



REACH

Resilience, Ethnicity, and AdolesCent Mental Health

REACH OUT

PUTTING YOUNG
PEOPLE, SCHOOLS AND
COMMUNITIES AT THE
HEART OF RESEARCH



Centre for
Society and
Mental Health



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Thai-sha Richards and Dan Robotham • February 2022

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INTRODUCING REACH

“REACH is a study of adolescent mental health, of what increases and – most importantly – what reduces risk of mental health problems, especially in disadvantaged populations, during a critical period in life. Working in close partnership with young people, schools, and communities has massively enhanced the value, quality, relevance, and impact of this research.”

Professor Craig Morgan, REACH lead

Many mental health problems begin when people are still at school. Around 18% of young people (aged 11-16) in England during 2020 experienced mental health difficulties¹. Schools are a vital place to learn about wellbeing, but they are also busy places. Teachers and support staff often lack the time and resources to engage with students about mental health and wellbeing. Few schools or colleges have the time or expertise to monitor student wellbeing across the whole school.

University-based researchers do have these skills and can access extra resources, like research funding. However, they may lack the contacts to work in schools and struggle to access these environments.

ABOUT MCPIN

We are a charity that has been involved in REACH from the beginning of the study. Professor Craig Morgan, the study lead, said he wanted to contribute to the community with his school-focused research.

We helped set up the Young People’s Advisory Group (YPAG) and sat on the steering committee. We wrote this report to tell the story of REACH so other researchers and schools could learn from our experiences.



HOW WAS THIS REPORT CREATED?

McPin staff spoke to people involved in the REACH programme, including teachers, young people, and the researchers themselves. The McPin team created this report and an **accompanying podcast** in collaboration with a young person (aged 17) who was involved in REACH as a co-researcher.

The REACH project is an example of how a university partnered with local secondary schools in a mutually beneficial way, providing students with opportunities to learn more about research and mental health, to take part in a study, gain work experience, and to support university-based researchers with their work.

The partnership described in this report may be of interest to researchers, teachers and support staff, parents/guardians, and young people, as well as policy-makers looking to monitor wellbeing and mental health at scale. It may also help to demystify university life, including what mental health researchers get up to.

This output is about the process of making REACH a success for all parties. See the **final report** for the results of the study.

1. NHS Digital (2020). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020 Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey. Available at: https://files.digital.nhs.uk/AF/AECD6B/mhcpy_2020_rep_v2.pdf

ABOUT REACH

REACH, WHICH STANDS FOR RESILIENCE, ETHNICITY, AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH, IS A COHORT STUDY, LED BY KING'S COLLEGE LONDON AND FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION.

REACH, which began in September 2015, is generating new information about the extent and nature of mental health problems among young people from diverse backgrounds and is exploring which factors increase and, more importantly, decrease risk of developing mental health problems over time.

To do this, the team collaborated with 12 secondary schools in South London. The study is described in the following [paper](#), but in summary:

- Over 4000 school students are taking part
- Participants were in years 7, 8 and 9 (aged 11-14) when the study began
- 85% are from minority ethnic groups
- They complete questionnaires about their mental health and their social circumstances and experiences every year
- Over 800 students also completed interviews and assessments with REACH researchers.



REACH will continue to collect data from as many young people in the cohort as possible as they get older and leave school, allowing researchers to understand which factors influence young people's mental health and experiences during the transition to adulthood.

Some of the young people also completed additional assessments with REACH researchers. These assessments included in-depth interviews about their mental health and their experiences, providing a hair sample to measure cortisol (a stress response hormone), and exploring young people's reactions to social situations in a Virtual Reality (VR) school canteen.

The team did this to try to understand some of the pathways – or mechanisms – through which mental health problems may develop and why, despite similar circumstances and experiences, some young people develop mental health problems and others do not.

COHORT STUDY

A type of study that collects information from participants over time, often years. Cohort studies collect data from people with a characteristic in common, e.g. age.

“We are trying to get evidence that indicates what we all know already; if you start off in life in a less fortunate position, you are much more likely to experience difficulties.” REACH researcher

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT



Young people and schools have been involved in shaping and co-producing REACH in many ways throughout the research study. REACH's engagement programme has worked with over 15,000 local young people so far, through whole-school activities and assemblies, work placements and exhibitions.

This is in addition to the 4,000 young people who are research participants in the study. Some examples of this work are shown in the table below. These activities and young people's involvement grew over time as the REACH study evolved.

