

# Getting the Right Team

# 02

GUIDEBOOK  
SECTION

Youth Engagement  
in Health Research



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**WELLBEING  
HEALTH &  
YOUTH** NHMRC Centre of  
Research Excellence  
in Adolescent Health

**YR** **YOUNG &  
RESILIENT  
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# Overview

You need to gather and prepare the right team to help facilitate young people's involvement at whatever stage of the research process you start engagement. Meaningful, inclusive and safe engagement with young people is the tip of the iceberg. Underpinning this is a skilled and capable team who have done their forward planning, allocated clear roles and responsibilities, allocated

appropriate resourcing and are working well together to ensure the safety and accessibility of the research experience for young people.

In this guide you will find some key considerations for getting the right team.

## Prepare

### Checklist

- Getting the right people together
- Identifying roles and responsibilities
- Allocating necessary resources/budget
- Considering child safeguarding obligations and practical needs
- Project plan ahead so you can best support young people's involvement

### The right people

The skills, capacity and approach of staff on your project team make a big difference when it comes to engaging young people in health research.

All staff who have contact with young people should be:

- Welcoming
- Open-minded and ready to learn from young people
- Encouraging
- Friendly
- Active listeners
- Flexible in ways of working

### Roles and responsibilities

While all members of a team should engage respectfully and meaningfully with young people over the course of a project, it helps to have clearly identified roles and responsibilities, as you would for any project or organisation. It is important to have one person designated as the main contact for young people, but there also needs to be a shared commitment from a wider team to supporting meaningful youth engagement.

The following roles should be considered as part of the team:

#### Main contact

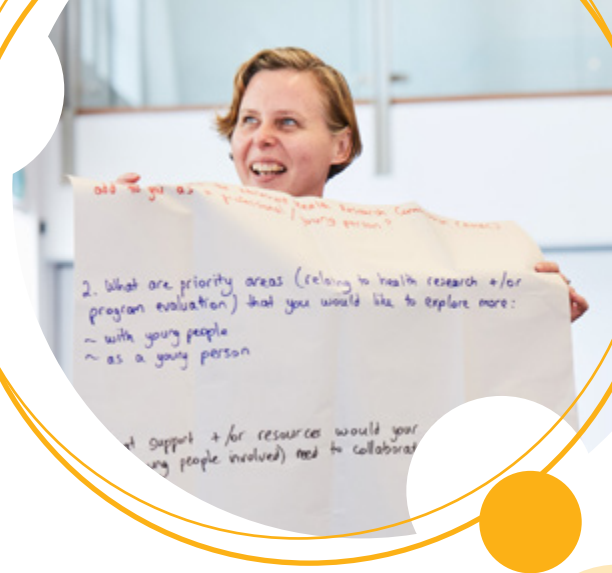
A younger staff member or person in the team with experience working with young people will be best placed to understand the ways in which young people would like to be contacted and involved.

#### Senior Researcher

Whatever term you use (Chief Investigator, or Lead Researcher), be clear about who is the senior researcher in the project and ensure that this person is publicly supportive of young people's involvement. They should be welcoming and regularly available and engaged with young people involved. This sets the tone for the rest of the team and sends a positive message to young people that they are valued.

#### Support team

They may be a familiar face and trusted person, skilled in youth engagement and can support young people if the main contact is not available. They may be slightly more senior to the main contact and can advocate for young people's involvement and positive contribution to other team members and the wider organisation.



## Staff resourcing

Regardless of the project, you should allow extra time in the 'Prepare' phase to build relationships with youth organisations and young people themselves as well as informal opportunities for young people to connect.

As a rough guide expect to allocate the following amounts of staff time per activity outlined below:

Task	Description	Estimated time allocation
Set up & recruitment phase	<p>Generating recruitment materials</p> <p>Contact with youth organisations, networks or potential young people</p> <p>Ethical considerations and child safeguarding planning</p> <p>Induction staff and young people</p>	10 days
Getting young people along to activities (e.g. for a meeting or workshop with a new or established group)	Each young person may need to be contacted at least 3 times via different communication methods.	5 hours per activity
Activities young people are attending	Prepare youth-friendly, plain language information sent ahead of time.	1.5 hours of staff time for every hour of young people's time
Post-activity debrief and admin, thank you (process reimbursements, distribute letters of thanks and or certificate of appreciation)	Team reflection, debrief with young people, project admin, thank you (process reimbursements, distribute letters of thanks and or certificate of appreciation).	3-5 hours

## Project planning

All successful projects should use project management tools. When working with young people these can also be very effective and help people to understand the different areas of work, milestones, responsibilities and timelines.

Some project management and team communication tools are more accessible and friendly than others. Young people may prefer to use platforms such as Slack, or custom tools. Either way it's important to ensure all members of the team – including young people – understand what is being used, how and why.

# Connect

## Communication

Clear communication and setting expectations about roles and responsibilities helps avoid unnecessary confusion and stress for all team members – including young people.

- It's important speak to young people like you would speak to an adult who does not know much about research.
- Use clear and plain language but be mindful to avoid patronising or talking down to young people.
- Work with young people early on to understand their usual communication channels and what will work best for the group as a whole.
- Expect to set aside a reasonable amount of time to communicate, build trust and engagement with young people, especially early on!
- Be clear within your team about who is the key contact for young people. This can help to manage the communication flow and requests for involvement of young people, and help to mitigate the risk of young people feeling overwhelmed

## Navigating power

As adults, researchers need to acknowledge the power we hold in shaping the topics, approach and methods. Throughout the research process, we need to continually reflect and evaluate on our own biases and assumptions which we bring about young people, the topic of research as it relates to young people, and how we are sharing power with young people throughout this process.

We also need to recognise that power dynamics may shift if/as the makeup of your team changes. It's important to ensure that any changes within your team are managed in a way that consider how this will impact on the power dynamics within your team and with young people you are engaging with. Ensuring that new/incoming team members are supported to build their knowledge and skills in youth engagement with support from other colleagues is essential.



# Reflect

## Applying the WH&Y framework: reflection questions

### Mutual trust & accountability

Which team member is the main contact for young people? Are there additional skills or support they need to be effective?

Who is the Lead Researcher? What additional power dynamics might be in play when this person makes requests of young people? Are young people comfortable and supported?

How will your team hear of young people's views and reflect together on how you can improve your practice?

### Equity & responsiveness

How will you regularly review and improve on your team's engagement with young people?

Is there sufficient time to be flexible and responsive to the diverse strengths and needs of participating young people?

Have you asked young people about their preferred mode of communication? Do you have a range of ways to communicate?

Do any young people want leadership roles in the team?

### Diversity & inclusion

Is the language, information and data being used in your project or practice inclusive, clear and understandable for a diverse range of young people?

Are the meeting spaces, timing, food and other supports (eg. Translators) available and suitable for the needs of the people you're working with?

Are the associated material technologies (for example, consent forms, apps, electronic health records) and social activities (for example, workshops, events) inclusive and respectful of young people's diversity and needs?

Are there opportunities for more young people to be involved? Can their roles be expanded or developed within your project?

