

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

MY VOICE MATTERS IN RESEARCH

This module explores what helps – and what gets in the way of – young people taking part in mental health research. Building on the characters created in the workshops, the young people looked at how different parts of their identity can shape their experience of being involved in research. In the workshops, participants discussed how characteristics (such as race, gender, socioeconomic status and neurodiversity) influence opportunities to take part.

The ideas and reflections shared in this section have been brought together into audio insight packages in which you'll hear the young people highlight the key barriers and enablers to engagement in research for people like them and the character they created.

Kaya



"I've had people treat me wrong, I've had trust issues so it's a bit harder."

"Speaking about her experiences, she might be anxious in front of new people."

Click [here](#) to listen to the audio insights from the group of young people with experience in the justice system who co-created Kaya. This piece lasts around 2 minutes.

Tara



"We need to think about how she grew up and how that reflects on her daily life."

"It's stigmatised [mental health]. Our cultural beliefs or myths change our mindset."

Click [here](#) to listen to the audio insights from the group of young people from Global Majority communities who co-created Tara. This piece lasts around 2 minutes

Cat



"It's important to know who you're going to be working with. If you don't know, then you'll worry. You might act out and you won't say anything."

"Strangers may not understand."

Click [here](#) to listen to the audio insights from the group of neurodiverse young people who co-created Cat. This piece lasts around 1 minute.

Harry



"Young people might not have been out for very long so it would be quite hard for them to talk about their sexuality."

"Not everyone's out, but also not everyone's mental illness is tied to them being gay."

Click [here](#) to listen to the audio insights from the group of LGBTQIA+ young people who co-created Harry. This piece lasts around 3 minutes.

Listening to these insights, you have heard how identity, experience, and opportunity can all shape a young person's journey through mental health research. Each group offers a different perspective, but together, they show how much inclusion and understanding matter when working with young people from diverse backgrounds.

We would like to thank the young people for their contributions, and everyone who helped make the workshops possible.

REFLECTION QUESTION

How might your own assumptions, practices, or systems create barriers or facilitators for young people like Kaya, Tara, Cat and Harry to take part in research?

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

The young people outlined a range of factors that can make taking part in mental health research feel difficult. These considerations highlight what can get in the way of engagement.

Feeling unsure or unsafe when information is unclear.

Not knowing who researchers are, what will happen, or what participation involves can cause anxiety.

Trust, anxiety and past experiences.

Trust was described as fragile, influenced by past experiences and by having few people they felt able to trust.

Assumptions about identity and experience.

Experiences differ widely, and assumptions about identity may create pressures that make open engagement harder.

Practical and environmental barriers.

Time, finances, transport and the research setting itself can all affect whether a young person feels able to take part.

IN SUMMARY | WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

Young people's reflections reveal how everyday realities – from past experiences and identity, to environment and access – can influence whether research feels like it's for them.

Understanding what gets in the way is a crucial first step in creating mental health research that feels inclusive, respectful and relevant to young people's lives.