

# Nuffield Foundation

## Invitation to tender: Peer Research for *Grown Up?* *Digital Lives* project

**Title:** Peer Research for Grown Up? Digital Lives project

**Commissioner:** Nuffield Foundation

**Aim:** To work with young people to gather insight into their experiences of growing up with digital technology

**Timescales and key dates:**

Deadline for submissions: 12 Noon Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Appointment: 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Project start date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Project completion date: no later than 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025

**Budget:**

Work Package 1: tenders are invited up to circa £100,000 (including VAT)

Work Package 2: tenders are invited up to circa £15,000 (including VAT)

### Introduction and background

The Nuffield Foundation has developed the Grown up? programme to respond to the urgent challenges young people face in navigating the journey to adulthood in the UK today. The project aims to capture both common experiences and issues that this new generation of young people are facing, as well as delving deeper into differences between groups and places.

The Grown Up? programme is focused on 14–24-year-olds. This decade marks a critical period of development for young people, reflecting the time at which they are making choices about their future options at school, forming their own perspectives and values, forging new relationships, becoming more independent, potentially leaving the family home, completing education, and making transitions into work. However, rapid economic, social, technological and cultural changes have created an environment of greater insecurity, which has impacted young people disproportionately.

The Grown Up? programme is looking at their journey through three lenses – education to work, mental health and wellbeing, and digital life.

This programme has convened a Youth Insight Group of young people from different backgrounds across the UK, who are providing insights and directing the development of “deep dive” workshops. This enables a relatively representative and broad-ranging look at young people’s experiences of growing up. Complementing this work will be the qualitative research

that is the subject of this tender, focusing on the voices of young people and allowing for rich, deep, detailed exploration of lived experiences of growing up with digital technology.

In recent years there has been an emphasis on harms that children and young people experience in their digital life with the pinnacle of this harm focused on development of the Online Safety Act. But harms are only one part of the picture. Digital life is life for 14–24 year-olds – it is good, bad, risky, safe, beneficial and detrimental, as with any aspect of life, the risks and the benefits are nuanced and reliant on context. Moving between online and offline can involve different frictions, and this work is interested in exploring how that intersects with young people's development and communication of their sense of self. Furthermore, different young people from different communities and identities will experience this in different ways, with some risks and benefits differently distributed.

The Ada Lovelace Institute, part of the Nuffield Foundation, is delivering the work focused on digital life within the wider Grown Up? programme framing. The project will aim to explore digital life holistically, considering what it means to grow up digital rather than focusing on the binary harm/opportunity which is often the starting point for research and social commentary around this topic. Our qualitative research will explore the lived experience of young people from different communities and identities as they grow up with digital technologies.

Our overarching objective is to interrogate and demonstrate what role digital engagement and digital technologies play in young people's lives as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Our conception of digital technologies is diverse; we are not asking only about mobile phones and social media, we want to hear about the plethora of technologies (including wearables, gaming, parental surveillance apps, educational, etc.) that young people engage with.

We are seeking a partner to support delivery of our qualitative research, specifically to facilitate the peer research package, in partnership with the Ada Lovelace Institute team. The partner will lead on recruiting, onboarding and training, supporting young peer researchers to undertake investigation into digital life. There is further potential to bid on an additional work package to support with interviews. Please note that final reporting of findings from both work packages will be held by the Ada Lovelace Institute.

## Aims

- Contribute new knowledge about the experiences and views of young people, leading to policy and regulatory insights and recommendations.
- Provide a critical perspective on the overarching narratives in society around young people's digital lives, to reflect deeper evidence about their digital lives, experiences and needs.
- Provide capacity building for the young people we engage with, such that they feel informed, and empowered to engage further on issues around digital and AI in their lives.
- Test and demonstrate the efficacy of research methods that centre young people's voices about their digital lives.

## Research Questions

1. How are young people from diverse backgrounds engaging with and experiencing digital technologies throughout the course of their growing up journey?
2. What reflections do young people have, both positive and negative, about how digital technology has interacted with their lives?

3. What are the hopes and visions for the future that young people have for their path into adulthood, and what role do they want to see digital technology play in this?

