



Case study

Case study: Co-Researching Young People's Priorities – the 'Youth Health Matters' project

SUMMARY

- Ran from March – December 2022
- Co-research project involving 4 WH&Y Commissioners and 3 WH&Y senior researchers
- Young people collaborated in all stages of the project from designing the aims and methods to data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination
- Engaged 86 young people across 5 online workshops and a short online questionnaire
- Resulted in a national report disseminated by young people at conferences and to key stakeholders via direct advocacy

What was the aim?

Youth Health Matters aimed to identify young people's health and wellbeing priorities to directly inform research and policy agendas. The project also investigated how young people want to participate in health research and policy development to achieve more inclusive practice.

What were the research project questions?

- What is working well and what is not working well in the health system for young people?
- What things should be happening to improve health services for young people?
- What are young people's health and wellbeing priorities?



- What research needs to be done to promote change?
- How should young people be involved in research and policy making, and how should we do research translation with young people?

opportunities for young people to be engaged in the project. We gave them the choice and flexibility to pick and choose how they would like to be involved in the project.

Why were young people engaged in this project?

Engaging young people as partners in this research aimed to overcome key limitations of existing research. Specifically, it aimed to centre the concerns and ideas of young people in health service research agendas. The Commissioners ensured the research questions and methods were inclusive, relevant and relatable to young people and that the findings reflected young people's perspectives.

What model of engaging with young people was chosen and why?

Young people were engaged as Co-Researchers, Facilitators and Research Participants. The project also used a participatory and hybrid research design to facilitate the participation of young people from dispersed geographical locations and with diverse identities. We offered a wide range of



When and how did young people participate in this project?

Phase	Approach or methods used	Young people's role/s
Ideation	Co-design project	Co-researchers
Planning	Co-create research questions and aims with the researchers Co-create workshop activities and the questionnaire.	Co-researchers
Data collection	WH&Y Commissioners developed 3 online workshops (using Zoom and Miro) with senior researchers. This included reviewing the workshop pilot and making changes to workshop design. WH&Y Commissioners were trained as workshop facilitators.	Co-researchers Facilitators Participants
Analysis	WH&Y Commissioners undertook analysis of the workshop and questionnaire data.	Co-researchers
Reporting	WH&Y Commissioners drafted sections of the project report. All WH&Y Commissioners were invited to give feedback on the final draft of the report.	Co-researchers Consultants
Dissemination	WH&Y Commissioners contributed ideas to a key stakeholder list and the report's dissemination strategy. They also identified how they wanted to take part. WH&Y Commissioners presented key findings to the 2022 Australian Association for Adolescent Health Conference in Melbourne and Primary & Community Health Research Advisory Groups.	Advisors Co-researchers Presenters
Impact/evaluation	WH&Y Commissioners contributed to one hybrid and one online workshop where they were invited to respond to a series of reflective questions regarding their role and the benefits of the project.	Co-researchers Participants



What actions were taken to meet ethical considerations relating to involving young people?

Mutual trust and accountability:

- Communicate the research process to young people on the research team and acknowledge the varying time frames as a result of organisational and ethical procedures.
- Ask young people what they would like to contribute to the project and how we can support them to achieve that.

Equity and responsiveness:

- Discuss what team roles & responsibilities are so people understand their rights & responsibilities.
- Be open to feedback, negotiating responsibilities.
- Be open to all questions about the research, the project timeline, methodologies, concepts, terminology, workload, reimbursement and acknowledgement of young people's work.

Diversity and inclusion:

- Have conversations about how the research team can best support young people to engage with the research.
- Identify what training, skills and knowledge to engage with the subject matter needs supplementing?
- Consider the social and cultural makeup of the team. Ask if young people can easily access the support they need?

What were some of the practical steps taken to prepare to work together, connect with young people, and reflect on each activity/step in the process?

Prepare:

- Discuss the subject matter, aims, context, purpose and team roles & responsibilities within the project.
- Discuss the processes involved and the estimated time frames for each step within the project including ethics amendments and report writing.
- Have 1-2 senior researchers at every meeting and check in on how people are feeling about their work.



- Allocate roles based on interests, strengths and lived experiences project team members. Provide training in social research and ethics.

Connect:

- Spend time to establish rapport among all team members and get to know their interests, skills, strengths and reasons for being involved.
- Organise and schedule regular meetings to ensure the project was on track and to discuss any concerns or ideas the young people have.
- Provide different types of support and resources such as capacity-strengthening and reimbursements.

Reflect:

Throughout and at the conclusion of the project ask young people:

- How do you feel about your roles & responsibilities? Does anything need to be revised so that you feel comfortable and supported?
- What have you learned, what do you think you gained and what difference did taking part make to you?

What were the outcomes of this project?

A co-created report: WH&Y Youth Health Matters distributed.

For researchers, service-providers and policy stakeholders:

- Researchers reported it was valuable to hear directly from young people what health service reform should focus on and how young people want to be involved in better design and delivery of health research, policy and services. Some reported that they have subsequently included youth health as a priority area for 2023.
- For example, the South-Western Sydney Local Health District Research Advisory Group decided to put youth health agenda on their 2023 agenda items. They planned to consult their local youth advisory group, children and families, and primary and community health clinicians to see what the research priorities for youth health should be the district.



For young people:

- Young people engaged as co-researchers reported that they felt valued and appreciated being able to demonstrate the possibilities and value of young people as co-researchers to a wide youth health audience. They reported learning new research and project management skills and gaining confidence in conducting and communicating research.
- Young facilitators said they enjoyed the experience, felt more connected and learned new skills for facilitating conversations with young people in an online context.
- *"I enjoyed sharing my personality with the young people involved- being able to share a joke allowed to create a human connection with others especially "* - Female, 23, NSW
- Research participants also felt a sense of safety and belonging in the workshops. They reported that the peer facilitators created a great collaborative environment where young people could share and learn about different views
- and lived experiences of health and wellbeing.
- *" I continue to learn many things and have a sense of belonging" - Workshop 2; 5 female, 1 male*
- *" I liked how easy it was to [give] our opinions and the safe space that was created for us; Great group of people! Good conversations, positive experience overall :); I appreciated the conversations and discussions we had around different topics that we're passionate about; General support from each other, building on ideas collectively; it was fun and chill, plus the group work was fun :)" - Workshop 4; 3 non-binary, 2 male*
- Participants were enthusiastic about being part of future research workshops.

WH&Y Commissioners who advised the project by contributing to an intergenerational discussion said that it felt good to be in the same room as researchers and advising on the preliminary findings of the Youth Health Matters report.



Key questions for researchers to reflect on if planning a similar project:

- What roles do you want young people to play in the project? Are there resources to support these roles?
- Have you allocated time to discuss the aims and purpose of the project and build rapport?
- Have you discussed the procedures, processes, budget and timeframes for the project?
- Do the young people know who their main contact is for the project?
- Have you established a learning environment to encourage honesty and openness?
- Is there dedicated time for feedback during and at the end of the project?

Tips/learnings from this project:

- Brief the whole team on the aims and purpose of the project and be transparent about the processes involved in achieving the desired outcome.
- Collectively set and manage expectations and agree on changes to roles when required.
- Regularly communicate processes for raising issues and challenges (E.g. high workloads).
- Ensure that young people understand ethical procedures when analysing and handling data.
- Regularly check in and work through concerns as a team. Provide a lot of reassurance to young people on their progress and continuous feedback.
- Be organised: consider where young people can store all their work, and who is the best available contact if they need help or if something goes wrong. Let them know any proposed project plans/changes early.