GOVERNANCE OF THE STUDY	PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS	DATA COLLECTION	COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES	WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Young people and teachers are on the steering group, which oversees the study and meets twice-yearly	Working with head teachers and senior staff to set up the study and identify a lead teacher in school to be point of contact	Recruiting REACH community champions, young people in schools who work on REACH as young researchers	Prioritising data/findings to share with schools, policy makers, and the public so young people, parents and teachers have access to timely finding	Members of the research team fundraising for, and co-delivering events with, local youth charities
The Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) was recruited before the research staff, to guide the work from the very beginning	Schools receive a tailored engagement programme each year, developed with input from school staff and young people	Young people at REACH schools advised on and contributed to the development of the Virtual Reality sub-study	Creating podcasts, blogs, and videos with young people about REACH to make sure the results of the study were available in a range of formats and accessible to young people	Work experience for young people from south London

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION MAKING



Young people were integral to decision making in the study. This was ensured via the 'steering group', which provides independent oversight of the project, and the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG). This advises the research team on the focus and conduct of the study and on how to make the research and the findings accessible, engaging, and impactful for young people. The group initially had 11 members aged 14–25 years, although membership evolved over time with new members joining to replace people as they left.

The group advised on consent procedures, confidentiality, responding to risks, drafting information sheets and questionnaires, interviewing, designing logos, and more. The YPAG was first set up by our colleagues at McPin before passing to the KCL team. This helped embed it in the programme and ensured that relationships were with KCL researchers. Over the period of the study the YPAG role evolved. It began by looking at all the materials being used in schools including the surveys. The group advised that the initial ones were too long.

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS THE YPAG HAS:

- Provided input on all study materials, such as questionnaires, information sheets and promotional materials, helping make language more accessible, inclusive, and engaging
- Advised on the different topics covered in the questionnaires and assessments, ensuring they captured the range of young people's experiences
- Advised on ethics and how to manage the consent process in schools, for example, deciding on a parental opt-out approach
- Advised researchers on how to communicate with the cohort and on the sorts of engagement activities they might want to be involved in. One example was work experience placements and useful experiences to put on CVs.
- Contributed to the website, making it more accessible for younger people and providing content and information. It also added content to newsletters.
- Brought in members to visit schools and help collect data, assisting with interviews alongside the REACH team
- Developed the Covid-19 wave of REACH, including identifying priority research questions, shaping questionnaires, and advising the team how to quickly adapt study procedures (e.g. data collection, safeguarding, etc.) to monitor the impacts of the pandemic on young people.

STEERING GROUP

"I started out on the steering group and have been involved more in REACH ever since. I was on the steering group as a student ambassador. The REACH team would give presentations about the progress of the study and where it was going to go, and ideas for boosting engagement, how to spread the word.

For most of those steering group meetings I was still in sixth form, still a school kid, still in shock with all these researchers talking about ideas and discussing loads of things. I think my stance was to listen more because it was a change for me to understand how these situations work. The steering group always came before the YPAG and often filtered down to have a secondary discussion about those wider questions." Steering group member

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVISORY GROUP

"It worked really well because we were all from different backgrounds, so we all had our own perspective, I think that was a plus."

"In those YPAG meetings the REACH staff gave us an update for what is going on. We also got the opportunity to weigh-in about data collection forms. 'I remember at one point I suggested they do a diary every now and then, maybe on a weekly basis, of student wellbeing. I remember suggesting that. It was nice to bounce ideas off people."

"I got the option to be part of the YPAG, and as I found the more I integrated myself into the way that REACH does things and the way that they've tried to engage with our target audience." YPAG member

ENGAGING WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

"From the outset, we've tried to give back as much we can, to work in partnership with schools and young people, and to be as flexible as possible in everything we do. If the schools said jump, we said 'how high?'" REACH coordinator

Engagement was vital. Researchers worked with each school to develop activities and resources that staff and students would benefit from, including mental health awareness talks, research methods training for sixth-form students, and exam stress awareness sessions.

The ethos from the beginning was to give value to the schools so they would benefit from the expertise of the REACH team, who would in turn benefit by completing the study and progressing understanding about risk and resilience in young people.

"We did some painful, painful hikes! We raised some money for the charity, who got in touch with us through one of the schools we work with. We built up a strong partnership and did annual fundraising for them." REACH coordinator



Having formed relationships with the schools, REACH then also linked into their wider networks of charities and community organisations. Team members took part in fundraising events for local causes, such as the National 3 Peaks Challenge in support of the **BIGKID Foundation**, a charity that works with young people at risk of social exclusion and youth violence. The team raised over £3000 for the organisation.

