



# Engaging young people in NHS service delivery and development

*Recommendations from a scoping  
review and research project*

Association for Young People's Health  
April 2024



# Background

Young people need to be involved at all levels of our healthcare system, from shaping the care they are receiving at the front line right up to co-designing and inputting to strategic change. What we mean by health services in this context is any NHS funded or branded service that manages the health and wellbeing of young people (10-25 year olds), ranging from primary care, through secondary and tertiary services, and including community services, mental health services, and allied health professional services such as physiotherapy and occupational health.

NHS England is committed to working in partnership with young people but this requires planning, resources and guidance. There is high level policy support for this, and anecdotal accounts of good work going on in practice on the ground. However, despite high levels of commitment to working together with young people and representing their voice in policy and planning, our understanding of what is actually happening on the ground within the system is somewhat lacking.

NHSE's children and young peoples' transformation team commissioned AYPH to map the territory and provide an understanding of what we do and do not know about best practice in this area. As a result of an **evidence scope** and **our own research** into what is happening in the system, we concluded that very limited progress had been made in developing this workstream in recent years. Echoing other reports dating back two decades, our conclusions were that we need better accounts of what is going on, more resources dedicated to these kinds of activities, and some serious investment in evaluating impact. These conclusions do not need repeating and provide us with nothing new. What we need now is action to improve the evidence base.

We have drawn up this list of recommendations for taking forward work in this area.

---

**Citation:** Wortley, L., Hagell, A & Brady, L.-M. (2024). *Engaging young people in NHS service delivery and development: Recommendations from a scoping review and research project*. Association for Young People's Health. <https://doi.org/10.18745/pb.2299/27879>

# Recommendations

## Evidencing what is going on

- Require applications for transformation funding and reports at the end of such funding to include an account of participation work undertaken separate to other clinical work.
- Set up dedicated NHSE blog space for accounts of youth engagement from practitioners. This will encourage practitioners who may not have the time for longer or more academic pieces to at least share the work.
- Encourage managers and leaders to allow time for practitioners to write up their participation work.
- Set up an annual award for health service youth engagement projects, branded by the NHS itself.
- Provide writing bursaries for youth engagement practitioners to buy time to write short articles.
- Provide resources on how to record and report youth engagement activities for a wider audience.

## More resources dedicated to these kinds of activities

- Share good practice principles more widely. Build guidance for NHS providers on how to embed youth participation in their service models.
- Encourage/ensure youth participation training as a routine part of on-boarding staff to services for young people.
- Fund an NHSE endorsed, targeted training programme on youth participation within health services. Run on a rolling basis for 2 to 3 years and review for success.
- Launch a dedicated funding stream for youth participation seed projects within new health services.
- Consider more support for dedicated posts for participation and engagement in health care.

## Investment in evaluating impact

- Fund a think piece on how to measure impact in youth participation activities within the health service setting (including recommendations for a core set of methodological principles).
- Find a way to share useful resources – outcome measures, for example.
- Undertake a partnership with a practice journal to publish a special issue on youth participation in healthcare settings in the UK. Commission articles.
- Fund a research fellowship to undertake a 2 or 3 year project on how to improve the evidence base.
- Build, with NIHR or another central medical funder, a funding stream for university and research institution collaborations with youth participation teams in health service settings for evaluating impact, to build the evidence base.



## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Children and Young People's Transformation Programme at NHS England for funding this project, and to Ellie Preston and Emma Sparrow for very helpful comments on an earlier draft.

## For more information

For more information about this project,  
email [info@ayph.org.uk](mailto:info@ayph.org.uk)

[ayph.org.uk](http://ayph.org.uk) @AYPHcharity

© 2024 The Author(s). This is an open access work distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.