 14 and 24 from across the UK who have acted as peer researchers for the Young people's future health inquiry, or who have taken part in mental health projects for Leaders Unlocked. The youth panel will be involved in assessing applications and representatives from the panel will contribute to decision making at shortlisting and interview stages. After the awards have been made, the main purpose of the youth panel will be to contribute 'on the ground' perspectives to steer the work and act as a 'critical friend' to the programme.

Group

2

The technical advisory group will be set up once funding has been committed. Members will be selected based on their ability to contribute their expertise to the methodological and technical aspects of the chosen projects and advise on the wider programme aims. The group will include policymakers, public health professionals and relevant academics as well as two representatives from the youth panel. The main purpose of the advisory group will be to act as a 'critical friend' to the programme and provide technical oversight.

We will also invite two representatives from the youth panel to join the existing programme steering group once the programme is underway. This group will oversee the strategic links arising from the programme.



Application and selection process

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7.1 Who can apply?

This call is open to suitably qualified and experienced research teams based in the UK (although individual members may be based abroad). We expect the lead applicant to have suitable research expertise. We encourage applications from multidisciplinary teams combining expertise from a broad range of disciplines, including social psychology, sociology and other social sciences.

We expect young people to be meaningfully involved in the design and delivery of any proposed research. If you are not planning to involve young people, you should explain why.

Our priority is to fund standalone projects, but we may consider co-funding projects or providing additional funding for an existing research project. Please contact us to discuss this prior to submitting an application.

If applicants wish to apply for additional funding for an existing project, they should make sure that:

- the research would finish within 12–18 months of the point when the Health Foundation programme would start
- there is a clear rationale for the combined/additional funding, and why our Health Foundation funding is needed
- there is written confirmation that the other funding body is happy with a co-funding model when applying to us.



As a funder, we are committed to inclusion. We encourage applicants who are concerned about barriers in the application process to contact us about their concerns.

7.2 How to apply

You should submit your application via our online platform:

<https://healthfoundation.force.com/applicantportal/s/>

The application form has the following sections:

About your project

1,900 words max

Key stakeholders

300 words max

Sustainability

500 words max

Patient and public involvement

250 words max

Environmental sustainability; diversity & inclusion; safeguarding

300 words max

Team expertise and experience

500 words max

Budget information

500 words max

Project plan

1,300 words max

Project risks

500 words max

Members of our youth panel will review applications that make it through the longlisting process, so you should make every effort to write your application in plain English.

7.3 Key dates

The deadline to submit proposals is 12.00 (noon), Monday 6 June 2022. We will not accept applications submitted after this time.

Activity	Date(s)
Launch of the call for proposals	Wednesday 6 April 2022
Information call	Wednesday 27 April 2022 (13:00–14:00)
Longlisting	Weekly
Internal review	Weekly
Close of the call for proposals	12.00 (noon), Monday 6 June 2022
External peer review	Mid–late June 2022
Panel meeting for shortlisting and interview selection	Friday 8 July 2002
Invitations to interview	By Monday 11 July 2022
Interviews and final selection	Friday 15 July 2022
Commitment of funds	Mid–late July 2022

7.4 Information call

Information calls offer applicants the opportunity to hear more about the programme and ask questions to clarify understanding.

We will hold an information call on Wednesday 27 April 2022. If you would like to attend, please register your interest by emailing us at youngpeople@health.org.uk. Attendance is optional, but we strongly encourage you to take part.

If you have any questions about the wider programme, please email them to us in advance of the information call if possible. Please note that we will not be able to answer specific technical questions about individual project proposals.

Our responses to these questions will be added to a Frequently asked questions document, which we will upload to our website soon after the information call.

7.5 Longlisting criteria

Health Foundation staff will longlist applications against the following criteria:

- alignment with the programme aims
- appropriateness of the proposed research methods
- value for money of the proposal.



We may reject a proposal at this stage for the following reasons:

- it is out of scope
- the approach or methods are inappropriate
- the proposed budget is much lower/much higher than expected and has not been justified.



If we reject your proposal at this stage, you are allowed to revise your application and resubmit it or submit a completely new application before the deadline. We therefore encourage you to submit your application as early as you can.

