# Developing Interventions to Improve Support for Young People with Melanoma

## Faculty of Wellbeing Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Call for doctoral projects starting in October 2027

The Open University

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# Project description

## Project Type

This is a PhD project

Please note that a research proposal aligned with this research project will be required from applicants in addition to an application form.

## School

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

## Unit

Institute of Educational Technology

## Members

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# Aim

This study aims will link to previous evidence and could have three phases - but will be informed by the successful student's proposal: 1) survey questionnaire; 2) focus groups; 3) iterative workshop to create a storyboard, informing the development of AI interventions to support TYA with this specific disease.

1. Establish where TYA with melanoma across the UK are treated throughout the cancer pathway? (Phase 1)
2. Understand what support is offered and provided at critical points in the patient trajectory, from the young person and HCP perspective (including barriers and enablers to support) (Phase 2).
3. Identify and develop resources to improve the support at critical points in the trajectory (Phase 3).

# Methodology

Although there are many gaps, the overall aims and design of the study will depend on the successful student to take ownership of how the methodology can meet these aims and fit with core aspects of study design, such as how it will adhere to robust co-design and deliver (robust) findings that can effectively inform the resources we envisaged being generated by the study. The following information therefore represents a potential methodology; the final approach will be informed by the successful student's proposal and thinking.

A mix-methods co-design study forms the core of study design. An established PPIE group of young people with melanoma (Stages 1 to 1V) from previous work (n=6) have contributed to the study design and will continue to contribute their perspectives throughout the research. These young people, with melanoma, will

be part of the research as consultants and be involved from the beginning to the end. Involving young people throughout is important as they have real life experiences and knowledge to add to the study design and methods used. The underpinning study rationale is that we know that not all young people with this disease access TYA specialist age-appropriate care. We will apply for OU HREC (Human Research Ethics Committee) approval and NHS HRA from all sites. The specialist nurses will be the gatekeepers for the six study sites; established links are already in place. If a participant wishes to withdraw from the study at any time, support will be provided to facilitate this.

Phase 1

The survey will be distributed more widely to healthcare professionals (n=>75). There are no additional costs for this work. The survey has been designed and developed through previous work and is set up through JISC survey (OU).

Phase 2

Focus groups, face to face or hybrid, will be offered. Each NHS site will be a Participation Identification Centre, and we will ask colleagues at these sites to identify young people with melanoma using databases for referrals to the 'Skin' and TYA multidisciplinary teams. **Table 1** highlights the inclusion/exclusion criteria for TYA. Informed consent will be sought and stored in accordance with GDPR through OU and NHS Healthcare professionals (n=20) will also be invited to participate in hybrid or focus groups, to include a range of HCPs from dermatology and TYA oncology services, voluntary sector, medical and non-medical professionals. Focus groups will include a maximum (n=10) of

participants.  Discussions will be guided using a semi-structured guide, informed by survey data, the successful student's thinking and input from young people.

Phase 3

A face-to-face workshop will create an iterative storyboard. Stakeholders (n= approximately 30, to include young people, healthcare professionals and voluntary sector representatives) will be invited to attend. The central aim of the workshop will be to develop resources, drawing on focus group data. An experienced facilitator, Jackie Forbes, (Drawn to Learn) will create a storyboard from the data collected form the focus groups and workshop. This will be the final stage of this project but will also be key to engagement with young people and HCPs. Engagement will support the dissemination of the work and mobilisation.

# Contribution

This project will identify where TYA with melanoma is treated, if they are receiving age-appropriate care and identify their supportive care needs – physical, emotional and social.  These findings will lend themselves to future research where parts of the storyboard could be developed into Artificial Intelligence (AI) supportive mechanisms. The proposal could also include sharing of developed resources with the CYPCA and Melanoma Focus UK, thereby promoting access for TYA and HCPs. Dissemination of findings and outputs will be pursued through international and national conferences for TYA

and nursing (e.g. the RCN). It is anticipated that three peer reviewed publications will come from this work: Methods, Co-design and Findings.


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