

ECED7007

2518176

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work.



Critically examine the role of practitioners
in a setting of your choice and how they
might remove barriers to social inclusion.



"The role of YMCA England & Wales youth workers in removing barriers to social inclusion."

YMCA England & Wales: Organisational background

- The *Young Men's Christian Association* began in 1844 in London, founded by Sir George Williams.
- The oldest youth charity in the world.
- Works with disadvantaged youths of varying ages, depending on area and program type.
- Operating in multiple locations across England and Wales.

(World YMCA, n.d.)

YMCA England & Wales: Organisational background

YMCA Vision and Values:

Seek out

Welcome

Inspire

Speak Out

Serve Others

The YMCA ethos has five main goals: To never stop seeking ways to improve youths' lives; to welcome and respect everyone and ensure a feeling of inclusivity; to inspire and build individuals' confidence in themselves and their potential; to advocate for people and support individuals to have their own voice, and to holistically serve all people, fairly and equitably.

YMCA England & Wales: Organisational background

Provides services in five primary areas:

Community Fitness

Creating Positive Outcomes

Supporting the individual

Opportunities

A Safe Place to Talk

The five main service areas for helping people includes providing access to fitness through availability of gyms, sports, recreation, and community centres to take classes; offering early years daycare, nursery, and holiday clubs; programs running throughout the year to support positive outcomes into adulthood; housing; education and training; and a safe environment to talk, counseling, and mentoring.

Policy/Funding and YMCA delivery:

Macro Level:

- Since 2010/2011, funds for youth services have been reduced by £1.1 billion (House of Commons Library, 2024)
- Short-term funding and contracts causes inability for services to plan too far in advance (National Youth Agency, 2025)
- Reduced funds available for paid staff (National Youth Agency, 2025)
- Cost-of-living rising, worsening job sector, increasing mental health concerns (House of Commons Library, 2024)
- Inconsistent distribution of available youth services in communities (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2025)



Implications for the YMCA

- Loss or reduction of funding results in loss of YMCA services (YMCA, 2025a)
- Payments to YMCA member sites was reduced, affecting delivery of programs (YMCA, 2025a)
- Rising staff costs, increased reliance on YMCA volunteers (YMCA, 2025a)
- More reliance on fundraising and YMCA charity shop and retail income (YMCA, 2025a)
- YMCA member sites operating in net deficits (YMCA, 2025a)

Oversight and Regulation:

Ofsted – Inspections on youth services, childcare and early years provisions. Monitors safeguarding compliance and quality of services (Ofsted, n.d.).

Local safeguarding partnerships and authorities – Investigate complaints and concerns, progress referrals, and organise child protections measures (HM Government, 2023).

Charity Commission – Safeguarding guidance for charities delivering services to vulnerable children and adults, protect staff and volunteers, and hold trustees who fail to safeguard, to account (The Charity Commission, 2017).

YMCA organisation – Organisational safeguarding policies and procedures, and training (YMCA Trinity Group, 2024).

Social Inclusion, an overview:

Equal and fair access to take part in social, cultural, and economic society (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016)

Able to participate, have access, respect, and a voice
(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016)

Respect for all regardless, of race, sex, gender, age, religion, disability, or other status (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016)

Positive interactions which strengthen social bonds
(World Health Organization, 2025)

Social inclusion is an effort based in ethics, equality, and equity for all, eliminating barriers experienced by marginalised people (Denkewicz, 2024).

Although there is no general consensus on the definition of social inclusion, the lack of participation in society is a core factor that is omnipresent (World Health Organization, 2025).



Social Exclusion is not simply the opposite of social inclusion

As is the case with defining "social inclusion", there is also no universal agreement on the definition of "social exclusion." Social exclusion is not just the opposite of the generally accepted view of social inclusion (World Health Organization, 2025). Social exclusion is a contested term; a multi-faceted concept that is methodologically difficult to quantify (Dykxhoorn *et al.*, 2023). However, a commonly identified core element of social exclusion is unequal power structures that systematically marginalise certain demographics (Dykxhoorn *et al.*, 2023).