7.6 Assessment criteria

Proposals will be internally reviewed, reviewed by our youth panel and externally peer reviewed against more detailed assessment criteria.

Our internal assessors will be looking for evidence of the following:

- a strong alignment with the priority areas of this call
- findings that would be relevant to policy decisions or practice change
- a well-planned research approach and methods that are robust and feasible
- a researcher or team with the right strengths, expertise and credibility to deliver the research
- value for money.



Our youth panel will be looking for evidence of the following:

- a strong alignment with the priority areas of this call – particularly alignment with the findings of the Young people’s future health inquiry
- findings that would be relevant to policy decisions or practice change – particularly findings which they think are relevant to live policy or practice issues they see in their lives
- the strength of youth involvement in the application.



A panel of external peer reviewers will then review the applications rated most highly. This panel will be made up of academic researchers, policy leads from relevant research organisations and two young people from our youth panel.

The external peer review panel will be looking for evidence of the following:

- the quality and technical merit of the research plan
- the relevance of the proposed research to policy or practice change.





Further information

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If you have any queries about the application process that are not addressed in this document – or the forthcoming information call or Frequently asked questions document – please email **youngpeople@health.org.uk**.

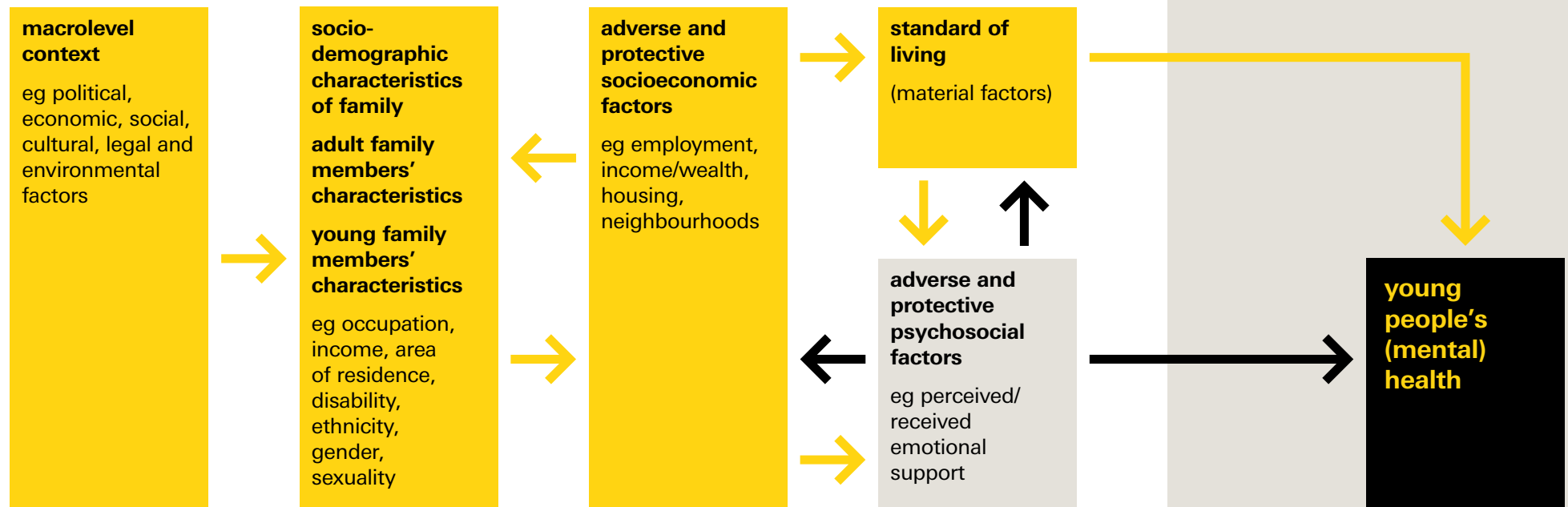
We will try to respond within three working days and we will also update the Frequently asked questions document if needed.



Appendix A: psychosocial pathways and health outcomes

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Wider determinants of health



Source: Adapted from UCL Institute of Health Equity report for Public Health England (Bell, 2015)

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