## About the commissioners

**The Ada Lovelace Institute** (Ada) is an independent research institute with a mission to ensure that data and AI work for people and society.

Ada was established by the Nuffield Foundation in early 2018, in collaboration with the Alan Turing Institute, the Royal Society, the British Academy, the Royal Statistical Society, the Wellcome Trust, Luminata, techUK and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics.

We believe that a world where data and AI work for people and society is a world in which the opportunities, benefits and privileges generated by data and AI are justly and equitably distributed and experienced. We recognise the power asymmetries that exist in ethical and legal debates around the development of data-driven technologies and will represent people in those conversations. We focus not on the types of technologies we want to build, but on the types of societies we want to build.

Through research, policy and practice, we aim to ensure that the transformative power of data and AI is used and harnessed in ways that maximise social wellbeing and put technology at the service of humanity.

This piece of research is led within Ada's Public Participation & Research team, focusing on how we can ensure the voices of people affected by data and AI contribute to building and shaping evidence, research, policy and practices.

We want to hear from prospective partner organisations on how they will align with our values and aims, as well as engaging collaboratively in research design and working constructively with Ada and the cohort of young people to deliver this research.

## Work Package 1: Peer Research

### Aims and objectives

Ada's aim in conducting peer research is to ensure that young people are heard and their perspectives are explored with nuance, authenticity and diversity, providing rich insight into their lives. To achieve this, we want to enable young people to codesign the research with us to ask the right questions and involve their peers in capturing insights about what it is like to grow up with today's digital technologies, and exploring their future visions for positive experiences of growing up with technology.

Our objective is to recruit young peer researchers from diverse backgrounds, whose experiences and networks may throw different light on how young people are navigating a multiplicity of technology in their lives, and who can engage with members of their community across our full target age range (14-24). Peer researchers will be invited to co-design the research process, to gather insight from their community members, and to co-analyse the data they gather to agree on themes and messages.

Though our focus is on 14-24 year olds, we are cognisant of the influence older significant adults can have on young people's engagement with and understanding of how the digital world sits alongside the physical world. We are keen to have our peer researchers interrogate the narratives of intergenerational difference and technology that are prevalent in the media and

policy discourse. This approach we envisage would require the peer researchers to consider as part of their research design, including interviewing a significant adult.

It is essential that peer researchers are provided with quality training and that their capacity to engage on the issues surrounding digital technologies that matter to them is built by taking part in the project. Proven ability to build capacities and foster supportive relationships with young people, in ways that ensure that robust and usable evidence is generated in this area, is our top priority in selecting our partner organisation.

## Specification

### *Time frame*

We anticipate that peer research activity will need to commence after exam periods have come to a close, as these will be significant commitments in young people's lives within our target age range.

We expect to see an extended and gradual recruitment phase from spring into summer, with light-touch activity and contact time designed in to maintain contact with recruited peer researchers until field work can commence.

We anticipate that field work will take place in summer during July-August, and will conclude with co-analysis finalised by mid-August, in time for the project to wrap by September.

### *Participants*

We aim to recruit 8-10 peer researchers. Within the peer researcher group, we wish to see representation from communities where we can expect to find different experiences of digital life in the growing up journey. We expect our partner organisation to provide informed and evidence-based rationales for which communities, and therefore which recruitment strategies, would gather a diverse range of experiences and perspectives on digital life. We expect to see plans for how to achieve some geographic spread of peer researcher representation across the UK, avoiding concentration in London and the South East.

### *External partner: roles and responsibilities*

We want to commission a UK based organisation (or consortium), which has expertise and a track record of excellent peer or participatory research work with young people, and who can work effectively in partnership with Ada to deliver this research programme. We will consider applicants who have an excellent track record of participatory work with young people, if not specifically peer research as a methodology. In your tender proposal, we expect to see, particularly how you would:

- Identify, recruit, and retain young people that meet the sampling needs of this project, and what kinds of diversities of backgrounds you would be able to bring together for this project.
- Set up and monitor an effective and structured programme of training, which benefits young people and supports the aims of the research.
- Ensure research integrity and the robustness of the evidence throughout the fieldwork period, to ensure the insights from peer research are tangible, usable and effective for the aims of the project.
- Secure informed consent to participate (including from parents/carers where appropriate) with an understanding of participation as voluntary.
- Safeguard the members of the group, taking a trauma-informed approach for those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, providing trauma-

responsive support, appropriate support for those with physical or learning disabilities, and offering support before and after meetings, e.g., for those experiencing challenges.

