

MAIN RECEPTION

URBIS

SEEN BUT NOT HEARD

Supporting the perspectives of children
and young people in evaluation

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Prepared for the AES Conference 2023

INTRODUCTION

WHO ARE WE?



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WHAT ARE WE HERE TO TALK ABOUT?

Theoretical background –
reasons, principles, and challenges

Examples from Urbis' practice

'CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION: FROM TOKENISM TO CITIZENSHIP'

*"This Essay is written for people who know that young people have something to say but who would like to **reflect further on the process.** It is also written for those people who have it in their power to assist children in having a voice, but who, unwittingly or not, **trivialize their involvement.**"*

Hart, 1992

'INVOLVING CHILDREN IN EVALUATION'

“Evaluation practices that involve children are under-used in child and family services (Knight & Kingston, 2021), with many service providers defaulting to adult-reported data for evaluation.”

Goldsworthy (Australian Institute of Family Studies), 2023

DEFINITION

Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014 (NSW)

“Child” means a person under the age of 12 years... “young person” means a person who is 12 years of age or above but under 25 years.

Also shared by Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (2021)

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (updated 2018)

Child: *subject to law in the relevant jurisdiction, a minor who lacks the maturity to make a decision whether or not to participate in research.*

Young person: *a minor who (subject to the law in the relevant jurisdiction) may have the maturity to make a decision whether or not to participate in research.*

National Statement also asks researchers to factor in:

- different maturity levels and
- what this looks like in the context of the research project.



WHY SHOULD WE DO IT?



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE ARE EXPERTS
IN THEIR OWN LIVES**

(ACYP, 2019)



**DEVELOPMENTAL
BENEFITS**

(Vic Govt, 2022;
Goldsworthy, 2023)



**MORAL AND ETHICAL
IMPERATIVE TO ENABLE
PARTICIPATION**

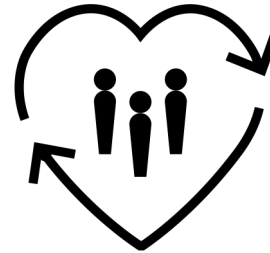
(UN, 1989; ACYP, 2019)

WHAT DOES GOOD PRACTICE LOOK LIKE?



Mutual trust and accountability

- Does the structure and governance of your work support young people's participation and contribution in meaningful ways?
- Are there ongoing opportunities for young people to hear about progress and voice their ideas and concerns?



Equity and responsiveness

- How can you best support young people and their networks in the co-design of health research and translation?
- Is your co-design approach youth-centred, strengths-based and focussed on maximising opportunities for health and wellbeing?



Diversity and inclusion

- In your communications, are you using language, information and data that are inclusive, clear and understandable for a diversity of young people?
- Are your material technologies (like consent forms) and social activities (like workshops) inclusive and respectful of young people's diverse identities, abilities and skills?

Values-based approaches (WH&Y, 2019)

WHAT DOES GOOD PRACTICE LOOK LIKE?



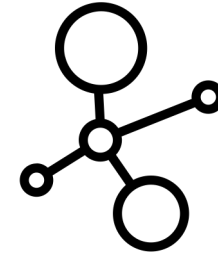
Attitudes and assumptions

- Treat children and young people with respect
- Don't make assumptions about what children and young people are capable of
- Remember that children and young people are as diverse as any other population group - "Do not ask children and young people what all children and young people think, ask them what they know and experience"



Language and communication

- Don't talk down to children and young people
- Don't be a 'try hard' (be authentic)
- Tell children and young people how they will be involved and always provide feedback
- Steer clear of professional jargon whenever possible

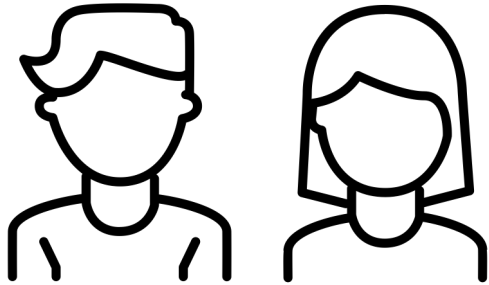


Flexibility within a frame

- Be open to new ideas, especially ones you may not have thought of
- Give children and young people time and space to say what they mean
- Give clear objectives and limits for decision-making

