

Transdisciplinary Research for the  
Improvement of yoUth Mental Public Health

**Network report 2018-2023**



**TRIUMPH**



**UK Research  
and Innovation**

# ABOUT THE TRIUMPH NETWORK

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Childhood and adolescence are key life stages that set the foundations for health in adulthood. However, young people face real challenges to maintain their mental health. They live in an ever-changing environment, driven by changes in technology, communications and the media. Changes that have coincided with an increase in mental health problems.

One in ten children and young people experience mental health problems, yet we have few effective solutions for the improvement of youth mental health. Treatment and care, when accessible, treats the problem and not the causes. We believe there is a different approach – one that seeks to understand young people’s strengths, which we can draw on to improve mental health. This approach takes young people themselves as the starting point.

The Transdisciplinary Research for the Improvement of Youth Mental Public Health (TRIUMPH) Network’s vision is to facilitate a transdisciplinary, solution-focused, co-production approach to better understand and address youth public mental health. We aim to identify opportunities and challenges within the field and facilitate new research collaborations to strengthen the UK evidence base. Our ultimate goal is to improve mental health and wellbeing among young people across the UK.

To achieve this, over the last four years the TRIUMPH Network has brought together young people, health practitioners, policymakers and those working with voluntary organisations, with academics from across a wide range of disciplines. By working together and sharing learning we have identified new ways to improve mental health and wellbeing, especially among vulnerable and disadvantaged groups where need is greatest.



# ABOUT THE TRIUMPH NETWORK (CONT.)

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One of the core principles underpinning TRIUMPH is that young people should be involved in all of the work that we do and the projects we support. As well as supporting research projects to effectively engage with young people the TRIUMPH Network has its own Youth Advisory Group, who have played a key role in ensuring youth voices have been included in all of our network plans and activities.

This report summarises the key activities and achievements of the network. All of our network outputs and resources can be found on our legacy website: [triumph.sphsu.gla.ac.uk](http://triumph.sphsu.gla.ac.uk).





## Network membership

575



Network members

47% academia, 36% practice, 3% policy, 3% private, 11% other members

45%



Young people (under 25)

48%



Early career researchers

## Network activity overview

Coproduced research agenda for improving young people's public mental health

9



UK-wide events

8



Academic papers

Funded 4 research projects worth £138,485 involving 6 universities and 8 non-academic partner organisations

Leveraged over £6.7 million in new mental health research funding

20



Newsletters

23



Blogs and research highlights

2389



Twitter followers



Sustained involvement of young people



# TRIUMPH NETWORK HIGHLIGHTS

## Research agenda-setting

In 2020, we hosted a series of workshops across the UK to coproduce a research agenda identifying priority areas for research to improve youth public mental health in collaboration with almost 200 stakeholders including young people, researchers, policymakers and practitioners.



## Funding decision-making

To assess applications to the network funding call in 2020 we brought together a panel of 12 young people from the TRIUMPH Youth Advisory Group alongside researchers, and professionals from the Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland, NHS and leading mental health charities. It was great to hear all of the different opinions and priorities of each stakeholder group, and to see young people's opinions being highly valued in the decision-making process.

*"My feedback and scores on proposals were directly used to rank proposals and decide which ones would be recommended for funding, and none of my opinions were written off just because one or more people disagreed with them." (Youth Advisor)*

*"I really felt your process was considered, inclusive, carefully planned and supported." (Professional reviewer)*

## Early Career Researcher (ECR) Forum

Our online ECR Forum was attended by over 150 delegates, and showcased the work of ECRs working in this field, as well as providing an opportunity for researchers across all sectors at an early stage in their career to receive advice and guidance from more senior scientists in the field. The exciting programme included presentations from 48 ECRs, three distinguished keynote speakers and a series of "Ask the expert" sessions.



## Advisory Group Residentials

Our three residential weekends with the TRIUMPH Youth Advisory Group have been key in building strong working relationships and friendships within this group. Each residential has involved a range of workshops and activities, ensuring young people are involved in all of the network plans. But as well as being productive we've always found time to make jokes and have fun!



## TRIUMPH Fest

In October 2022 we hosted TRIUMPH Fest, a two-day event celebrating young people's contribution to mental health research and activism. The event saw over 150 young people, academics, practitioners and policy makers come together to share their work and learn from one another. TRIUMPH Fest was a brilliant opportunity for all of our attendees to meet others and learn from one another, and it was great to be able to highlight the work and future hopes of so many incredibly committed young researchers and activists.