The YMCA England & Wales supports inclusion in verifiable and impactful ways (1/2)

Youth and Community

Supports 228,711 children and families from birth to young adulthood (YMCA, 2026b)

Operates 267 youth clubs every week (YMCA, 2026b)

Delivers 44 off-site sessions each week meeting young people in their familiar surroundings (YMCA, 2026b)

Housing

20,671 supported housing residents (YMCA, 2026a).

10,432 beds in various housing types, annually (YMCA, 2026a).

3,591 residents in emergency housing, 11,479 residents in sponsored hostels, 187 residents in family rooms, and 144 in women's refuge (YMCA, 2026a).

The YMCA England & Wales supports inclusion in verifiable and impactful ways (2/2)

Education

23,886 individuals in vocational and educational programs (YMCA, 2026a).

1,182 apprenticeships (YMCA, 2026a).

1,876 further education (YMCA, 2026a).

676 work placements (YMCA, 2026a).

Health and Wellbeing

54,815 gym users (YMCA, 2026a)

90,389 leisure centre users (YMCA, 2026a)

27,683 multi-purpose gaming areas (YMCA, 2026a)

1,156 disability programs users (YMCA, 2026a)

Case studies: YMCA removing barriers to inclusion

"Jack" - YMCA Derbyshire

Barrier: Young person who experienced unexpected loss of a father, homelessness, mental health concerns.

YMCA intervention: Provided YMCA accommodation, a welcoming and stable environment, personalised guidance from YMCA mentor.

Outcome: Jack, now 18, studying A-levels in three sciences, plans to pursue becoming a brain surgeon, 95% attendance, and volunteers with the YMCA. Jack acknowledges the YMCA was the reason he was able to turn his life around.

Case studies: YMCA removing barriers to inclusion

New College Apartments - YMCA Wellington

Barrier: Lack of available one bedroom accommodation for young people transitioning from supported housing.

YMCA intervention: In July, 2024, created 28 new, high standard units, for 40 young people, repurposing a local Grade II building.

Outcome: Young residents were provided an inclusive community, and the Grade II building and its link to community heritage was preserved for the future.

Case studies: YMCA removing barriers to inclusion

SHOT: Healthy Relationships Service - YMCA Cardiff

Barrier: Young people lacked guidance and education about healthy relationships, sexual health, and positive masculinity.

YMCA intervention: In one year, helped 178 young individuals through one-to-one support, 2,314 youths in group sessions, 93 parents, and 169 professionals.

Outcome: Young people were empowered to make informed relationship choices, and access to the C-Card scheme which provides access to free condoms, advice, and further sexual health information.

Case studies: YMCA removing barriers to inclusion

The Happy Women's Project – YMCA North Tyneside

Barrier: BAME women experiencing cultural, social, and language isolation as migrants to the United Kingdom, as well as intersectional barriers.

YMCA intervention: Provides English lessons, on-site childcare, and inclusive activities, such as art and life skills.

Outcome: Increased independence and empowerment in participants, enabling BAME women to interact and engage in their local communities, and use learned UK life skills with more confidence.

Case studies: YMCA removing barriers to inclusion

Acacia House – One YMCA

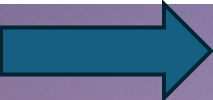
Barrier: Young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, lacked inclusive areas to socially engage with others.

YMCA intervention: Provided various cultural, social, and religiously diverse activities, such as Eid, Christmas, and Diwali events, and transport to local locations on field trips. Multilingual team enables inclusive communication environment.

Outcome: Increased interfaith respect and understanding, socialisation, and confidence in youth participants.

Potential safeguarding boundary concerns

- Working with children requires an enhanced background check to ensure safety for those under 18 years of age, and reduce risk.
- Clear professional boundaries must remain in place between workers, volunteers, youths, and parents. Parent volunteers working with an organisation must pass safer recruitment and child protection training to ensure the organisation environment remains a safe place for youths.
- Structured safeguarding procedures to manage potential risks. Residential trips require organisational planning and procedures and a nominated child protection lead. Secure consent from parents for youths' participation.

- 
- Health and safety protocols must be followed, including first aid and fire safety, to minimise risk for participants.
 - Workers have a duty of care to participants to recognise and respond to concerns, promptly and in line with government and organisational guidelines.
 - Allegations of a sexual nature must be reported and addressed promptly and securely, and reported to the nominated child protection lead, a senior manager, or school head, in line with safeguarding policy.