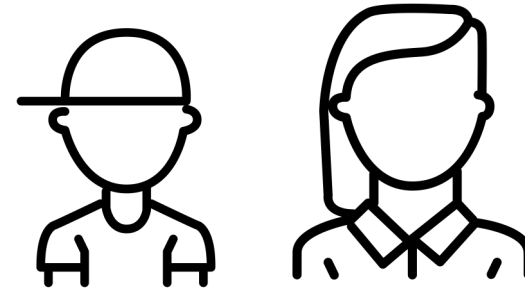
Key principles/actions (ACYP, 2019)

CHALLENGES



Evaluators (adapted from Goldsworthy, 2023)

- Skills
- Cost
- Time
- **Navigating ethical considerations**
- Potentially many more, depending on your evaluation



Children and young people (adapted from ACYP, 2015)

- **Paternalistic attitudes – adultism and protectionism (Stafford et al., 2021)**
- Lack of adult receptiveness to their suggestions for change
- Transport
- Methods requiring parental consent (for mature minors)

UNDERSTANDING AND MITIGATING RISKS



IDENTIFY ANY RISKS



GAUGE PROBABILITY AND SEVERITY OF RISKS



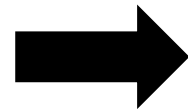
**ASSESS THE EXTENT TO WHICH RISKS CAN BE
MINIMISED**



**DETERMINE WHETHER RISKS ARE JUSTIFIED BY
POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH**



DETERMINE HOW RISKS CAN BE MANAGED



National Statement Chapter 2.1



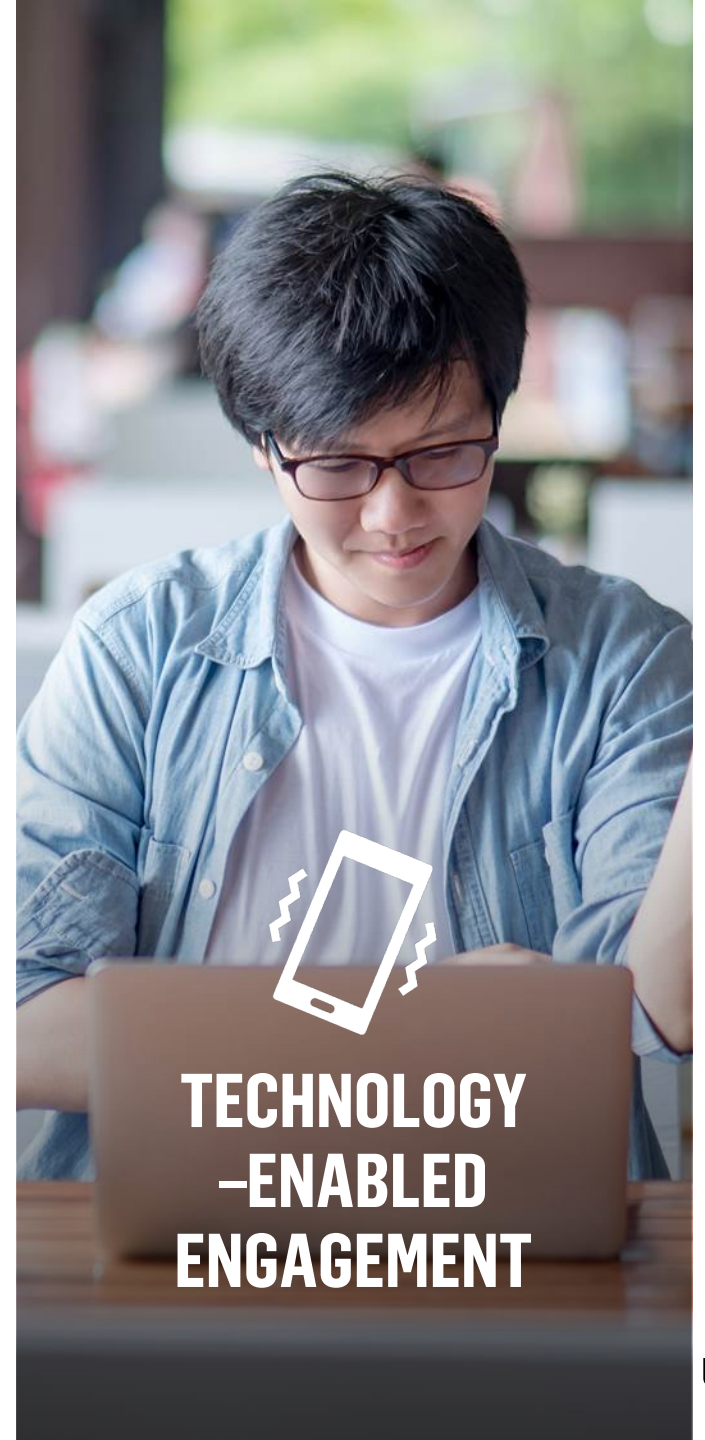
PRACTICE INSIGHTS



**PARTICIPATORY
RESEARCH DESIGN**



**PARENT OR
GUARDIAN CONSENT**



**TECHNOLOGY
-ENABLED
ENGAGEMENT**

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH DESIGN



RESEARCH PROJECT

Evaluation of a wraparound mental health and engagement program delivered in a flexible learning school setting

METHOD

We undertook a collaborative research design process with four participants who expressed interest in helping design the research project

PARTICIPANTS

People aged 15-21 who had disengaged from education for a minimum of 2 months and who had a mental health diagnosis

OUTCOME

Participant engagement was maximised, and research method better aligned with good practice principles

VALUE



Aligning with best practice principles



Maximising participation and engagement



Elevating voices and valuing perspectives



Improving data quality

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS



Would your peers prefer to provide feedback over the phone, over video call or in-person?

Would your peers prefer the option of speaking with a queer-identifying researcher?

What topics should we be asking program participants about?

Do you think your peers would be happy to complete an online survey?

How can we make participation safe for queer participants?

What time of the day would your peers be more likely to participate in research?

What would be the easiest way for your peers to provide feedback on the program?

SEEKING PARENT OR GUARDIAN CONSENT



RESEARCH PROJECT

Evaluation of a program supporting LGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools

METHOD

Yes, parent or guardian consent was required for students (under 18) to participate in focus groups

PARTICIPANTS

Secondary school students engaged in their school's LGBTQIA+ inclusion group