- Arrange participation logistics, digital inclusion, and payments/vouchers for young people's participation. Participant payment should be taken from the overall budget.
- Support peer researchers to conduct their research field work as the main point of contact for them.
  - Peer researcher activity will include: onboarding into the project, to understand the aims and objectives of the research; co-design of their data collection approach including sampling and interview question design; data collection among their community; transcription and preparation of data for analysis; co-analysis of the data; collaborative discussion of the findings; potential to contribute to outputs such as guest blog writing or videos
- Providing a platform for peer researchers to safely store research data, their notes, and any other research materials.
- Co-facilitate peer research co-design and co-analysis meetings and support the inclusion and participation of peer researchers alongside an Ada team member.
- Holding the data generated through the peer research and sharing this with the Ada team, complying with data protection regulations and research integrity principles.
- Maintaining contact with the Ada team throughout the research process as the intermediary between the peer researchers and the Ada team.
- Collaborating on the development of outputs with the Ada team such as blog posts, and supporting peer researcher contribution to output creation.

## Work Package 2 (OPTIONAL): Interviews

In addition to the peer research, there is another strand of work that organisations can bid for as part of this opportunity – supporting an interview phase of our research to capture reflective insights from young people about what it has been like to grow up with digital technologies.

### Aims and objectives

Interviews will be conducted in collaboration with the Ada team.

Our aim for the interviews as part of this research is to hear from the oldest in our age range (20-24 year olds) in order to capture their retrospections about their whole growing up journey.

Our objective is to recruit 10-15 young people to take part in interviews. We are particularly interested in using an arts-based, creative and engaging approach to elicit reflections about what it has been like for them to grow up with digital technology. We will also be asking for future visions of how this could be different for future generations.

Outside of interview time, we also intend to invite participants to engage in wider research activities to capture more holistic reflections into their digital lives. As part of these, we would like to see an element of intergenerational contact, inviting participants to speak to significant adult(s) in their lives. We welcome proposals from partner organisations on the detailed research design of this wider activity.

Interview recruitment may target certain groups with specific lived experience (e.g. carers, LGBTQ+ young people, gamers, etc.), and may focus on certain themes; this will be developed in relation to insights from earlier research phases.

## Specification

We expect to be working closely with an organisation in the design and delivery of this work package, so we would like to understand how partner organisation would approach working collaboratively with Ada's project team, especially over interview design and analysis. As with the peer research, Ada's team would be responsible for reporting on this work strand.

### *Time frame*

Interviews will take place in late summer of 2025 (to be completed by September 2025). We expect the co-analysis phase to take place in mid-August. The interview design will be informed by the findings of our prior research activity.

*Participants:* 10-15 interviewees, age 20-24. We will determine the sample strategy for the interview participants based on our findings from the previous research.

*Format:* online 1:1 semi-structured interviews, 1 hour per participant, with additional pre- or post-interview activities amounting to a total engagement of up to 1 day per participant.

### *External partner: roles and responsibilities*

We wish to see proposals from prospective partners on how they can co-design engaging reflective activities that support participants in sharing their holistic experiences of growing up with digital technologies, and work in close collaboration with the Ada team to deliver a successful piece of research. Proposals should include:

- Working together with the Ada team to develop a robust research design, contributing to the theoretical grounding and practical planning of the interviews.
- Advertising interview opportunities to relevant communities and managing participant recruitment processes.
- Propose creative methods for capturing participants reflections on growing up with digital technology within the interview, and as additional activities outside of the interview time.
- To conduct a share of the total interviews, balanced with the Ada team.
- Arranging interview transcription and providing fully formatted data ready to use in analysis.
- To take part in co-analysis of the interview data with the Ada team. This will include independent qualitative coding of interview data, followed by joint thematic analysis together with the Ada team. We anticipate the thematic analysis phase to take place over two day-long workshops.
- Arranging participation logistics, digital inclusion, and payments/vouchers for young people's participation.
- Secure informed consent to participate (including from parents/carers where appropriate) with an understanding of participation as voluntary.
- Plans to safeguard the interview participants, taking a trauma-informed approach for those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, providing trauma-responsive support, and appropriate support for those with physical or learning disabilities.