## Youth led research project

The TRIUMPH Youth Advisory Group have led their own research project to explore the topic 'what can adults who support young people do to help young people feel better understood?'. The young people chose the topic they were interested in and have led on every aspect of the research including the research design, fieldwork, analysis and writing up, supported by TRIUMPH staff. Key findings have been presented at two international conferences and a co-written paper has been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

# NETWORK ACHIEVEMENTS

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## **Knowledge exchange**

The TRIUMPH Network have supported researchers to share their work as widely as possible with a wide audience through blogs, podcasts, videos and research highlights. We have also hosted 9 events to allow our different stakeholder groups to come together to learn from one another and find out about the latest research, including 2 webinars, online training, an online conference, 4 in-person workshops and a 2-day festival. We also developed and piloted ReHIVE with our Youth Advisory Group, an online platform to allow young people to engage with researchers to discuss research ideas and project plans.



## **Capacity building**

The TRIUMPH Network has delivered a range of activities and training aimed at building mental health researcher capacity within the UK, and particularly in developing skills and knowledge among researchers around coproducing research with young people. Key capacity building activities include: hosting an early-career researchers (ECR) forum; delivering a webinar series on co-producing research with young people; providing funding to support network members to attend a short course on developing and evaluating complex interventions for public health; hosting workshops to support young people to learn and practice skills to support them to participate in and lead mental health research and activism projects.



## **Leading new public mental health research**

Members of the TRIUMPH Network Management Group have leveraged over £6.7 million of new funding for research to support young people's public mental health. This includes a range of projects covering topics such as loneliness among adolescents, sleep and mental health, support for care-experienced young people, academic pressure, covid-19 response work and new methods and approaches for evaluating mental health.

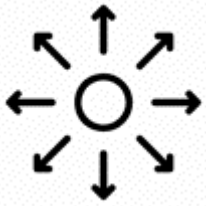
Through our Network plus-funding scheme we have supported four new research projects focussed on developing public health interventions. The research project outputs and the Network's work with young people have already been published in 8 academic papers.



## **Supporting new and existing mental health research**

The TRIUMPH Network have collaborated on and supported over 20 mental health research projects led by our network members, including research focused on schools, social connections, key groups of young people at risk of poor mental health, and response to Covid-19, among others.

The TRIUMPH team supported these projects in a variety of ways, including: members of the TRIUMPH Youth Advisory Group providing advice on the research design, project documents, engagement plans or other aspects of the project; TRIUMPH Management Group members providing input into research plans; TRIUMPH staff providing advice on young people's involvement or delivering parts of the project; and support with recruitment and dissemination of project outputs among our network members.



## **Influencing policy and practice**

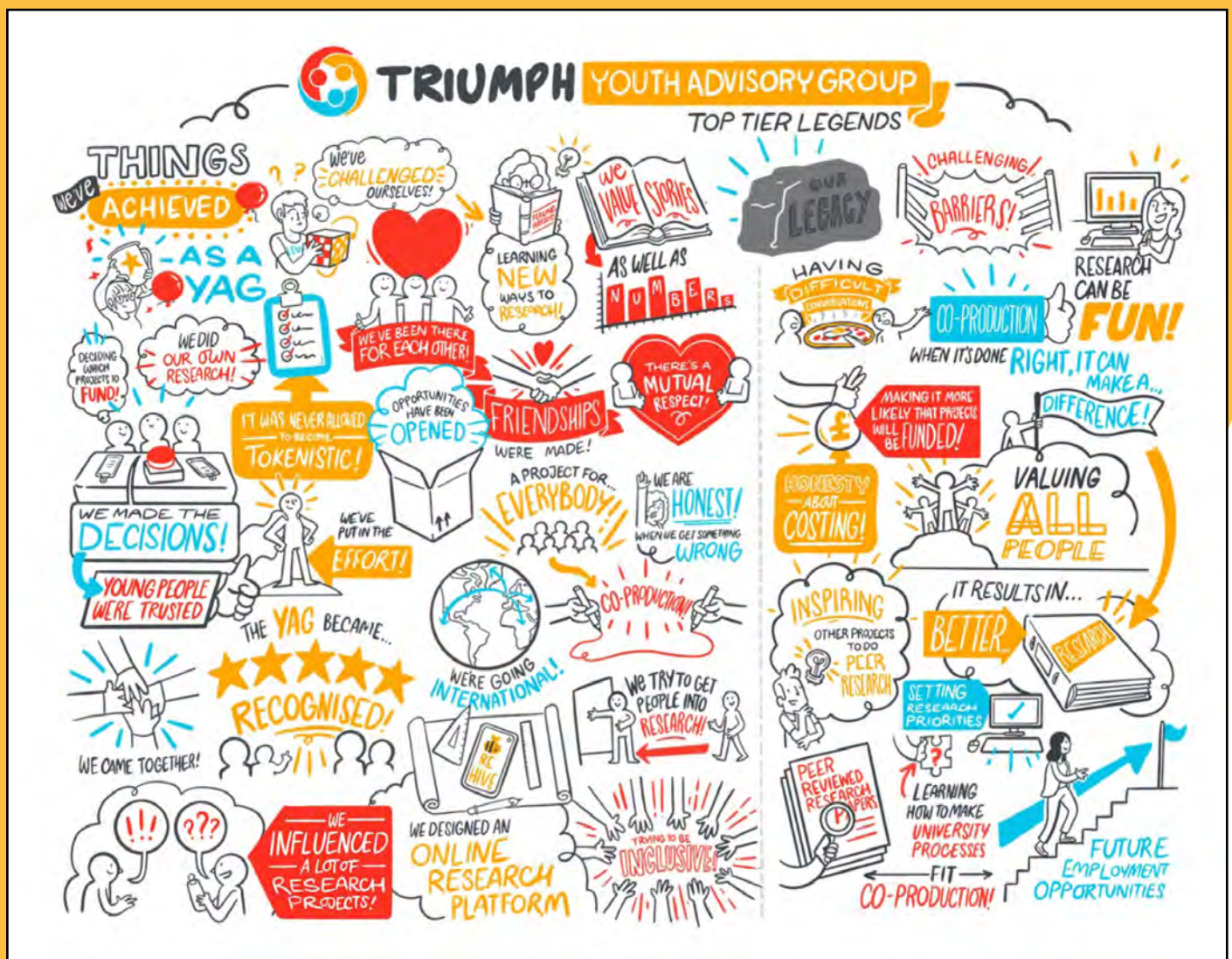
The TRIUMPH Network have been actively involved in influencing policy and practice to ensure that new research can have real-world impact. Network Management Group members are involved in government advisory boards both nationally and within the different UK regions, and the TRIUMPH Network has provided responses to national and regional government consultations. TRIUMPH staff were also involved in drafting the mental health report for the Independent Children's Rights Impact Assessment on the Response to Covid-19 in Scotland, commissioned by Scotland's Children's Commissioner.



