Reflecting on digital youth work research during COVID-19

**Dr Amy Calder, YouthLink Scotland
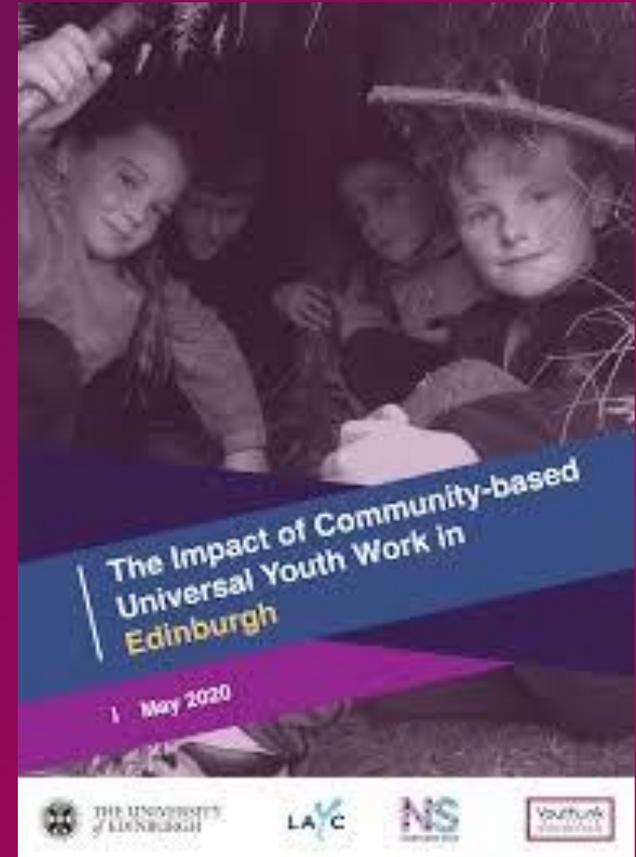Kelly McInnes, Northern Star**

Background

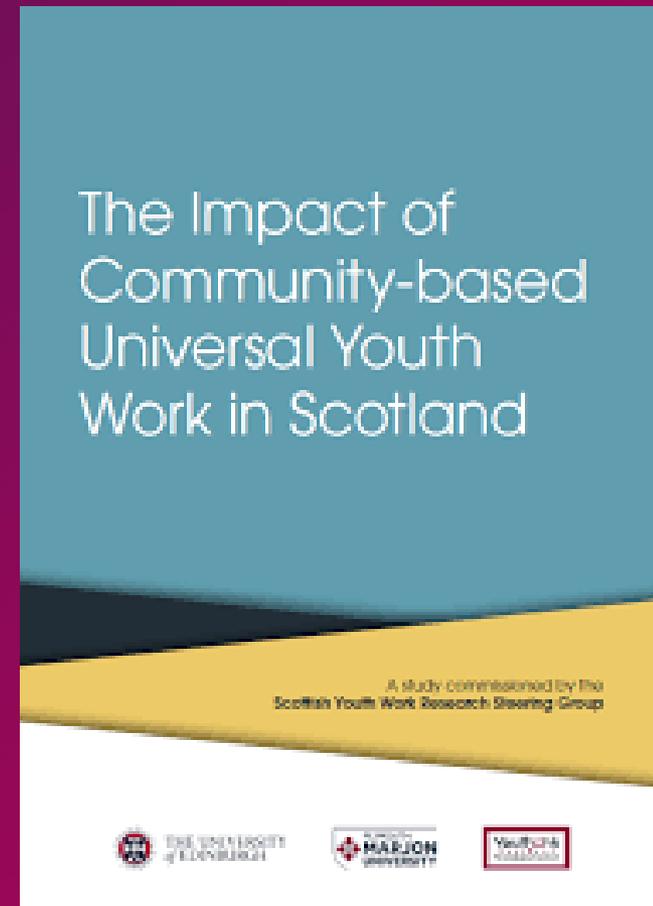- 2019-2020 YouthLink Scotland, Northern Star and University of Edinburgh worked in partnership in local studies

Universal youth work:
➢ Open to all young people
➢ Its purpose is not pre-determined or aimed at addressing specific issues or problems

The Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Edinburgh

May 2020

Transformative Evaluation
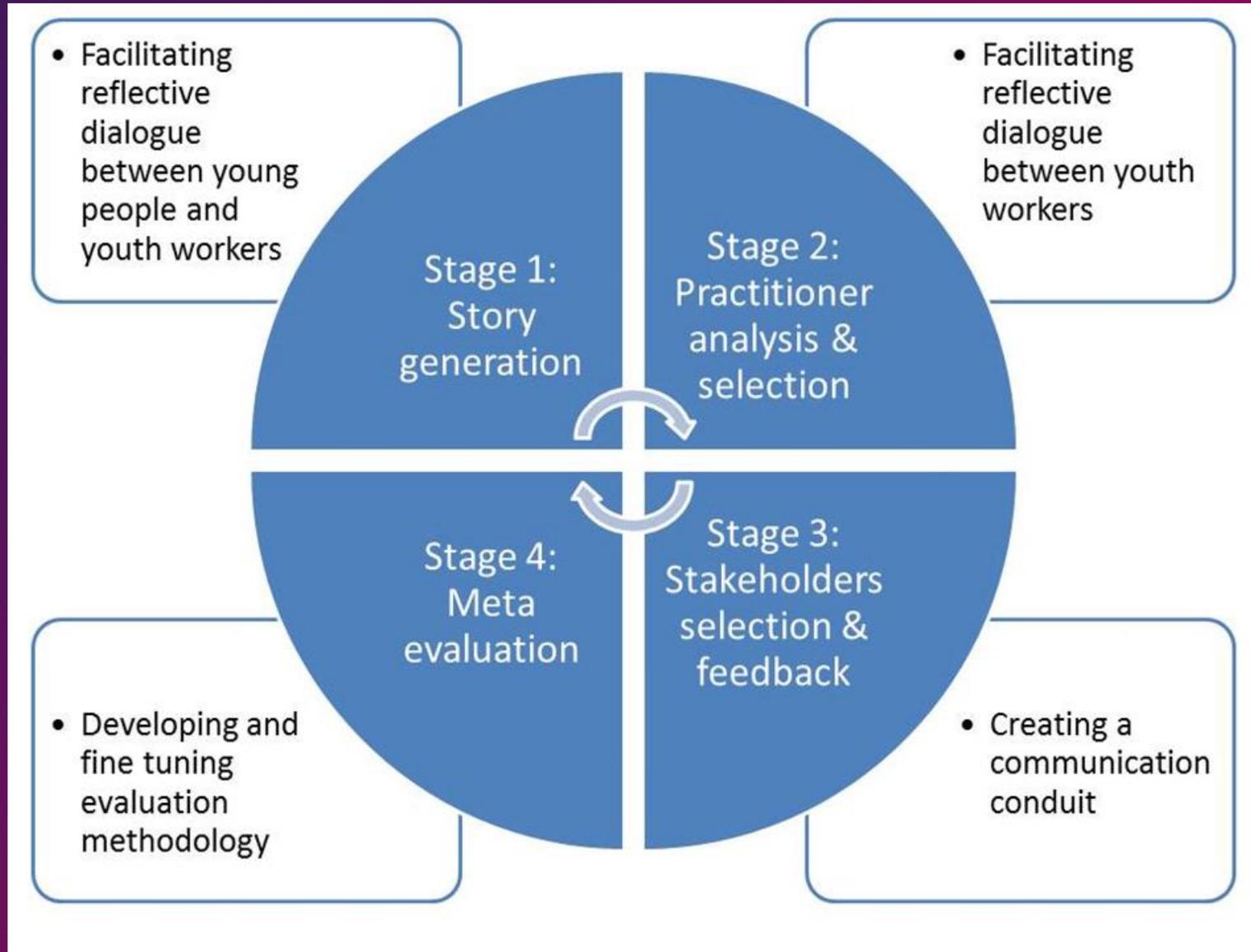
- Developed by Dr Sue Cooper (University of St Mark and St John)
- Collection of co-authored significant change stories
- Reflective conversation between a young person and their youth workers

The Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Scotland

A study commissioned by the Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group

