

West Yorkshire Scientific Advisory Group - Handbook

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The [West Yorkshire Scientific Advisory Group \(WYSAG\)](#) provides independent scientific advice on joint topics identified by [West Yorkshire Combined Authority](#) and [West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership](#). It is hosted and facilitated by the [NIHR Applied Research Collaboration \(ARC\) Yorkshire and Humber](#), working in partnership with [Yorkshire & Humber Policy Engagement and Research Network \(Y-PERN\)](#) and [Yorkshire Universities](#).

Further details about WYSAG include news, WYSAG talks and outputs can be found on the WYSAG pages of the ARC website. To contact a member of the WYSAG team please email yharc@bthft.nhs.uk.

1.0 Overview

The West Yorkshire Scientific Advisory Group (WYSAG) was established in September 2023 to support the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (the Combined Authority) and West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (the Partnership). It's primary purpose is to provide independent, scientific support and challenge on policy development and implementation with a focus on health, health inequalities, and growing a sustainable and inclusive economy. This handbook provides background information on WYSAG and details of its ways of working. It is a living document and will evolve as WYSAG develops.

1.1 Missions of the Combined Authority and Partnership

The Combined Authority and Partnership have complementary visions for the future of health, economy and environment of West Yorkshire on which they are actively collaborating to make a reality.

<p>The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) West Yorkshire Planⁱ sets the vision and five missions for <i>“a brighter West Yorkshire – a place that works for all. An engine room of ideas and creativity, where anyone can make a home.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission One: A prosperous West Yorkshire – an inclusive economy with well paid jobs. • Mission Two: A happy West Yorkshire – great places and healthy communities. • Mission Three: A well-connected West Yorkshire - a strong transport system. • Mission Four: A sustainable West Yorkshire – making lives greener. • Mission Five: A safe West Yorkshire – a region where everyone can flourish. 	<p>The West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (WYHCP) wants to help people live well and stay healthy for as long as possible, and if they have mental health or physical problems, they can easily access services that meet their needs.</p> <p>To realize this vision, it's Joint Forward Planⁱⁱ has 10 big strategic ambitions, underpinned by four strategic objectives to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce health inequalities 2. Manage unwarranted variations in care 3. Secure the wider benefits of investing in health and care 4. Use collective resources wisely
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The West Yorkshire Local Growth Planⁱⁱⁱ brings together the missions of the West Yorkshire Plan to create good growth and set the regions direction for the next 10 years. The Local Growth Plan is driven by the principles of inclusion, health and wellbeing and sustainability. This means:

- Ensuring all residents, especially those who are disadvantaged or from underrepresented groups, benefit from the prosperity this growth delivers.
- Delivering for the future prosperity and direction of West Yorkshire with a child-first agenda embedded across all activity.
- Improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of residents across all policies.
- Meeting the commitment to net zero by ensuring economic growth is environmentally regenerative and fosters thriving communities.

The interface between health and the economy is a major driver in realising these visions through understanding issues such as productivity, inequalities, inclusion, and climate change. Within West Yorkshire and the wider Yorkshire and Humber region there is a wealth of research and academic assets which WYSAG will seek to harness to inform policy development, jointly considering this health and economy interface.

1.2 Scope

In October 2024 a blueprint was published outlining WYSAGs ambitions for the coming year (Figure 1).

2024-2025 Blueprint: West Yorkshire Scientific Advisory Group (October 2024)

The [West Yorkshire Scientific Advisory Group \(WYSAG\)](#) was established in 2023 to bring together academic expertise and research to give independent evidence-based policy advice by mobilising, organising and utilising available research and evidence. This advice seeks to consider issues from a health, economic, environmental, inclusion and equity perspectives, sited within the West Yorkshire context, with a focus on joint topics identified by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (Combined Authority) and West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (Partnership) that are relevant to policy.