# OUR WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Over the past four years the Youth Advisory Group have been an integral part of TRIUMPH working alongside our Network Management Group. This group of 16 young people aged 16–24 from across the UK have been involved in all aspects of network activities including providing input on strategic decision-making, involvement in our plus-fund award process, support in planning and delivering events, and leading their own research project.

At our last residential our Youth Advisory Group members were asked about what they felt the group had achieved, and what their legacy was from TRIUMPH. Their responses are captured in this illustration:



Below are a selection of quotes from our Youth Advisory Group members about what involvement with the TRIUMPH Network has meant for them:

*"What an experience!! Thank you to everyone who made TRIUMPH happen."  
"Can't believe it is officially over. So weird to think when it all started I was 16 and now I'm 21. Thank you for this amazing opportunity, it really was an amazing experience, not just the work we've done but meeting all the people in TRIUMPH and the connections we made."  
"I've had the most brilliant time as part of TRIUMPH because of all you lovely people."*

TRIUMPH staff and Youth Advisory Group members have been involved in supporting a range of research projects over the past four years, providing advice on research ideas and plans as well as supporting other researchers to effectively involve young people in the work.

Beyond the Youth Advisory Group as a Network we have aimed to make all of our events and activities as inclusive as possible for young people, and engage as many young people as possible in mental health research. One of the roles of the Youth Advisory Group was to support wider young people's involvement in the network and – despite the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic – they achieved this through TRIUMPH Fest and Feeling Understood, the youth-led research project.

Over **250** of our **network members** are young people under the age of 25

Our **research agenda setting** process involved **45** young people, a quarter of all stakeholders

Our four plus-funded projects included **6** individual young people and **1** youth advisory group as **co-investigators**

TRIUMPH Fest was attended by **60** young people **working on mental health research and activism projects**

We have developed and piloted an **online platform** to support young people to **engage** with researchers on mental health

Our research priority engagement activities involved **26** young people from **10** organisations

# PLUS-FUNDED PROJECTS

The TRIUMPH Network have funded and supported four research projects that address some of the priority areas for youth public mental health research identified by our agenda-setting process. Each project brought together a team of researchers, non-academic partners and young people with the aim of identifying, developing or evaluating interventions that could support young people's mental health.

## **Co-production or adaptation of online interventions for foster care: promoting the mental health and wellbeing of care-experienced children and young people**



Led by Dr Rhiannon Evans at Cardiff University in collaboration with the Fostering Network and Cascade Voices, this project looked at how to best develop online programmes for care-experienced young people, or how to or adapt them from in person to online delivery. The project was prompted by the move from face-to-face interactions to remote forms of engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the consequences of this change for the type and frequency of mental health and wellbeing services and interventions that were available to care-experienced children and young people and their foster and kinship carers. The team interviewed 23 participants including care-experienced young people, health and social care professionals and foster and kinship carers. These participants discussed their experiences and the strengths and challenges of online and in-person services and offered recommendations for future practice and interventions. These data were then analysed, and a final list of policy and practice recommendations were developed in collaboration with foster and kinship carers from The Fostering Network Wales's Advisory Forum and care-experienced young people from Cascade Voices and The Fostering Network's Young People's Care Forum. Recommendations cover six key areas: research; training; awareness and access; resources; choices and flexibility; safety, and protection and risk. The full project report is available on the Fostering Network website (<https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/148568>), and the project team also developed an edition of the Fostering Network magazine focused on mental health and wellbeing.