OUTCOME

Some mature students were inadvertently excluded from participating in low-risk research highly relevant to their experience of LGBTQIA+ inclusion



SEEKING PARENT OR GUARDIAN ASSENT



A young person can consent without additional consent of a parent or guardian if:



THEY HAVE THE MATURITY TO PROVIDE INFORMED CONSENT



THE RESEARCH INVOLVES NO MORE THAN LOW RISK



THE RESEARCH AIMS TO BENEFIT THE GROUP TO WHICH THEY BELONG



IT WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THEIR BEST INTERESTS TO SEEK CONSENT FROM PARENTS



PROVISION IS MADE TO PROTECT THEIR SAFETY AND WELLBEING

4.2.9. of the National Statement

Seen But Not Heard

18/10/2023

TECHNOLOGY ENABLED PARTICIPATION



Hi, my name is Maddy and I work for Urbis. [XXX] from [YYY] passed your number onto me. Thanks for being interested in our research on [XXX].

I was wondering if there is a time you are free in the next few days to have a chat with me about the research? It would just be a chance for me to tell you a bit about the project and answer any questions you might have. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes. After this you can decide if you'd like to be involved.

I'm happy to chat via phone call, text or email. Just let me know what works best for you.

Thanks 😊

Hi yes [XXX] told me about your research. I am free tomorrow, in the afternoon. Give me a call then.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Evaluation of a program supporting young people transitioning from out of home care

PARTICIPANTS

Young people aged 18-21 years leaving out of home care

METHOD

We adopted a flexible method of engaging with young people

OUTCOME

The burden of participation was reduced, which led to an increase in participant engagement

TECHNOLOGY ENABLED PARTICIPATION



Arranging participation

Hi Maddy I'd love to chat – can we do it through email? My email is [xxx@xxx.com]

Hi, [XXX], that's great! We'd love to hear your thoughts via email.

I'll send an information sheet about the research along with the questions we have to your email, and you can reply to them in your own time.

Sounds awesome, thank you :D

Interview via text

What do you think the aim of [program name] is?

To help teens living in out of home care when they get older

Do you think that aim was achieved for you?

Yeah definitely

I'm glad to hear that. How was [program name] able to help you?

They helped me a lot with housing and how to pay for my rent and how to keep my house clean

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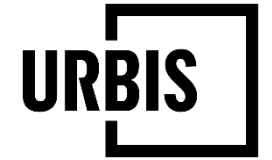
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THANK YOU



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