Failure to adhere to safeguarding requirements can cause harm to vulnerable individuals and weaken trust in youth services.

Redditch YMCA Pre-School and Nursery case: A safeguarding concern and action

- Concern: Redditch YMCA staff failed to adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures and did not notify Ofsted of an allegation made about a staff member. Children's health and safety were at risk (Ofsted, 2024a).
- Ofsted ruling: YMCA site judged "inadequate" (Ofsted, 2024a).
- YMCA Action: Implemented corrective measures and further inspections recorded improvements. Leaders identified necessary areas of improvement, including observation of staff in direct contact with children, using this information to further help staff in supporting and encouraging children's positive behaviour. designated site as "good" (Ofsted, 2024b).
- Resolution: YMCA provider site met safeguarding requirements, and the earlier suspension was removed after the improvements enacted (Ofsted, 2026).

Theories

Sarah Ahmed: Inclusion at institutional level

Core Theme: Institutions claim diversity. However, legitimate inclusion involves creating spaces where people experience true acceptance (Ahmed, 2012)

YMCA Action: Acacia House develops cultural, religious, and social events to encourage recognition and respect of multiple backgrounds. Staff are multilingual, and provide personalised support to remove barriers to inclusion (YMCA, 2025b)

Theories

Sarah Ahmed: Inclusion at institutional level

Evaluation

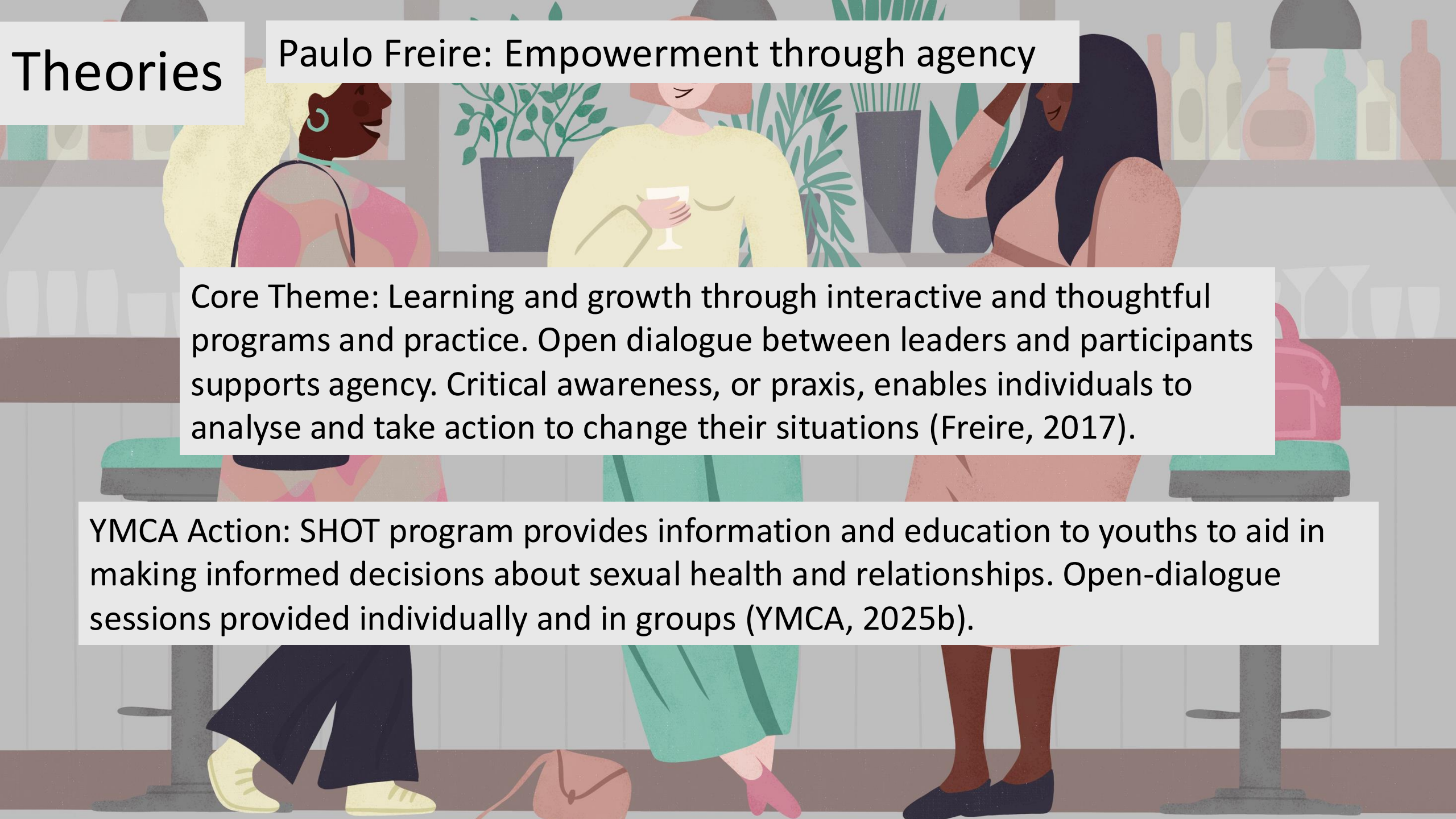
Inclusion must be more than symbolic. “Institutional whiteness” is sometimes reproduced (Ahmed, 2012, p. 33), and impacts delivery of inclusivity services, marginalising people outside the dominant local demographic.