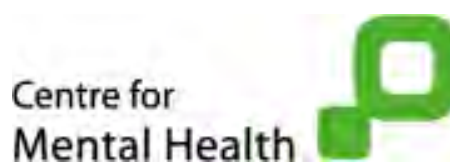


## STEP Study: research on Schools Training to Enhance support for LGBT+ Young People



Led by Dr Charlotte Woodhead at King's College London in collaboration with Mosaic LGBT+ Young Persons Trust and Jack Drum Arts, this project aimed to understand what training is already available to school staff about LGBT+ students and whether this training considers other aspects of social identity, focusing on race, ethnicity and religious/faith communities. The current training offer was then compared with what students and staff say is important to evaluate if this meets the existing need. The project also aimed to improve understanding about what makes it easier or more difficult for schools to access training on this topic. The project team undertook a scoping review of existing training courses and providers, and conducted interviews and focus groups with young people, school staff and training providers to find out more about the existing training provision and what young people and school staff wanted from the training. The research findings support the need for intersectionality informed, contextually adaptable, “Whole School Approaches” to inclusion, which involves action and collaboration across all parts of schools - including senior leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as parents, carers, community services and the wider community. The research emphasised the need to shift the narrative about sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, moving away from deficit thinking and ‘othering’, towards an approach in which young people’s intersecting identities are respected, validated and celebrated, and which is supportive of all young people’s developing gender and sexual identities. The research team presented their findings at the International Association for Young People’s Mental Health Conference 2022, and plans are underway to secure funding to continue this work. You can find out more on the study website: <https://stepstudy.co.uk/>.

## CESAME: Culturally Engaged and Sensitive Approaches to Mental health Education



## THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Led by Sneha Ramen at The Glasgow School of Art in collaboration with Leaders Unlocked, DeMontfort University and the Centre for Mental Health, this project aimed to map the experiences of young people from ethnically diverse groups during their transition from primary to secondary school to understand what mental health support young people need during this transition and develop ideas and recommendations for future policy, practice and research to enable culturally sensitive support. Using a participatory design approach the research team worked with a group of seven young people in a series of four workshops to understand current context and perceptions of mental health and mental health support: to visually capture young people's experiences of transition to secondary school; to identify key issues and opportunities for developing culturally sensitive approaches; and to prioritise ideas and develop recommendations. Key implications for schools, research, policy and practice were shared at an online dissemination event, and are also available on the study website:

<https://futurehealthandwellbeing.org/cesame>.

## Reprezent's On the Level: Covid-19 mental health programme in schools



Led by Dr Liat Levita at the University of Sheffield in collaboration with University College London and Reprezent Youth radio Station, this project aimed to develop, deliver and evaluate a mental health intervention to young people in schools. The On the Level show was developed and delivered in schools by staff and youth presenters from the Reprezent Radio Station, and data were collected through online survey tools during the show to evaluate the show's impact on participants' mental health. The project findings indicate good feasibility and acceptability of the show among participants. The show also prompted some young people to access further mental health support through NHS commissioned digital health online services. The project was awarded the prestigious HSJ Mental Health Innovation of the Year Award 2021. The team have plans to follow-up this pilot study with a larger trial, and to roll out the On the Level programme in more local authority areas in England. The project findings have been published in *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* (<https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13034-022-00534-2>), and you can find out more about the On the Level programme on the website: <https://www.reprezentonthelevel.org.uk/>.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The TRIUMPH Network is led by Dr Jo Inchley and is based at the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Science Unit at the University of Glasgow. The TRIUMPH team would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Network. This includes our **National Management Group**, including members from the University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Queens' University Belfast, Cardiff University, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Mental Health Foundation. Our incredible **Youth Advisory Group** members, and support staff from Young Edinburgh Action, Free2B, Voices Of Young People In Care, and ALPHA, who have supported all of the network activities over the last four years. Our **UKRI funders**, who supported this work through the Cross-Disciplinary Mental Health Network Plus initiative supported under Grant ES/S004351/1. And finally, a massive thank you to all of our **Network Members** who have supported and been involved in network activities. We could not have achieved so much without your support and shared learning.

Find out more

Visit our legacy website: [triumph.sphsu.gla.ac.uk](http://triumph.sphsu.gla.ac.uk)

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