NIHR | Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre

Funded by Wellcome

NEUROSEC Neuroscience, Ethics & Society

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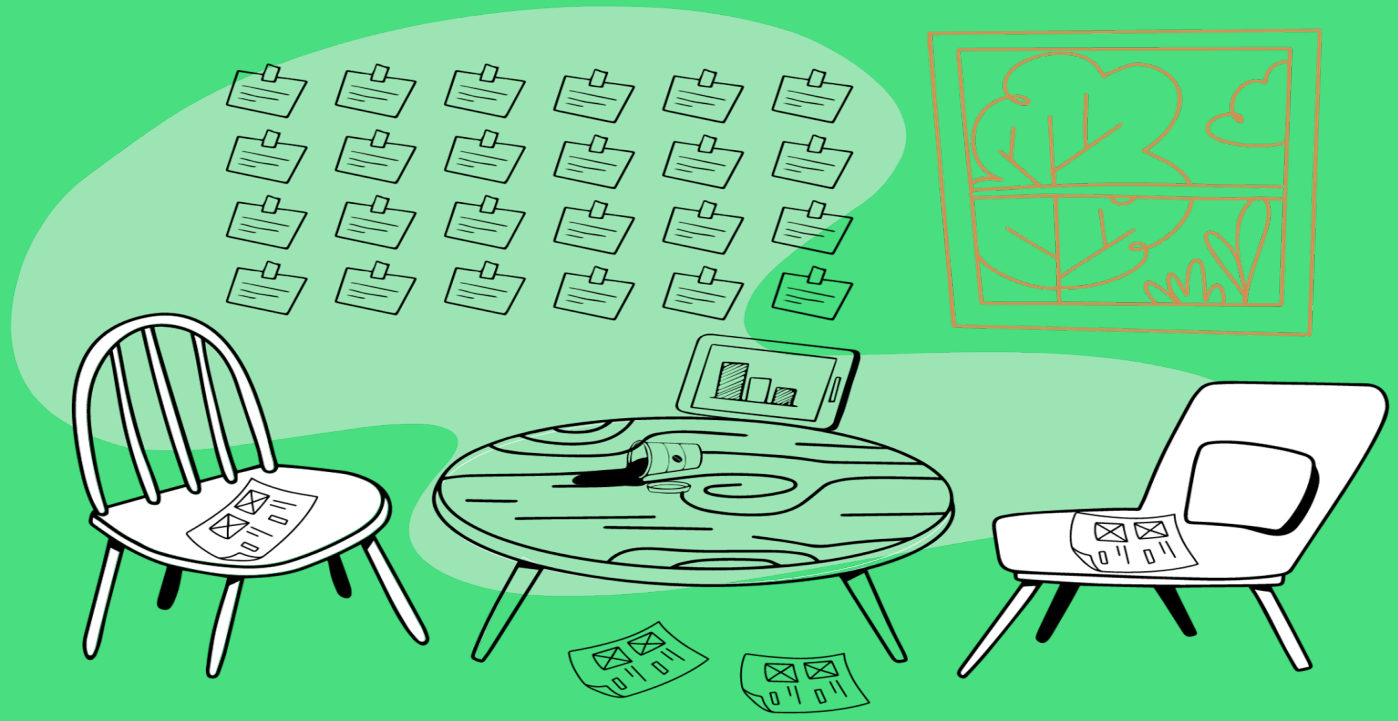
The NeurOx Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) Training Strategy

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

NeurOx YPAG



What is a co-researcher?

Co-researchers are considered experts in their area of experience, and their knowledge is valued equally to that of other researchers.

The NeurOx YPAG Co-production Ethos

- Co-production advocates for the production of joint research between experts by experience and academics/clinicians. These principles of participation have emerged from tensions in healthcare between patients and clinicians/researchers. In 2021, the World Health Organization extended the slogan “Nothing About Us Without Us” to highlight the importance of involving adolescents in the decision-making process for health-related policies that impact young people. Thus, on the one hand, there is a moral obligation for such inclusion. On the other hand, co-production is required for empirical rigour. A project that excludes the input of relevant groups with lived experience risks producing narrow and sometimes inaccurate results. In contrast, meaningful engagement with experts by experience can provide valuable insight into previously obscured areas of knowledge.