YMCA Acacia House has addressed this through the creation of programs to acknowledge the importance of multiple cultures, languages, and religions, encouraging understanding and respect of differences; and eliminating language barriers through multilingual youth workers (YMCA, 2025b).

Inclusivity is an ongoing process that must be maintained, is not corrected by solitary initiatives. (Ahmed, 2017). Inclusivity programs are about more than policies; they are about everyday routines, personal engagement, small sustained changes, and adaptation to individuals' needs.

YMCA Acacia House regularly consults with youth members and the broader community to deliver changing, ongoing services, meeting the needs of participants (YMCA, 2025b).

Theories

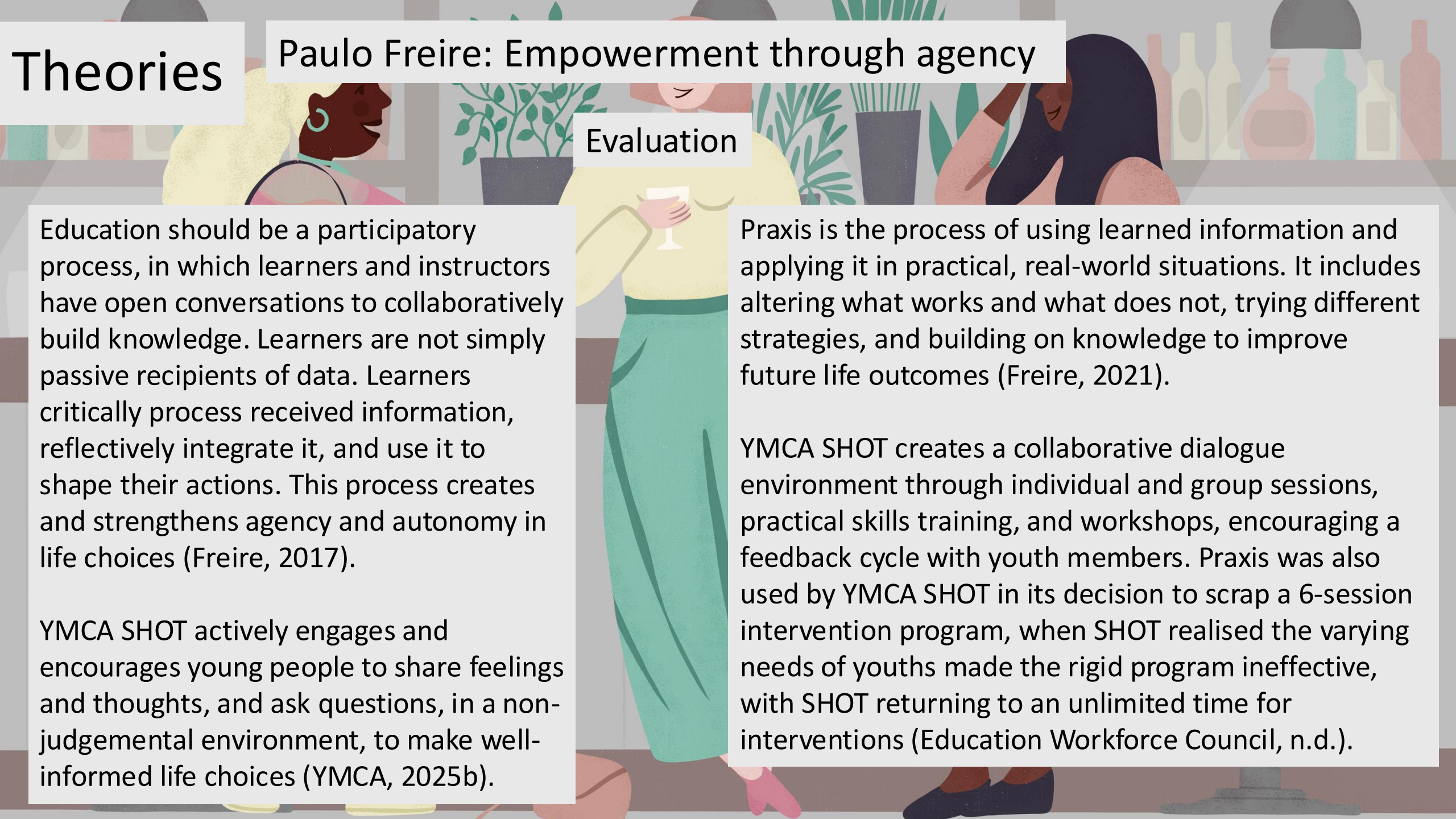
A stylized illustration of three women in a social setting, possibly a bar or cafe. The woman on the left is seen from the back, wearing a pink top and a black bag. The woman in the center is wearing a yellow sweater and holding a white wine glass. The woman on the right is wearing a dark top and has her hand near her face. In the background, there are shelves with various bottles and potted plants. The bottom of the image shows the lower legs and feet of the three women, with a small brown bag on the floor.

