MY VOICE MATTERS in research

Making mental health research more inclusive - with children, young people and their families - What works?

Start with young people, not research questions

Involve children, young people and families from the very beginning — designing, shaping and sharing the research together.

Make participation easy and practical

Offer flexible times, online or in-person options, travel support, childcare and clear information so families can take part without extra stress.

WHAT to EXPECT and how to find us.

Build trust through relationships

Take time to listen, be approachable and create safe, welcoming spaces where everyone feels respected and valued.

Use clear, friendly language

Avoid jargon. Explain research in ways that are age-appropriate, culturally sensitive and easy to understand.

Reach out - don't wait for people to come to you

Work with schools, youth groups, community organisations and trusted local leaders to connect with diverse communities.
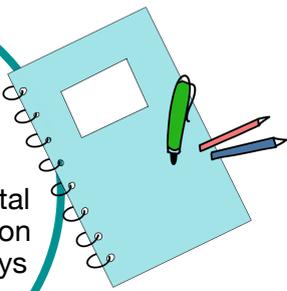
Celebrate diversity and representation

Ensure research reflects different cultures, identities, abilities and experiences so everyone can see themselves included.

Value lived experience as expertise

Children young people and parents are experts in their own lives. Treat their knowledge as equal to professional knowledge.

Offer creative ways to share experiences

Use art, storytelling, digital tools, games or discussion groups — not just surveys and interviews.

Support confidence and mental health literacy

Help families understand the essential role they can play in mental health and research so they feel empowered to contribute their views.

Recognise and thank people properly

Acknowledge time and effort in a way that is meaningful. If in doubt, ask. It may be best to provide activities or opportunities to develop skills, instead of or as well as vouchers, certificates, feedback and updates on what changed because of engagement in the research process.

Create a culture of inclusion

Train researchers and professionals in inclusive practice, cultural humility and working alongside communities.

Show impact - and close the loop

Tell people who engage in research or research development what difference their involvement made. Seeing change builds trust and future participation.

Inclusive research leads to better science, better services and better outcomes for young people.