The NeurOx YPAG Co-production Ethos

- For genuine co-production to take place, it is essential that the input from the relevant group is significant and meaningful, rather than tokenistic. It is not enough to merely ask members of the relevant group for their insights. These insights then need to inform and steer the research, policy or decision-making process in a substantial way. For this reason, we develop trained YPAG members who can meaningfully collaborate in every stage of mental health research.

The NeurOx YPAG Training Plan

1) Respond to existing demand from the field of PPIEP through a rapid review.

2) Develop training based on the needs of YPAG members, Researchers and Funding Bodies.

3) Pilot the training strategy: after a recruitment round of 30 new YPAG members in April 2023, we have piloted our training strategy with the NeurOx YPAG.

4) Development: on the 14th of December 2024 we will have an in-person YPAG session to further co-develop the training strategy.

Rapid Review of YPAG Training Strategies

The Rapid Review by Zeba Kokan can be read here: NeurOx YPAG Rapid Review

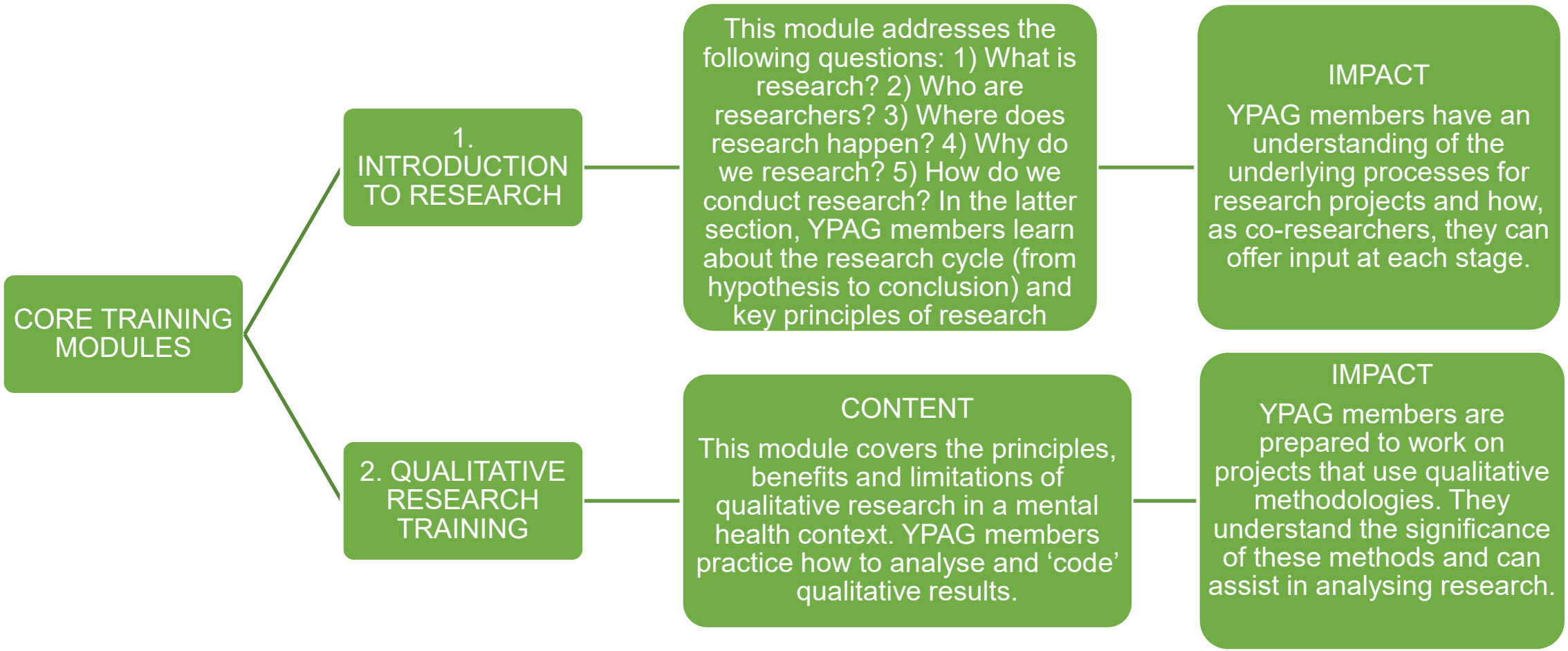
Key Findings:

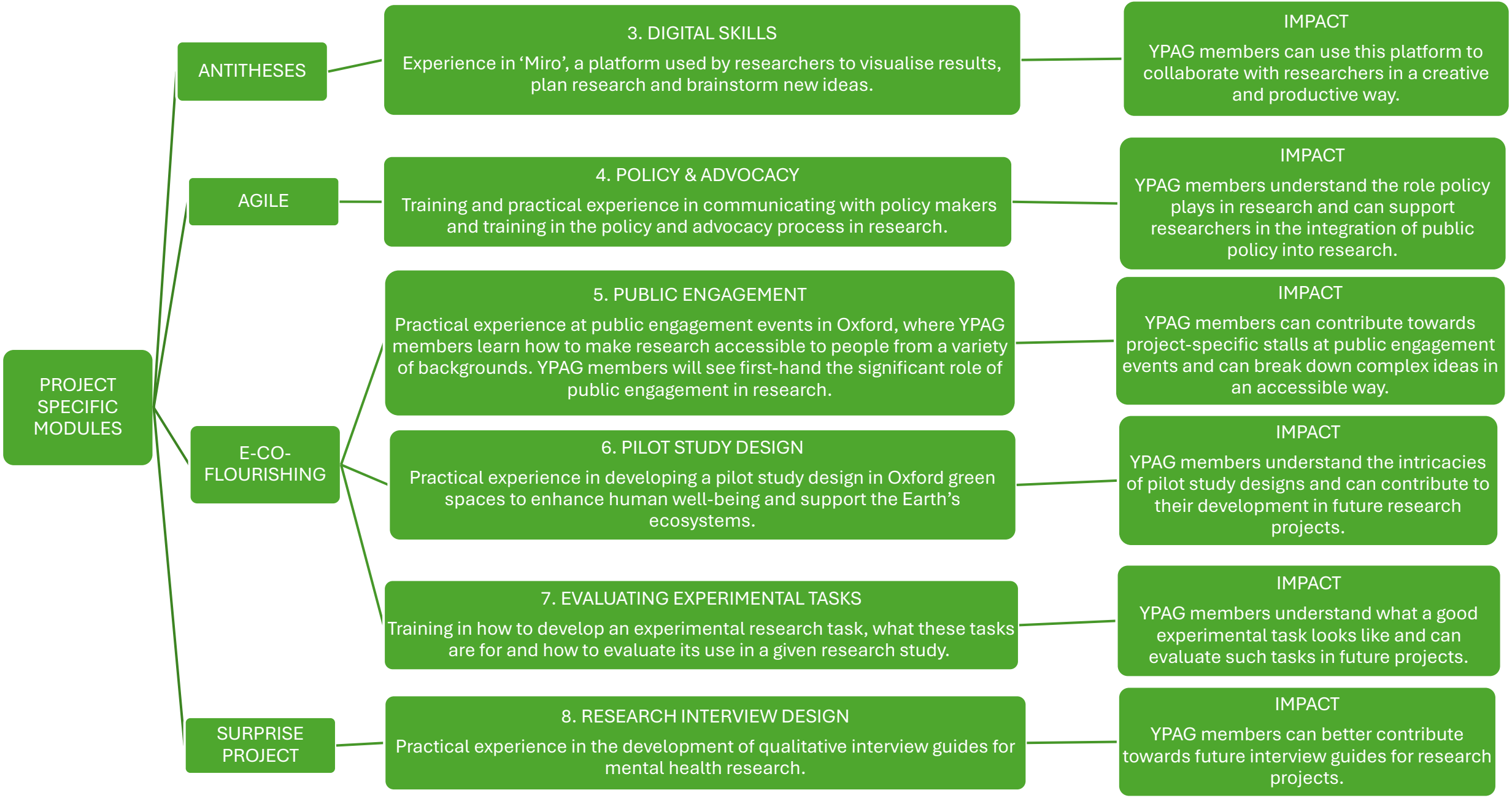
- Existing training initiatives tend to target researchers rather than young people themselves.
- There is an absence of standardisation across YPAG training practices, which results in fragmented and inconsistent delivery methods, reducing scalability and broader applicability.
- There is limited integration of cultural and contextual relevance within existing training frameworks.
- Participatory methods (such as role-playing, community mapping, and thematic analysis) have proven effective in making complex research concepts accessible to young people.
- Co-designed training initiatives demonstrate how collaboration with young people can improve engagement and ensure relevance.
- Hybrid frameworks that combine standardised core training with context-specific adaptations offer a balance of consistency and flexibility, addressing local challenges effectively.
- Sustained partnerships with local organisations and the involvement of dedicated coordinators can significantly enhance the delivery and longevity of training programmes.