Paulo Freire: Empowerment through agency

Core Theme: Learning and growth through interactive and thoughtful programs and practice. Open dialogue between leaders and participants supports agency. Critical awareness, or praxis, enables individuals to analyse and take action to change their situations (Freire, 2017).

YMCA Action: SHOT program provides information and education to youths to aid in making informed decisions about sexual health and relationships. Open-dialogue sessions provided individually and in groups (YMCA, 2025b).

Theories

The background of the slide features a stylized illustration of a social gathering. On the left, a person with dark skin and a large hoop earring is shown in profile. In the center, a person with light skin and a yellow top is holding a glass. To the right, a person with dark hair is visible. The background is filled with various green plants and several bottles on a shelf, creating a warm and communal atmosphere.

Paulo Freire: Empowerment through agency

Evaluation

Education should be a participatory process, in which learners and instructors have open conversations to collaboratively build knowledge. Learners are not simply passive recipients of data. Learners critically process received information, reflectively integrate it, and use it to shape their actions. This process creates and strengthens agency and autonomy in life choices (Freire, 2017).

YMCA SHOT actively engages and encourages young people to share feelings and thoughts, and ask questions, in a non-judgemental environment, to make well-informed life choices (YMCA, 2025b).

Praxis is the process of using learned information and applying it in practical, real-world situations. It includes altering what works and what does not, trying different strategies, and building on knowledge to improve future life outcomes (Freire, 2021).

YMCA SHOT creates a collaborative dialogue environment through individual and group sessions, practical skills training, and workshops, encouraging a feedback cycle with youth members. Praxis was also used by YMCA SHOT in its decision to scrap a 6-session intervention program, when SHOT realised the varying needs of youths made the rigid program ineffective, with SHOT returning to an unlimited time for interventions (Education Workforce Council, n.d.).

Theories

Pierre Bourdieu: Capital in practical application

Core Theme: Capital in various forms, create opportunities. Social, cultural, and economic capital improves access to opportunities in life. Material stability enables access to further capital (Bourdieu, 2021).

YMCA Action: YMCA Derbyshire provided Jack with housing, guidance, mental health support, and mentoring, and the opportunity to volunteer at the YMCA (YMCA, 2025b).

