

Student Researchers: Increasing evaluation capacity through peer evaluation

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NERUPI: Fostering Meaningful Student Voice
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Why Student Researchers?

- Find a new, pro-active way to gather qualitative data on the impact of LH outreach activities delivered as part of Uni Connect.
- Student voice usually gathered via focus groups.
- Wanted broader and more honest student feedback.
- Participant Action Research approach
- Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – 1989.
- Still few studies / examples / little literature.

What we did: Academic Year 2021/22

- Student Researcher groups in 4 schools, 1 college.
- Students in Years 9 & 10, Level 3 Years 1 & 2.
- 33 students took part – 21 boys / 12 girls.
- 3 visits planned starting before October half term.
- Delayed start until December mainly due to Covid.
- Meant less visits - 2 at 3 schools, 1 at 1 school.
- Student conference at the University - summer 2022.
- Collaboration with 3 other UC partnerships - HOP / Inspiring Choices / Sussex Learning Network.
 - Ran one college and one school group after Easter.

How the SRs worked: A case study

- Students selected by their Head of Year for their '*confidence and ability to make the most of the task set*'.
- 8 Year 9 & 10 students – 4 each Year, UC/non-UC split.
- Initial 90 mins. workshop – Early February:
 - Involved a member of LH delivery team and the Careers Lead.
 - Included an icebreaker, naming the group 'Young Researchers', what questions students could ask their peers as well as how they would collect and report back the information.
 - Given freebies – notebooks, pens etc.
 - Year 10 divided their year group by tutor group to avoid duplication.
 - Year 9 mainly aimed to feedback back from their friendship group.
 - Gelled as a group and worked together well.
 - Students started planning their next steps, asked to gather feedback from peers on LH activities before our next visit.

Session 2: Late March

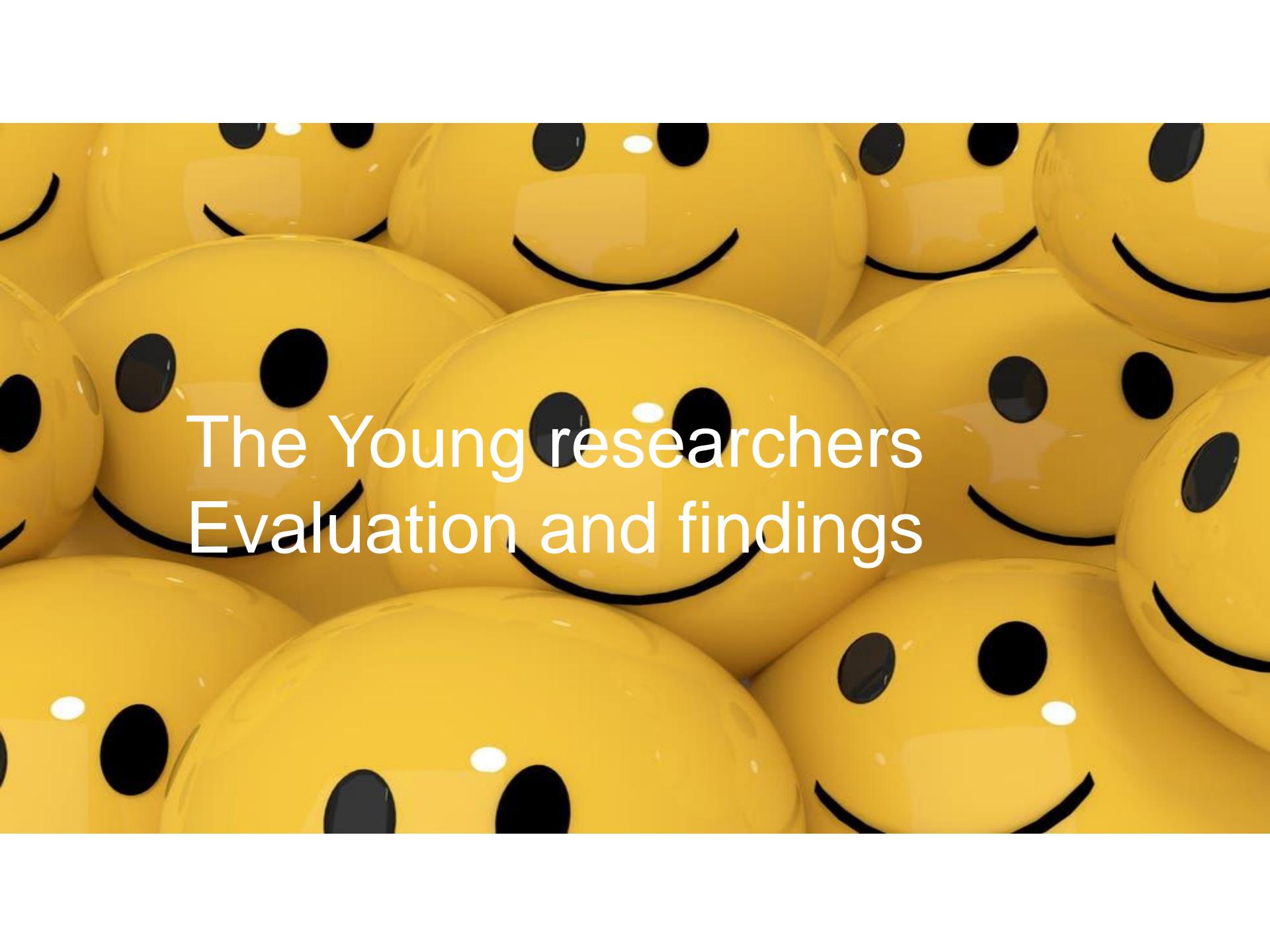
- Students presented results as a PowerPoint presentation.
- Badges with the group's name, students wore them with pride.
- Gave them an identity, made other students curious.
- They had been meeting regularly, at least once a week.
- Regular meeting kept them motivated, always something to add in.
- Found it easy to ask their peers for feedback on activities.