The Benefit of NeurOx YPAG Training

FOR YPAG MEMBERS	FOR RESEARCHERS	FOR FUNDING BODIES
YPAG members have good foundational knowledge for a wide variety of university courses, and are especially prepared for mental health research. Our YPAG members include members who are underrepresented in UK universities like the University of Oxford.	YPAG members not only offer their valuable insights as young people, but have the skills to support the research design, analysis and dissemination process.	There is a growing call for lived experience to be central to most projects funded by the Wellcome Trust's Mental Health programme. We support genuinely co-produced mental health research meaningfully informed by a trained group of young people from diverse backgrounds.
YPAG members receive skills and certificates for their CV and UCAS applications, aiding their future career development.	YPAG members eventually learn the jargon of academic research, thus bridging the gap in researcher-young person communications.	Funding bodies support the next generation of mental health researchers from underrepresented groups, thus aiding the diversification of the research landscape. This meets the research inclusion aims of Wellcome Trust and NIHR.
YPAG members receive training from, and build connections with, leading researchers at the University of Oxford.		This training strategy meets the NIHR's aim to reward and recognise the involvement of people and communities in research. YPAG members receive certificates for completed training skills.
YPAG members feel empowered as trained co-researchers who can contribute to each stage of the research process.		This training strategy meets the NIHR's aim to improve access to evidence, materials, training and peer support so that research teams can conduct effective and meaningful public partnerships.

The NeurOx YPAG Training Strategy




PROJECT SPECIFIC MODULES
ANTITHESES
3. DIGITAL SKILLS
Experience in 'Miro', a platform used by researchers to visualise results, plan research and brainstorm new ideas.
IMPACT
YPAG members can use this platform to collaborate with researchers in a creative and productive way.
AGILE
4. POLICY & ADVOCACY
Training and practical experience in communicating with policy makers and training in the policy and advocacy process in research.
IMPACT
YPAG members understand the role policy plays in research and can support researchers in the integration of public policy into research.
E-CO-FLOURISHING
5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
Practical experience at public engagement events in Oxford, where YPAG members learn how to make research accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. YPAG members will see first-hand the significant role of public engagement in research.
IMPACT
YPAG members can contribute towards project-specific stalls at public engagement events and can break down complex ideas in an accessible way.
6. PILOT STUDY DESIGN
Practical experience in developing a pilot study design in Oxford green spaces to enhance human well-being and support the Earth's ecosystems.
IMPACT
YPAG members understand the intricacies of pilot study designs and can contribute to their development in future research projects.
7. EVALUATING EXPERIMENTAL TASKS
Training in how to develop an experimental research task, what these tasks are for and how to evaluate its use in a given research study.
IMPACT
YPAG members understand what a good experimental task looks like and can evaluate such tasks in future projects.
SURPRISE PROJECT
8. RESEARCH INTERVIEW DESIGN
Practical experience in the development of qualitative interview guides for mental health research.
IMPACT
YPAG members can better contribute towards future interview guides for research projects.

The NeurOx YPAG Training Strategy

OPTIONAL GENERAL YPAG TRAINING

9. PUBLIC SPEAKING

YPAG members are given the opportunity to present at meetings and events.

IMPACT

YPAG members develop confidence in presenting mental health research, which can aid in the dissemination of research.

10. WRITING SKILLS

YPAG members are given the opportunity to write blog posts for the NeurOX YPAG website.

IMPACT

YPAG members learn how to write in a concise and engaging manner, thus aiding in the dissemination of research and public engagement.

Watch this space to see how the NeurOx YPAG Training Strategy unfolds!

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Katrin Wilhelm

Zeba Kokan

NeurOx YPAG