Theories

Pierre Bourdieu: Capital in practical application

Evaluation



Capital impacts individuals' ability to succeed in life, by affecting their access to resources and opportunities. Cultural capital, such as education; social capital, such as networking and relationships; and economic capital, such as financial security increases options for advancement in society. Having material stability, such as housing, creates a foundation of stability to pursue other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 2021).

YMCA Derbyshire provided Jack with forms of capital and foundational support that helped Jack to stabilise his life situation by supplying housing, education access, and mentorship (YMCA, 2025b).

Habitus, a person's habits, experiences, upbringing, and skills, interacts with the field, an area with its own rules such as work or education areas. Capital can be used effectively when the person who has it can recognise its advantage in a field and uses it. Habitus can affect how successful possessed capital is in a field, predicated on an individual's confidence and recognition of application (Bourdieu, 2002).

At YMCA Derbyshire, Jack acquired housing, social and educational support, and mentoring, (YMCA, 2025b) The extent to which Jack can apply these gains in wider society is dependent on his ability to recognise when and where to use them, and any structural constraints faced. However, the acquisition of these forms of capital have significantly improved his chances. (Bourdieu, 2002).

Recommendations for inclusion

- Staff and volunteer training in regular intervals, including up-to date training on organisational, regulatory, and government policies (Driscoll *et al.*, 2022).
- Safeguarding procedure visible and available to youths and families, in an accessible, easily understood format (Department for Education, 2025)
- Cultural and faith-informed education for staff (Trend, 2025)
- Individualised support for youths with disabilities and liaising with SEND services (Department for Education, 2025)
- Safe feedback routes, which offers confidentiality and no fear of repercussions (Department for Education, 2025).
- Consistent monitoring of policies, including audits of staff, volunteers, incidents, and site (Department for Education, 2025).



Conclusion

YMCA England and Wales provided clear, practical interventions to removing barriers, through their available wellbeing, education, relationship, and housing services. Staff and volunteers build trust and stability with young people, by providing open dialogue and safe environments. Coordinating with other agencies, maintaining safeguarding, and addressing weaknesses in YMCA sites indicated by assessors such as Ofsted, demonstrates YMCA's commitment to helping youths overcome barriers in their lives. However, some funding and policy issues continue to impact YMCA's resources for service delivery. This reflects sociological theories that illustrate how structural inequalities impact opportunities for young people, and the crucial role of supportive institutions in mitigating these barriers. Despite this, the YMCA remains an important organisation dedicated to promoting inclusivity and improving outcomes for vulnerable young people.

References

Ahmed, S. (2012) *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2017) *Living a feminist life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2002) *Outline of a theory of practice*. 16th edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2021). *Forms of capital*. Cambridge: Polity.

Denkewicz, P. (2024) 'Social inclusion and social exclusion: A necessary conceptual discussion', *Multidisciplinary Perspectives: Integrating Knowledge*, Seven Editora, pp. 971–984. Available at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379964903_Social_inclusion_and_social_exclusion_A_necessary_conceptual_discussion

Department for Education (2025) *Keeping children safe in education 2025: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges*. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68add931969253904d155860/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_from_1_September_2025.pdf (Accessed: 1 March 2026).

References

Driscoll, J., Hutchinson, A., Lorek, A., Stride, C., and Kiss, K (2022) 'Multiagency safeguarding arrangements during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic: Identifying shared learning', *Child abuse review*, 31(5). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2774>

Dykxhoorn, J., Osborn, D., Fischer, L., Troy, D., Kirkbride, J.B. and Walters, K. (2024) 'Measuring social exclusion and its distribution in England', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 59(1), pp. 187–198. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-023-02489-x>

Department for Culture, Media & Sport (2025) *Youth matters: Your national youth strategy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

References

Education Workforce Council (n.d.) *The healthy relationships project*. Available at: <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/accreditation/the-quality-mark-for-youth-work-in-wales/the-quality-mark-examples-of-good-practice/the-healthy-relationships-project> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

Freire, P. (2017) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin Modern Classics.

Freire, P. (2021) *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

HM Government (2023) *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6849a7b67cba25f610c7db3f/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

House of Commons Library (2024) *Trends in funding levels for youth services*. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2024-0040/CDP-2024-0040.pdf> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

National Youth Agency (2025) *Youth sector workforce survey report 2025*. Available at: <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Annual-Youth-Sector-Workforce-Survey-2025-%E2%80%93-DIGITAL.pdf> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

References

Ofsted (n.d.) *About us*. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about> (Accessed: February 27 2026).