A. Expert scientific advice

WYSAG will leverage its connections and academic networks to provide expert advice to the Combined Authority and Partnership through approaches including:

- Piloting systems mapping approaches to explore topics e.g. flexible working, the interconnections between health, economic, environment, equity and inclusion, and potential policy responses
- Contribute to and convene topic specific policy and evidence roundtables to inform the development of policies and strategies
- Connect policy makers with relevant academics across the region and nationally

B. Informing West Yorkshire ambition

WYSAG will bring together ideas worth spreading and different perspectives on issues to help stimulate thinking by:

- Developing an expanding the library of [WYSAG Talks](#) in which WYSAG experts talk about the big challenges and opportunities facing us, what the science tells us and what we can do to together to build a healthier future in West Yorkshire
- Horizon scanning for early identification of issues relevant to the [West Yorkshire Plan](#)

C. Embedding research and innovation

WYSAG will facilitate connections for research and innovation by:

- Providing a portal for submissions of policy briefs about the latest research and other evidence relevant to the [West Yorkshire Plan](#)
- Identifying best practice from national and international settings

D. Supporting robust evaluation

WYSAG will support the development of the evidence base underpinning new / novel interventions by:

- Providing methodological and analytical advice and support to evaluate policies and interventions

E. Data and data linkage

WYSAG will harness the power of connected data research assets to:

- Develop regional secure data environments
- Inform and support policy making by providing evidence
- Use linked data to inform West Yorkshire needs and support evaluation of interventions

WYSAG is hosted and facilitated by the [NIHR Applied Research Collaboration \(ARC\) Yorkshire and Humber](#), on behalf of the Combined Authority and Partnership, bringing together the ARCs applied health research expertise with that of economics and the environment via the [Yorkshire & Humber Policy Engagement & Research Network](#) (Y-PERN) and [Yorkshire Universities](#).

(Figure 1 – WYSAG Blueprint 2024-2025)

1.3 An exploratory approach

It is recognised that for advice to be useful and impactful to the Combined Authority and Partnership, open dialogue is needed, moving beyond simple provision of information to that which helps jointly shape focussed research questions based on practice needs and citing evidence in local context, initiatives and ambitions.

WYSAG is adopting and exploring different ways of working to achieve its aims. For example working with the [International Public Policy Observatory](#)^{iv} to explore how a systems map for flexible working could help in explore opportunities and ambitions around inclusivity and sustainability.

Overtime the ambition of WYSAG is to develop a suite of approaches, useful to the Combined Authority and Partnership which can be utilised to address different areas of inquiry from a broad topic perspective through to a specific and clearly defined research question. Underpinning these exploratory approaches will be considerations of both what the evidence is (including hierarchy, quality, relevance, uncertainties) and the context in terms of how policy advice may be taken forward, applied and implemented. Throughout WYSAG will:

- Be policy and practice driven
- Be systematic, rapid and responsive within available resources
- Collate, appraise and synthesize existing research evidence
- Be advisory
- Formulate interdisciplinary advice set in the local context

1.4 Participants and funding

The [West Yorkshire Scientific Advisory Group \(WYSAG\)](#) is supported by in-kind contributions of staff time by the [NIHR Applied Research Collaboration \(ARC\) Yorkshire and Humber](#), [Yorkshire & Humber Policy Engagement and Research Network \(Y-PERN\)](#), [Yorkshire Universities](#) and linking representatives from [West Yorkshire Combined Authority](#) and [West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership](#).

The ARC provides applied health research expertise alongside contributions from the Y-PERN and Yorkshire Universities offering independent academic expertise across economic, social and environment disciplines. Yorkshire Universities provides the over-arching infrastructure for higher education in the region, with a direct link to senior leaders.

Representatives from the Combined Authority and Partnership are the principle means of liaison between the respective organisations and WYSAG.

WYSAG is advisory and does not set policy and does not undertake primary research. Instead it seeks to leverage and connect with other aligned initiatives and research programmes, drawing on the wealth of research assets regionally on a best endeavours basis. It is hosted and facilitated by the [NIHR Applied Research Collaboration \(ARC\) Yorkshire and Humber](#) (NIHR200166).

2.0 Coordination and Operations

2.1 Coordination

The WYSAG Chair is the ARC Director, appointed by the West Yorkshire Mayor. WYSAG core WYSAG group, chaired by the ARC Director, meets regularly providing updates, agreeing next steps and coordinating WYSAG actions and activities within the scope described in 1.2.

