

AWCH & HCNSW'S

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



Association for the Wellbeing
of Children in Healthcare

2022



Acknowledgements

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we all meet and work throughout Australia.

We recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

This always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.



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OVERVIEW

This Guide is a part of the Walking the Talk project, a collaboration between the Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare, Health Consumers NSW, and young people.

Findings from the project offer a foundation for improved youth engagement among organisations and services. This Guide collates these findings and synthesises them into practical, effective guidelines for optimal youth engagement.

In Workshop 3 of the Walking the Talk project, we also asked the collaborators to provide feedback regarding engagement processes and experiences.

We asked:

- "What values do you hold when working in a collaborative space?"
- "How do young people want to be involved in designing and implementing a youth engagement strategy that aims to move the dial on meaningful youth engagement?"

Five Key **Necessities** for Youth Engagement

From the findings we developed five key necessities for youth engagement:

- Collaboration at Every Step
- Intersectional Lens
- Feedback & Follow Up
- Consistency & Clarity
- Be Open to Change!

The five necessities are outlined below, with practical examples offered, and supporting quotes from collaborators included.



Collaboration at Every Step

Young people want to, and should be, involved in every step of the way during engagement with organisations, services, and systems. By centring a collaborative approach from the beginning of the engagement process, the inherent power imbalance present in consumer/professional and young person/adult dynamics may be addressed.

"Genuine partnership & active participation, as opposed to tokenism."

How to?

- Using methods of engagement that optimise collaboration, e.g. if engaging online, shared documents allow all involved to edit in real time making sharing ideas equal and simple.
- Surveying large groups of young people to gain diverse insight
- Treating young people equally to those engaging with them e.g. remunerating young people for all work, giving equal time to ideas and discussions
- Recruit young people as early as possible, ask how they want to be engaged with, and include them in the design and development of engagement. This allows for the most positive experience for all, as well as the most effective outcomes!

"Remuneration for our time."

"Real partnership."

"Young people involved in every step of the process."

"Active participation and engagement."

"Shared decision making."

*Intersectionality is a framework for understanding **how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.**

Intersectional Lens



An intersectional* lens is integral to effective and meaningful youth engagement. Including diverse groups is critical to engagement, thus recognising the intersections of various identities and the impact of intersecting oppression is also essential. Further, by including age in this analysis we can conceptualise the impact of age and adult power more effectively.

How to?

- Acknowledging intersecting identities and the impacts of such on all areas of life including engagement.
- Offering interpreter services including AUSLAN
- Ensuring engagement is accessible, including: physical, visual, audio, and sensory.
- Keeping individuality at the fore; no one person can represent an entire group, and the core of intersectionality acknowledges the individual experiences of intersecting identities and experiences.

"Value everyone's opinion."

"Inclusion of lots of different young people, not always the same voices."

"Nothing about us without us!"

"Inclusion & acceptance."

"Discretion, privacy and safety."

"Respect for everyone's stories and experiences."



Feedback & Follow Up

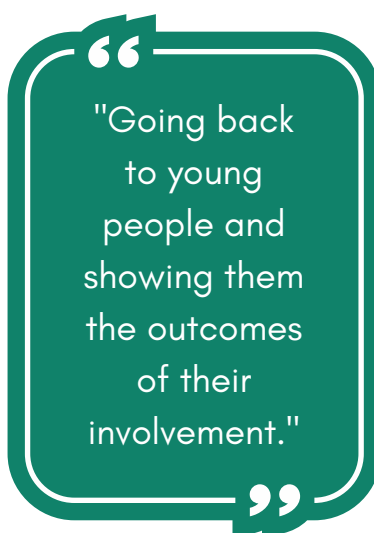
Providing an effective method of feedback for young people is essential to ensure they are afforded dignity and power in the engagement process. Not only allowing for feedback, but taking feedback on (even if it challenges the organisation/service/system), and providing follow up on any changes made as a result of feedback.

Similarly, follow up post-engagement is important to young people, including results, changes, impact, and future opportunities for engagement.

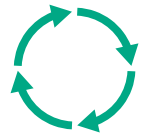


How to?

- Feedback surveys with open-ended questions to allow for specific feedback
- Communicating to young people that all feedback is welcome and will be considered
- Providing regular (e.g. fortnightly) updates on the project/process they are involved in
- Streamlining feedback and follow up processes to be clear and simple



Consistency & Clarity



"Transparency about results of our involvement and feedback."

Consistency is important to effective youth engagement. Young people value consistency with regard to communication, updates, and planned activities. Clarity of what is expected of them is helpful for young people who often have many commitments including school, TAFE or university. Similarly, honesty and transparency from organisations, particularly regarding outcomes, is important to young people.

How to?

- Remaining consistent with communication, e.g. scheduling regular updates, a newsletter, or social media, and sticking to it!
- Offering all information clear and up front including remuneration processes and amount, what is expected of all involved, what engagement is likely to result in, and so on.
- Being honest if outcomes or proposed changes are not achieved as expected. Young people would prefer honesty and transparency about disappointing outcomes, rather than receiving no updates or being misled about outcomes.

"Honesty, and clear, consistent communication."



Be Open to Change!

One of the most imperative aspects to engagement is being open to change. A common experience for young people is participating in an engagement process, sharing ideas and thoughts, only to see no change as a result of their work. It is critical that organisations are genuinely open to taking on young people's ideas and feedback.



How to?

- Being clear with young people that their engagement and feedback will be reflected upon and taken into consideration even if it is contrary to current organisational processes and knowledge (**and meaning it!**)
- Following up with young people about the impact of their engagement, any changes made (**or not made**), and so on.
- Creating and fostering an open, inquisitive environment for young people to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas. Being explicit about the safety and welcoming nature of the engagement space is important to ensure young people feel comfortable.



THE WALKING THE TALK MODEL FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



Each of the five necessities are equally important and should be consistently upheld throughout the entirety of the engagement process.

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