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Transformative Evaluation

- Facilitating reflective dialogue between young people and youth workers

- Facilitating reflective dialogue between youth workers

Stage 1: Story generation

Stage 2: Practitioner analysis & selection

Stage 4: Meta evaluation

Stage 3: Stakeholders selection & feedback

- Developing and fine tuning evaluation methodology

- Creating a communication conduit

#youthworkchangeslives

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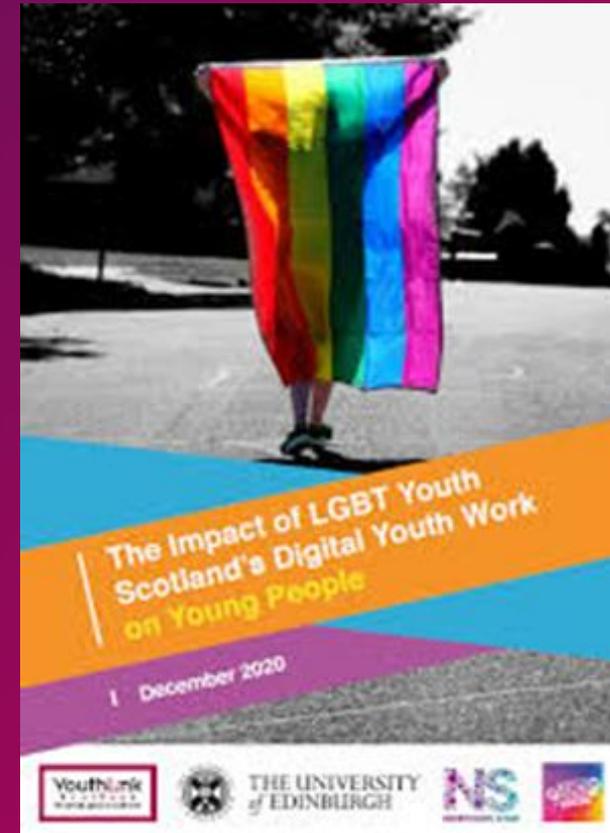The national agency for youth work

How we adapted the methodology online

- Training youth workers in the methodology and collection of significant change stories
- Youth workers collect story online
- 2 coding days with youth workers
- Northern Star – analysis and report writing
- University of Edinburgh - verification

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The impact of LGBT Youth Scotland's digital youth work during lockdown

"During lockdown, what do you think has been the most significant change that occurred for you as a result of engaging with us online?"

The Impact of LGBT Youth Scotland's Digital Youth Work on Young People

1 | December 2020

YouthLink Scotland | THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH | NiS

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Key Findings

What was the impact of LGBT Youth Scotland's digital youth work on young people during lockdown?

❖ Reduced isolation (86% of stories)

❖ Improved wellbeing (77% of stories)

❖ Personal growth (68% of stories)

❖ Increased resilience (36% of stories)

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How was that impact achieved?

What youth work does

- **Group work opportunities (77%)**
- **Individual support (50%)**
- **Participation opportunities (45%)**

How youth work delivers

- **Safe and inclusive digital space (73%)**
- **Regular scheduled youth work (59%)**

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Reflections on findings

- **Findings differed from previous studies**

- **Findings were linked to context – lockdown**

- **Providing regular and consistent youthwork digitally was important**

- **Digital youth work was an anchor**

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Breakout Rooms Activity

'What has been the most significant research learning you have taken during lockdown?'

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Reflections on the process - Success

- We were able to conduct the research
- Added to evidence base on the impact of digital-youth work
- Young people had an opportunity to have reflective conversations with their youth workers
- Workforce development – research training for youth workers across Scotland
- Creative online tools – Padlet
- Ideas for taking forward to future research

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Reflections on the process - Challenges

Data collection
- Stories from the young people tended to be shorter
- Gathered fewer stories than we aimed to

Data coding
- Participative process is harder to deliver in a digital space
- Tried to replicate offline coding day online but in future studies we would possibly rethink the coding process

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Researcher wellbeing

- Focused on participant wellbeing (young people)

- Our youth workers were beginner researchers

- Researching online in a pandemic can be a lonely experience

- More emphasis on researcher wellbeing and support in future online studies

Questions

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Thank You

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