Chair:

- ARC Director (ARC)

Membership:

- YHARC Director (ARC)
- Chief Policy Fellow (Y-PERN)
- Executive Director (Yorkshire Universities)
- Senior Policy Fellow (ARC)
- Senior Policy Officer (the Combined Authority)
- Consultant in Public Health (the Combined Authority and Partnership)
- Power of Communities Programme representative (Partnership)

Secretariat:

- ARC representatives

Group roles:

- Agree WYSAG activities (in line with the scope – see 1.2)
- Maintain an overview of and administer, facilitate and review WYSAG activities
- Identifying synergies and alignment of WYSAG activities with existing initiatives
- Identifying relevant specialists and contributors to WYSAG activities including:
 - academic specialists from across academic networks and institutions
 - organisational leads within the Combined Authority and Partnership
- Provide strategic advice and support including problem solving
- Review and sign-off final outputs* (see 2.3.2)
- Contribute to evaluation and continuous improvement activities

An action log is maintained for the Core Group.

2.2 Conflicts of Interest

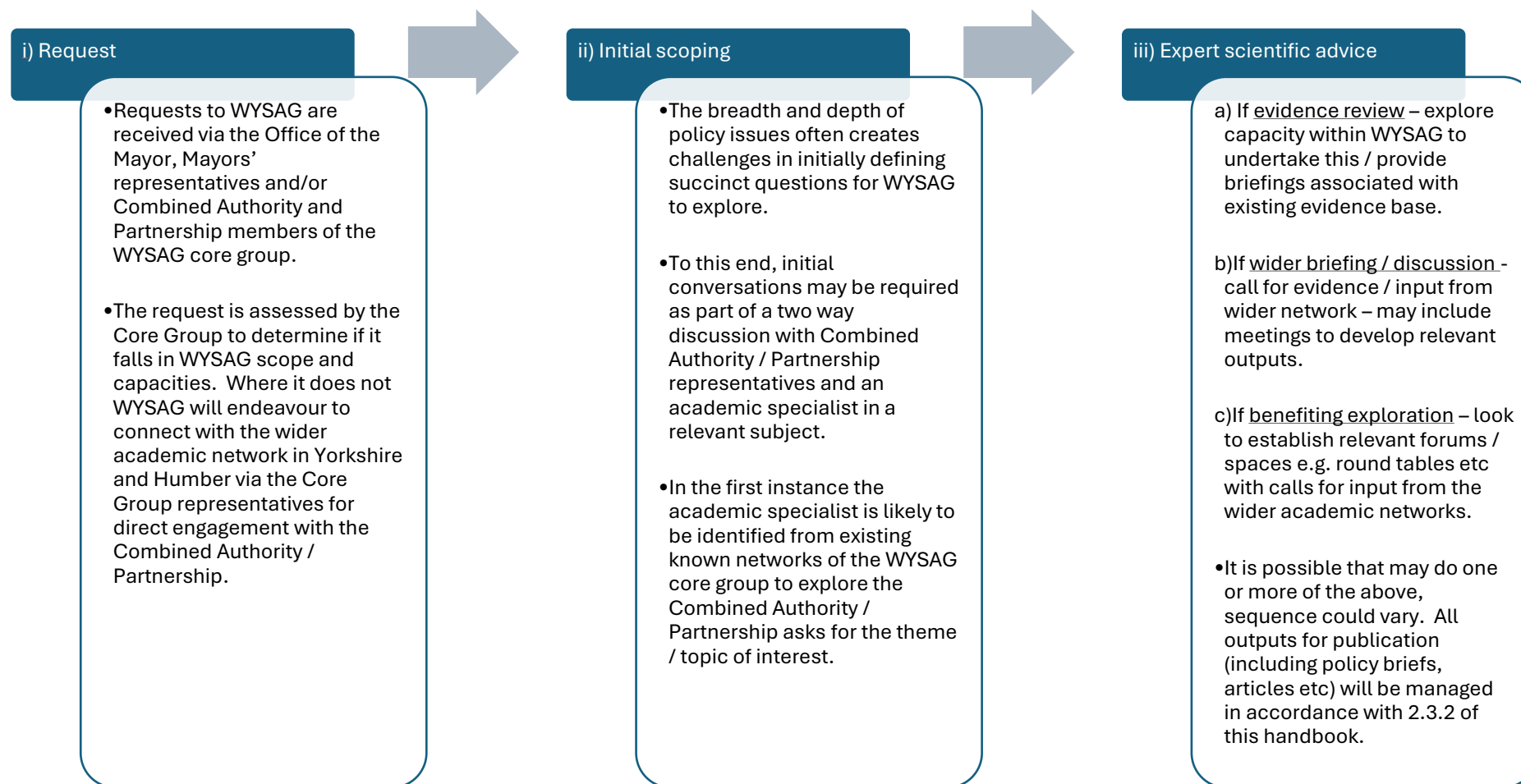
Conflicts of interest should be notified to the WYSAG Chair at the earliest opportunity. They will determine the appropriate measures to be implemented.