'They were really self-motivated as a group, I have not had to do any chasing around. Everyone is on board'.

(Careers Lead)

'We have been constantly feeding back information. If we had anything new, then we wouldn't necessarily forget the new information.'

(Student)



The Young researchers
Evaluation and findings

Session 2: Late March cont...

- Yr 10 fed back on a HE talk, Yr 9 on a My University activity.
- Collated responses and presented to us in a 15 slide-long PowerPoint – everyone contributed something.
 - Careers Lead impressed - extra points and a hot chocolate reward.
- What the students learnt from taking part:
 - Teamwork;
 - It improved their communication and confidence skills;
 - Time management;
 - Gather feedback as soon as possible, otherwise students forget;
 - Tell students beforehand that they are going to ask them questions;
 - Other students ‘mess around’ and do not always ‘take it seriously’;
 - Not all Form Tutors were supportive or ‘on board’.
- It was fun – they liked getting to work with people they did not usually work with and getting to know everyone.



The student conference: mid-July

- An opportunity for the students to feed back their findings *directly* to LH.
- Certificate, £10 Amazon voucher reward, lunch - Pizza.
- Campus Tour – a big hit.
- Felt their presentation and feedback would help LH with the future delivery of programmes.
- Felt that their presentation had been well received.

‘The students were inspiring and a true credit to their school’.

‘I enjoyed speaking my mind and having conversations with others in the room, it was a friendly environment’.

‘I loved it and would love to do it all again next year if I could’.



Lessons learnt: Do

- ✓ Provide school with a detailed brief of what the initiative involves and the skills and attributes the students will require to carry out the tasks.
- ✓ Get buy-in from key members of staff i.e., the Careers Lead, and ensure appropriate support is in place.
- ✓ Explain clearly to the students what they are being asked to do and why.
- ✓ Encourage students to use the question framework as a guide *only* and to use their own wording as appropriate.
- ✓ Encourage students to meet as a group in between sessions, with or without their teacher.
- ✓ Use student feedback, or lack of, as talking points to gain a deeper understanding of their issues and concerns relating their future.
- ✓ Arrange a day when students can share their findings more widely, i.e., feed back to their local partnership or SLT.
- ✓ Listen to the students feedback and act upon it.

Lessons learnt: Don't

- ✗ Give the students too many activities to gather feedback on.
- ✗ Ask them to gather feedback on activities that were a long time ago or not substantial / memorable.
- ✗ Expect to get all the students you ask for, in the right combination.
- ✗ Expect the students to know why they are in the initial workshop.
- ✗ Expect everyone to have been productive.
- ✗ Expect everyone to turn up to follow-up sessions.
- ✗ Expect the feedback to be neatly packaged / summed up in a PowerPoint or a word document; if it is then it's a bonus.
- ✗ Rush your time with the students, recommend 90 minutes for the first session. One hour for follow-up sessions.
- ✗ Require students to participate.
- ✗ Involve Year 11 or 13 students.

Resources

- Guidance for setting up and running Student Researchers in schools / colleges
- Timetables for long and short programmes
- Workshops – 1, 2 and 3
- Student Researchers peer questions
- Feedback guidance for student researchers
- Conference timetable
- End of day conference survey

All available on the LiNCHigher Future Focus website section
Making Student Voices Heard at:

<http://thefuturefocus.co.uk/resources/student-researchers/>