This was because the REACH team wanted to do more than just produce research – it wanted to contribute to the community, and ensure its findings had a wider impact. The fundraising programme was part of this commitment.

THE SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

"WE KNOW THAT WE ARE GOING TO BENEFIT MORE THAN THEY ARE GOING TO BENEFIT!"
School staff member

REACH HAD SEVERAL BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS.

Schools receive an annual summary report of the data gathered from their students. This gives them a snapshot of the common problems affecting students, providing them with information on levels of overall wellbeing, how common bullying and other risk factors are, and the proportion of students with mental health problems. They received expert analysis from researchers.

"What grabbed our attention was that it was all about identifying factors that could lead to students and young people having current or future mental health problems, and what factors could help them be resilient toward that. It is trying to understand what can help them succeed in future life and not to develop any further or greater mental health or emotional wellbeing issues." Teacher

"We were lucky – I would take it with open arms. I think the information you are provided with can structure the support you're going to put in place for years to come." School

REACH also helped facilitate additional one-to-one emotional support for students. Placement students from MSc courses at the university worked with school counselling teams to provide in-class support, assistance to speech and language therapists and educational psychologists, and facilitation of group work. This meant that the young people had a mentor or counsellor to talk to.

"YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T GET ENOUGH TIME TO TALK THINGS THROUGH. THEY CAN'T ALWAYS TALK TO THEIR PARENTS. HAVING SOMEONE ELSE THERE IS A BIG THING. IT ALSO FLAGGED UP SOME STUDENTS THAT WE MIGHT NOT HAVE NOTICED OTHERWISE AND ALLOWED US TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONGST STAFF." Teacher

"REACH has been a great source of support for the school. They have helped create a holistic service for [us]. This included social workers, five mentors, therapeutic support, drama therapists. REACH helped us tap into KCL resources and connections (placement officers for students looking for placements, etc). Schools should take these opportunities up with open arms. We miss it now. If we could do it again, we would." School

For schools, the collaboration worked by having a key contact on the teaching staff who could take responsibility for organising REACH activity in the school. This person would share administrative duties with the REACH team.

"We had some admin to do – make sure we had rooms booked for them when they came in. We also had to get buy-in from the parents. A lot of the organisation was done by REACH. We had to send out information letters and opt-out forms, but that was pretty much it. They provided us with a post box for students to put their replies in. They came and collected it. They arrived every time we were doing the online questionnaires with iPads. All I had to do was find a room for each class to sit and do a questionnaire." Teacher

"One thing that comes to mind is how overstretched staff members in the school are. We never had problem with enthusiasm, but the schools could not always fit us into their schedules." REACH researcher

Some school staff have since been involved in podcasts to share what they have learnt with others. REACH has facilitated conversations within schools and raised teachers' awareness of the issues that students are facing.

ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

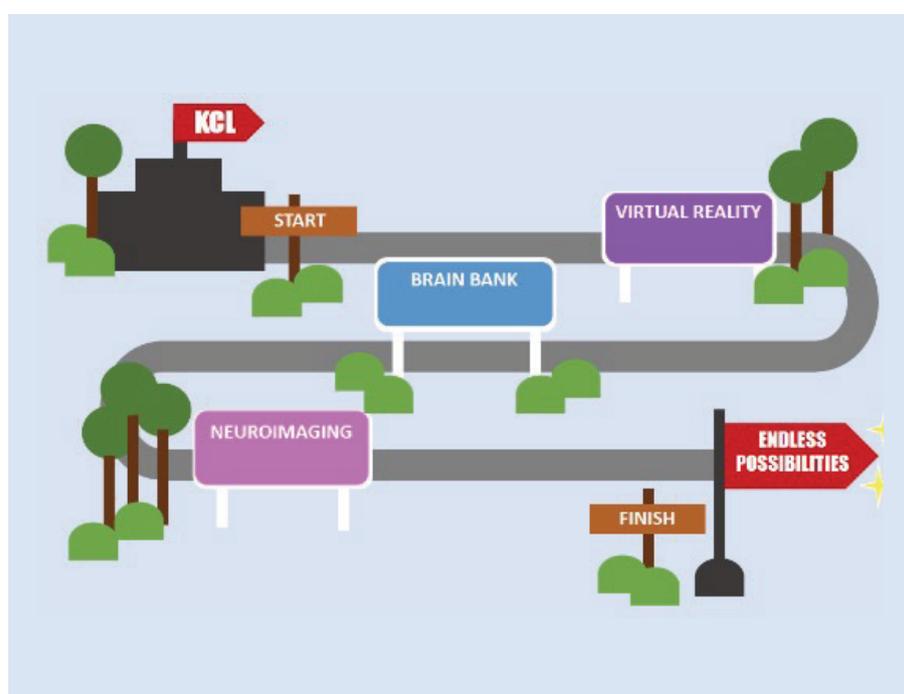
“The workshops, the work experience placements, the talks we give to schools. We give career talks to the members of our Young Person’s Advisory Group.”