2.3 Operations

WYSAG activities are devolved to specific task and finish groups with a nominated lead providing updates to the Core Group on progress.

2.3.1 Exploration and tasking regarding A. Provision of expert scientific advice

The steps / framework for assessing, scoping and responding to requests in detailed below in Figure 2.

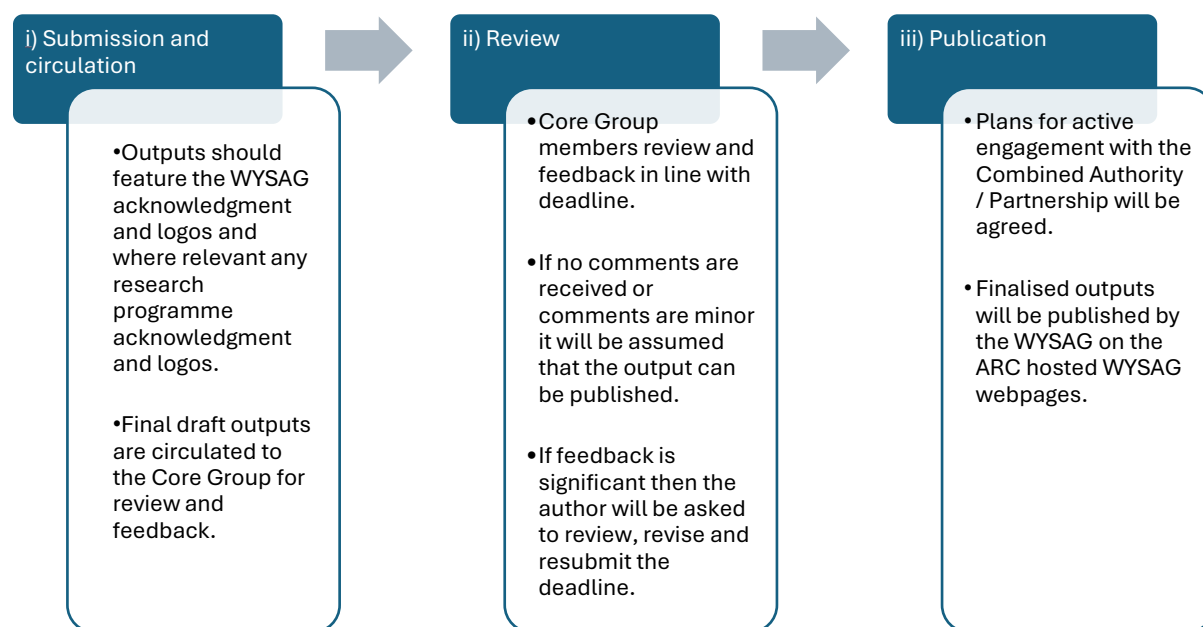


(Figure 2 – Requests to WYSAG)

2.3.2 Output review and sign-off

For governance purposes and to ensure that outputs associated with WYSAG activities best meet the needs of the Combined Authority / Partnership, the Core Group will review outputs for publication prior to submission / publication. This includes but is not limited to policy briefs, journal articles, videos (e.g. WYSAG Talks). The review will not compromise the independence of WYSAG.

The process employed for sign-off is detailed below in Figure 3.



(Figure 3 – WYSAG output sign-off process)

The aim is to publish all WYSAG outputs on the WYSAG website. Publication will be complimented by direct engagement activities with the Combined Authority / Partnership where these are requested.

Outputs should include the following acknowledgement:

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References

ⁱ West Yorkshire Plan <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/growing-the-economy/the-west-yorkshire-plan/>

ⁱⁱ West Yorkshire Joint Forward Plan <https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/publications/joint-forward-plan-2024>

ⁱⁱⁱ West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan <https://westyorks-ca.gov.uk/growing-the-economy/economic-strategy/local-growth-plan/>

^{iv} International Public Policy Observatory <https://theippo.co.uk/>