## Ethics, safeguarding and data protection

We require applicants to set out:

- The ethical and safeguarding considerations for this work and how they will be addressed, including thoughts about how appropriate consent for the young people will be sought, as well as any support that may be required. Applicants should also set out their plan for determining ethical approval whether via a committee or other means.
- A data protection impact assessment showing how they will ensure that the personal data collected in the course of the work will be processed in accordance with the UK GDPR. This should include consideration of the information to be provided to prospective participants and provisions for handling data submitted should any participants wish to withdraw. For an example template, please contact [hhollis@adalovelaceinstitute.org](mailto:hhollis@adalovelaceinstitute.org)
- A suggested approach to incentives payments for the young people taking part (with consideration of vouchers for younger participants) and the handling of any relevant ethical or safeguarding issues.

## Project management

Please set out your approach to project management to ensure the timely delivery of the project, including staffing, timetable, risk management and co-production/delivery of outputs. If you are submitting a consortium bid, please state the lead organisation that would be the point of contact for the Ada Lovelace Institute and your approach to collaboration and specific responsibilities of partners. We would like to know how you propose to work with the project team at the Ada Lovelace Institute to work effectively in partnership.

Please include the relevant experience of the staff members included in the project team.

The Nuffield Foundation must be acknowledged in all public communications, such as any blog posts or social media, resulting from the project and any communications announcements agreed with the Foundation in advance.

## Budget and indicative timetable

Proposals for Work Package 1: Peer Research should be within a budget of circa £100,000, inclusive of VAT.

Proposals for Work Package 2: Interviews should be within a budget of circa £15,000, inclusive of VAT.

We wish to see proposals demonstrate the use of the budget to deliver a high-quality standard of research. We are open to proposed rebalancing between the work package values if well justified.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity/milestone</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2025	Issue tender
12 Noon Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2025	Deadline for submissions
Week of 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2025	Shortlisting
Week of 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	Interviews
17 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	Appoint partner
24 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	Project start
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2025	Project end

## Submitting a proposal

We welcome bids from individual organisations or consortia.

A confidential summary document providing further detail about the qualitative research is available to bidders on request. If you have any questions about the process or specification, please email Helena Hollis [hhollis@adalovelaceinstitute.org](mailto:hhollis@adalovelaceinstitute.org)

Tenders should be no more than 10 sides of A4, clearly setting out:

- A project plan with timescales for key activities, milestones and deliverables
- Approaches to:
  - Risk management
  - Ethics, safeguarding and data protection
  - Delivering rigorous, high-quality research
  - Developing an effective working relationship that enables the partner organisation to working closely with the project team from the Ada Lovelace Institute in ways that align with our values and organisational aims
  - Staffing and relevant experience, including examples of content and outputs.
- Budget breakdown (including day rates, number of days per activity, non-staff costs including travel costs and incentive payments)

To be considered, tenders must be received by 12 noon on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

The assessment panel will comprise staff from the Ada Lovelace Institute.

**Please submit tenders by email to Helena Hollis [hhollis@adalovelaceinstitute.org](mailto:hhollis@adalovelaceinstitute.org)**

### Assessment criteria

We will judge proposals on the contribution the partner organisation can make to the quality and integrity of this research. We are especially interested in proposed ways of working, as this will be collaborative piece of work. Demonstrating capacity for and commitment to working with young people in safe, respectful, capacity building ways is essential.

40% – Proposed methodology, including provisions for inclusion, collaboration with the Nuffield Foundation, ethics and data protection



40% – Organisational and team member experience of similar youth engagement activities. Capacity and experience of safeguarding participants, including providing before and after support to care-experienced young people.

20% – Cost and value for money

If selected, you will enter into a Service Agreement with the Nuffield Foundation.