



# FORMALISING THE YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS CLUB YOUNG LEADER PATHWAYS

Consultancy Report  
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## INTRODUCTION

With funding from Historic England, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is formalising the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) Young Leaders Pathway to provide structured leadership, mentoring, and archaeological skill development for 16-17-year-olds. While Young Leaders have existed, their roles have varied across branches, creating inconsistencies in training, support, and expectations.

This project, developed in collaboration with stakeholders, aims to establish a standardised yet adaptable framework that empowers Young Leaders while equipping YAC Leaders with the necessary resources. Based on extensive consultation, the pathway ensures meaningful engagement, skill-building, and clear progression routes.

This report presents a summary of the Phase One findings from surveys and focus groups, forming the foundation for Phase Two, which will refine and implement the pathway throughout 2025.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND METHODOLOGIES

The volunteer survey gathered responses from 39 YAC Leaders, assessing awareness, existing practices, and support for a structured pathway. It identified benefits, concerns, and logistical challenges, such as application processes and training needs. A survey of 30 young people explored their experiences, motivations, and expectations of the Young Leaders Pathway. It examined the pathway's impact on skill development and career aspirations while identifying preferred training structures and support needs. Open-ended questions encouraged ongoing input from participants.

The focus groups explored challenges such as maintaining engagement, ensuring accessibility for a diverse range of participants, and balancing a structured pathway with flexibility. The discussions revealed a strong desire for mentorship opportunities, progression tracking, and more explicit role expectations.





A Theory of Change Model was developed with the CBA Engagement team and helped define key objectives and structure the evaluation process. This data-driven and narrative approach ensures the Young Leaders Pathway aligns with YAC Leaders' and YAC Young Leaders' needs, reinforcing the CBA's commitment to meaningful engagement.

### **The key aims of the Theory of Change**

- **Engaging and empowering stakeholders by actively involving volunteers, young leaders, and other key participants to gather insights, foster trust, and ensure that the Young Leaders Pathways aligns with their needs and perspectives.**
- **Laying the foundation for future implementation involved developing a comprehensive report that outlines actionable steps toward formalising the Young Leaders Pathways.**

**The Theory of Change Influenced the nature of the questions tailored to each of the stakeholder groups.**





## LEADERS SURVEY

CALLING ALL YAC LEADERS!

TELL US  
YOUR  
THOUGHTS



Young Leader Pathway  
(for ages 16 & 17)

Complete the survey to have your  
say on opportunities for older YAC  
members

£50 voucher draw



Most YAC Leaders knew of Young Leader opportunities, though implementation varied across branches. Strong support for formalising the pathway was expressed, with **38 out of 39 respondents in favour**. However, we identified the challenges. Including the limited availability of 16- to 17-year-olds in some branches and concerns about additional supervision and administrative burdens. YAC Leaders and Volunteers also expressed the need for flexibility to accommodate different branch capacities.

“We need **structure**, but it shouldn’t be so rigid that it doesn’t work for different groups.”



The survey highlighted key skill areas for development, with leadership, communication, public speaking, and archaeology-specific skills being the most valued. Many respondents suggested a mentorship model to guide Young Leaders effectively. YAC Leaders recommended a structured but adaptable framework to improve the pathway, centralised resources for training, DBS checks, and a "skills passport" or progression system to track achievements.

**“We support it, but make it **low maintenance** for volunteers to implement”**

*- YAC Leader, Survey Response*








# KEY FINDINGS FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SURVEY


**YOUNG PEOPLE'S SURVEY**

**TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS** 

**Young Leader Pathway**

Complete the survey to have your say on opportunities for 16+ YAC members

£50 voucher draw



The survey was shared with YAC members, YAC Young Leaders, the Youth Advisory Network (YAN) and the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). Young participants were primarily motivated by their desire to stay connected to YAC, and develop skills for university and career applications, with some conversation around participants who may not be in formal education. Many saw the opportunity to build leadership and mentoring skills as a key benefit, as well as the opportunity to gain experience and contribute to younger YAC members' experiences.

**"Opportunities for leadership in that age group are few and far between, despite the importance and wealth of knowledge that comes with leadership roles and experience."**

*- Young People Survey"*



However, some Young Leaders reported a lack of clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities and variability in the support received from different YAC branches. There was also a clear need for structured training and more apparent progression or clarity on transferable skills gained from being a YAC Young Leader.

**"I think it would be odd to not have some sort of **handbook** at least for understanding that role, especially if you're ageing up into a **young leader role**."**

*- YLP Youth Focus group (50:16)*





## FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS

The focus groups provided deeper qualitative insights into stakeholder perspectives, expanding on the survey findings. Participants emphasised the need for both structure and flexibility to ensure the pathway adapts to different branch needs. Mentorship emerged again as a key theme, with many advocating for designated mentors within YAC branches. YAC leaders proposed a milestone-based progression system, allowing young leaders to track their development while maintaining flexibility. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of community and networking, calling for more opportunities to connect across branches and foster a sense of belonging.

A key recommendation from the focus groups is the development of a comprehensive Code of Conduct to uphold ethical standards and create a respectful, inclusive environment for Young Leaders and YAC volunteers.

**“We tried to keep it more positive and uplifting, focusing on values like being respectful, embracing opportunities, and being empowered to share your voice, rather than strict rules”**

*- YAC Leader / Volunteer Focus Group*







## RECOMMENDATIONS

The research revealed several key recommendations for formalising the YAC Young Leaders Pathway:

**Introduce a structured mentorship programme to provide guidance and support for YAC Leaders and Young Leaders.**

**Develop a comprehensive Code of Conduct to uphold ethical standards, set clear expectations, and reinforce values like respect, teamwork, and accountability.**

**Streamline the application and onboarding process by creating a centralised onboarding system, ensuring uniformity, efficiency, and accessibility across branches.**

**Establish a centralised training system with defined training requirements to ease administrative burdens and ensure consistency.**

**Assess DBS check requirements to maintain appropriate safeguarding measures.**

**Develop and consult on a progression passport system to track achievements and milestones, providing Young Leaders with a structured growth path and YAC Leaders with a clear support framework.**

**Clarify Young Leaders' goals and support mechanisms to provide a structured pathway for development.**





## BENEFITS OF FORMALISATION

Formalising the Young Leaders Pathway creates a structured framework that supports skill development and meaningful engagement. A formal pathway ensures standardised onboarding, training, clear roles, and consistent mentorship, benefiting both Young Leaders and YAC Leaders and Volunteers.

Additionally, formalisation enables the CBA to evaluate long-term impact, track progress, and refine the programme. Clear metrics help demonstrate success, secure funding, and improve visibility, ensuring a sustainable and adaptable pathway that benefits future generations.

**“For me, formalising it would actually give me more ideas on what to do.”**

*- YAC Leader, Focus group (58.50)*

## NEXT STEPS

**Phase Two will refine the pathway to ensure it is accessible, impactful, and sustainable. Through co-curation and focus groups, stakeholders will assess the feasibility and structure of proposed recommendations. This phase will develop and pilot the framework in collaboration with YAC Leaders, Young Leaders, and CBA staff. It will also explore lowering the age requirement to 14+, testing both interest and practical considerations. This process will ensure the pathway remains adaptable and inclusive, ultimately leading to the creation of essential resources for its successful implementation.**