

## Recommendations for Involving Children and Young People in Research

Drawing on insights from this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the experience, safety, and inclusivity of research involving children and young people.

### 1. Prioritise Emotional Safety and Trauma-Informed Approaches

- Design research environments and processes that are emotionally safe, compassionate, and empowering.
- Apply trauma-informed principles, particularly in inpatient or high-intensity settings, to reduce harm and promote choice and control.

### 2. Communicate Clearly, Accessibly and Creatively

- Ensure all information about research purpose, process, and outcomes is transparent and easy to understand.
- Use creative, youth-friendly formats (e.g. visuals, videos, apps) to support communication and understanding.

### 3. Build Authentic, Collaborative Relationships

- Encourage researchers to engage with young people informally, respectfully, and as equal collaborators in the process.
- Offer relational training for researchers to foster empathy, trust, and youth-centred practice.

### 4. Adopt Inclusive and Anti-Discriminatory Research Practices

- Proactively seek participation from under-served and minoritised groups.
- Design research with anti-racist, inclusive frameworks and participatory methods to ensure a diversity of voices are heard and valued.
- Consider what images and icons could convey an inclusive approach on all participant facing documents.

### 5. Close the Feedback Loop

- Make clear to young people how their contributions influence the research and what will happen next.
- Always share research outcomes in an accessible way with those who took part.



## 6. Provide Flexible, Holistic, and Person-Centred Participation Options

- Offer choices about how, when, and where young people take part in research, accommodating their wellbeing and individual circumstances.
- Recognise and address the wider emotional, physical, and social needs of participants.



## 7. Thoughtfully Consider Family and Community Involvement

- Involve families, schools, and communities when appropriate, while respecting the young person's privacy, safety, and preferences.
- Avoid assuming family involvement is always helpful or wanted, check in with the young person about what feels right for them.



## In Summary

These recommendations aim to create **inclusive, safe, and meaningful research experiences** for children and young people, recognising their expertise, respecting their individuality, and ensuring their voices help shape the future of mental health research.