REACH researcher

The team also invited school students into the university for regular day-long campus tours. This included visiting the Virtual Reality centre, the Brain Bank, the neuroimaging centre, and attending taster lectures in genetics and mental health. This was to help students, particularly science students, understand the different career options that might be available. It also helped to make the university seem like a friendlier and more accessible environment.

REACH also involved work experience placements and careers weeks. The team provided young people with work experience opportunities at the university. This gave them a chance to develop new skills and learn more about university life and working in research. Members of the YPAG gained regular career advice and work experience through being involved in the programme.

“REACH has given me invaluable experience. I don’t think many people can say they have been involved in research from the age of 17. I think it’s really great work experience – I was able to see research forming right from the start, seeing it develop, seeing the ins and outs of public engagement.” YPAG member



“It is always handy to be put in a room with people who you don’t know, and discussing things with them, talking to people from different walks of life and understanding their perspective. It is a good opportunity to step out of your comfort zone.” YPAG member

Work experience opportunities changed when the pandemic ‘lockdown’ restrictions began in early 2020. YPAG members mentioned that placements in their schools had been cancelled for students, so REACH decided to run a virtual work experience week in April 2020.

Over 250 young people engaged with the virtual courses during the work experience week. The team ran sessions for young people who wanted to know more about studying in sixth form and university, or working in psychology, mental health, and research.

OBSERVATIONS FROM ONLINE WORK EXPERIENCE

THAI-SHA

REACH VOLUNTEER, CO-RESEARCHER
AND REPORT AUTHOR

I had already completed work experience in person with REACH back in 2019. Seeing the massive change to online work experience this year was amazing.

How the REACH team adapted to the current situation was incredible. Some things you do in person obviously you can't do online, but also some things you can do online you can't do in person. One of these things was the amount of people who can attend. The office space is quite small – only around two young people can attend at the same time – but there was around 35 young people on the Zoom call I observed. This means the REACH team can give back to as many people as possible, and that is what they are all about.

Seeing all the young people so engaged in the topics was amazing and the relationship that they built with the REACH staff. The young people were appreciative – it is very hard to find this experience and especially for free.

There were three times where we had the chance to meet up during the day: morning, midday, and late afternoon. I observed sessions on an introduction to mental health, a historical overview about mental health issues, facts and figures, causes of mental health, and how different cultures see someone with mental health.

I also got a chance to observe a session where a REACH staff member, who is currently doing her PhD, was talking to the young people about her study and wanted to get everyone's opinion.

Some of the topics that they discussed included: police powers to stop & search & mental health, and a video from BBC Newsnight where young men shared their experiences of stop & search. This session was interactive as the young people could ask and answer questions via a link as the presentations were going on. This topic was something that they seemed really interested in.

The final session was just a wrap up of the whole day, and people who attended were asked to complete a task, like a blog or a newsletter about what they learnt in the morning session. This gave them an opportunity to share, or they could email the REACH team if they didn't want to say anything in front of everyone.

Overall, the young people learnt lots of new skills and information throughout the week; they got a certificate at the end saying they completed the work experience with REACH, and a list of all the things they did to put on their CV, in case they didn't know how to word it.

IOLENT
ACADEMIC
ESSURE
L MEDI
GAN
SHIP

More recently, several of the young people who were involved in the YPAG have been employed as Young Person Community Champions (YPCC) (three young people, aged 16-18, who work on REACH one day per week) and REACH Research Champions (14 young people, age 15-19 years, who work on REACH for around 2-3 hours per month).

“The Research Champions role is a paid role requiring 20-30 hours of their time each year. They do basic research training, then through the year they work on tasks that are best done by young people. They are the experts, and they do a much better job than we can.”