Ofsted (2024a) *Inspection of Redditch YMCA PreSchool and Nursery*. Available at:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50252480> (Accessed: 27 February 2026).

Ofsted (2024b) *Inspection of Redditch YMCA PreSchool and Nursery*. Available at:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50261395> (Accessed: 27 February 2026).

References

Ofsted (2026) *Complaint about childcare provision*. Available at: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50294280> (Accessed: 27 February 2026).

The Charity Commission (2017) *Guidance: Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees> (Accessed: 27 February 2026).

Trend, L (2025) 'Local safeguarding leads in faith communities: Current experience and practice, and what it tells us about improving partnership working. A preliminary mixed methods study', *Child protection and practice*, 4. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chipro.2025.100100> (Accessed: 1 March 2026).

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016) *Report on the World Social Situation 2016: Leaving no one behind — the imperative of inclusive development*. New York: United Nations, pp. 17–31. Available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/full-report.pdf> (Accessed: 28 February 2026).

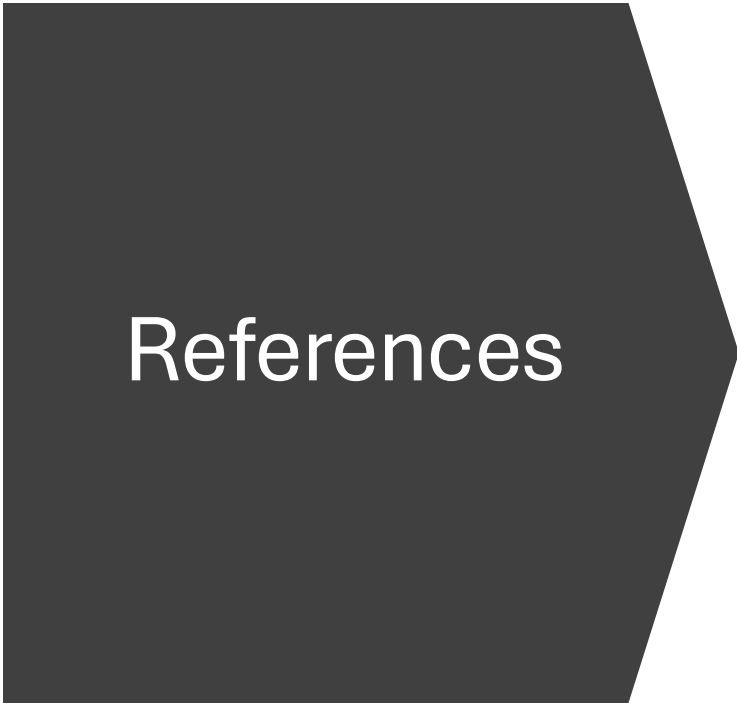
World Health Organization (2025) *From loneliness to social connection*. Available at: <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/f5f60bc8-344b-4216-aa1a-fb22d57ad6e8/content> (Accessed: 28 February 2026).

References

World YMCA (n.d.) *YMCA history*. Available at: <https://www.ymca.int/who-we-are/the-worldwide-ymca-movement/the-ymca-history/> (Accessed: 27 February 2026).

YMCA (2025a) *Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25*. Available at: <https://ymca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ymca-annual-reports-accounts-2024-2025.pdf> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

YMCA (2025b). *Youth Matters Awards Recipients and Finalists 2025*. Available at: <https://ymca.org.uk/finalists/> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).



References

YMCA (2026a) *Fact and stats: YMCA at 180*. Available at: <https://ymca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ymca-facts-stats-2025-compressed.pdf> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

YMCA (2026b) *Family and youth work*. Available at: <https://ymca.org.uk/services/family-and-youth-work/> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

YMCA (2026c) *Our vision and values*. Available at: <https://ymca.org.uk/our-vision-and-values/> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

YMCA (2026d). *What we do*. Available at: <https://ymca.org.uk/what-we-do/> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

YMCA Trinity Group (2024) *Safeguarding*. Available at: <https://ymcatrinitygroup.org.uk/who-we-are/safeguarding/> (Accessed 25 February 2026).