Gemma, REACH coordinator

“We work up to seven hours a week some weeks. I get to make so much content on the research that we’re doing. We got to make a blog on misconceptions of anxiety, we have a podcast coming out in the future, and I’ve also helped with engagement, thinking of ideas to keep people engaged and coming back to do the questionnaires.”

Young Person Community Champion

You can hear from the Community Champions in the podcast, and you can read, listen, and watch some of their work here:

- Social class, poverty, and young people’s mental health ([podcast](#))
- Being a student in 2021: A Young Person’s Perspective ([blog](#))
- Diary study project ([video](#)).

THE YOUNG PERSON PERSPECTIVE

“When I first started getting involved in REACH I was helping them by looking over their questionnaires. I also attended some work experience with the team. A year later I got involved in the REACH advisory group when they were looking for new members. This was right at the beginning of the pandemic when the lockdown first started, so everything was done online.

The biggest difference I have noticed over time is that there are more young people involved now. The role of the advisory group members has evolved and some of the people from the group are now in the role of Community Champions. I am in this role now too. It is a paid role, so we have our own work to do now, we’re not waiting for tasks to input in, like we were in the advisory group.

A highlight for me since being involved with REACH has been the student panel. This was an event for teachers, headteachers and researchers that was hosted by REACH. The panel was all about how the COVID lockdown had affected young people. As members of the panel, we spoke in front of lots of people and talked about our experiences.

This was a good opportunity to speak in front of a large audience. I have also been involved in making a couple of podcasts, one of which I am doing right now.”

THE ORIGINAL FUNDING FOR REACH ENDED IN SUMMER 2021. THE MOST RECENT PHASE HAS LOOKED AT THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC, OF SCHOOL CLOSURES AND SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, AND HOW YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN COPING.

This includes a diary study, where participants are asked to enter their thoughts about the ongoing situation and submit them to the team. Information about the study can be found [here](#). A video was co-created with young people to summarise the emerging findings, available [here](#).

The pandemic gave new opportunities for involvement that would not otherwise have happened. The young people were more likely to be at home, with less to do. It was an opportunity to develop online events that could reach more students than in-person events could.

REACH will keep going for as long as is feasible, continuing to engage young people beyond the life of the original project. The YPAG continues, shaping the procedures and measures being used in the 12 schools.

Continuing to engage the cohort when they leave school will be a new challenge. Young people will drive engagement opportunities in this next phase. The team will find creative ways to engage and maintain contact with REACH participants outside of the school environment.

The Young Person Community Champions will advise on decisions and activities, but also help the team stay in contact with participants and share information with them and with other young people.

The next phase of the project is to form strong, lasting relationships with the young people who have been involved in the project.



**WHAT
HAPPENS
NEXT?**

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS

TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS, FROM RESEARCHERS

1. WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS

"You've got to have engagement and coproduction in mind from the outset, when you first develop the grant, because then you can fully cost it in. We organised meetings with the schools and went in to speak to senior leadership teams and other staff who might be involved.

The key was making clear we wanted to do this in partnership with them and move away from that extractive model of working with schools. That started with offering before taking."

- **Give back** as much as (or, if possible, more than) you receive – true partnership working with schools
- **Be clear** what is needed from the beginning
- **Be flexible** – fitting around school needs, changing last minute if need be
- **Be efficient** – we used tablets to collect data which engaged students and was easier to set up with schools
- Our research team **enjoyed this aspect of the work** and gained skills doing co-production.

2. GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME

"It was useful to have five years to deliver the study. We had time to invest in the engagement side of things, and actually ... we developed it because we saw there was a dual benefit to doing it: it was the right thing to do but it also improved the quality of the research."

- Build relationships with schools and their staff teams, which takes time, but the groundwork pays off
- Develop engagement work over time – ours was shaped by input from schools, research staff who came into the team, and ideas generated in the Young People's Advisory Group. We also adapted, with the guidance of young people and school staff, when we had to go online due to Covid-19.

3. REMEMBER SCHOOL PRESSURES

"Always bear in mind that teachers are overworked, and you really do need to appreciate that – and yet despite that it's really quite incredible how committed they are to our project, and I'm sure to other projects."

- Find out what each school needs from the partnership and use this information to develop tailored engagement strategies for each school
- Provide the schools with newsletters and reports giving feedback and information that's useful in the wider school community raising awareness about mental health
- Always appreciate how important teachers are in the school system and to the project, seeking ways to acknowledge their commitment at every stage
- Work individually with teachers when requests arise
- Try as hard as a possible to be mindful of when are good and less good times to make requests! That will be different in each school so appoint a lead in each and an engagement plan that is sensitive to local context.
- It is important to be clear about what is involved – what you need from the school and the lead teacher. Different schools have different preferences, we used whatever they were most comfortable with using.

4. HIGHLIGHT ENGAGEMENT IN FUNDING APPLICATIONS

“The bottom line is that high-quality science depends on engagement and co-production, and it’s integral and central to it. That has been very much our experience and I think now funders appreciate this, and in fact insist on it.”

- Funders are interested in this but don’t always resource to the level that is required; thus, we need to keep providing examples of how to do it and the benefits that go alongside that
- We encourage others to keep developing engagement programmes with young people and share the learning. We need to learn from each other.

TIPS FOR STAFF WORKING IN SCHOOLS

1. COMMUNICATE

“These things need driving – you need people with energy, but also need to make sure everyone in the school knows what is going on. This isn’t for the faint-hearted. When you have your normal teaching day, then all this extra stuff is more difficult. You need some energy!”

- It is important to identify a lead person in each school who is the main point of contact but who will still need other people around them with energy and commitment to drive things forward as a team.

2. THINK ABOUT HOW YOU CAN USE THE DATA

“We are working toward becoming a trauma-informed school and I think some of our Year 7s and 8s now are benefitting from that. Mental health now, especially within our younger students, is being promoted. It isn’t a taboo subject anymore, it’s OK not to be OK.”

- Schools had an appetite for learning more about mental health, and we did stalls for Mental Health Awareness Day, we talked in assemblies, and gave workshops to share our expertise. Build on that and use the research to tackle the stigma of mental health.

3. GET SENIOR LEADERSHIP ON BOARD

“You need your senior leadership to buy-in and present the results to the rest of the teaching staff.”

- Schools took ownership of the information provided through REACH research. Patterns in

the data informed future strategy and action. For example, one school enrolled all the pastoral staff into a year-long counselling programme, partly as a reaction to the research highlighting the need.

4. MAKE IT WORK FOR YOUR SCHEDULE

“It just became the norm that every October when we have our theme day on emotional wellbeing and mental health we did those questionnaires.

Every class in the three cohorts got scheduled – it takes about an hour to do, so they all had that time.

Certain schools might have a period of academic tutoring for certain year groups and that could be an ideal place to put it, depending on how that’s scheduled in their timetable.”

- Collect the data in the most efficient and least disruptive way possible. Using key dates in the school calendar worked well.
- It is important to be led by schools in how to communicate the project to parents/guardians and students. This includes providing easy ways for them to opt-out.

5. GIVE IT A GO

“Please don’t be dismissive because we hear the word ‘research’ and we hear that’s going to be quite a lot of work but actually the benefits are outweighing any kind of effort that you have to put into it.”

- All schools found this work helpful. We are researchers but we are also passionate about school life and helping young people. We can make great partnerships!

TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS, FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

1. OFFER US SOMETHING IN RETURN

"Please don't be someone who asks us for lots of personal information, then we have no idea where that information goes. Don't underestimate how much we appreciate the opportunities you can provide, such as work experience. This is particularly true during a time when the pandemic has taken away opportunities for young people."

2. BE PREPARED FOR THE FACT THAT WE MIGHT TELL YOU THINGS WE'VE NEVER TOLD ANYONE ELSE

"We might feel more comfortable talking to you as an 'outsider' than we do talking to people we know (such as teachers, friends or family)."

3. GET THE 'TONE' RIGHT

"You need to come across as someone who is not a teacher. Students don't always feel comfortable talking to teachers about personal stuff. At the same time, don't come across as too relaxed either. Being too casual might give the impression that you won't take rules (like safeguarding) seriously enough. We need to be able trust that you have that covered."

TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

1. GET INVOLVED

"Just get involved. It is so good to be a part of something bigger than yourself."

2. EXPLORE (AND ASK FOR) ANY FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES THAT COME UP

"I love the YPCC role. If I'm being completely honest it's been one of the biggest things I've done in my life...I love being a part of something and feeling like I have a contribution."

3. TAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON YOUR EXPERIENCE

"This project made us reflect on what we were doing and about our mental health. I got involved and interested because I'd reflected on what the questions said and was like 'wow, these things are really important to me but I never asked myself these questions'."

4. USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

"I get to make so much content... on the research that we're doing, and spread mental health issues... We also got to make a blog on misconceptions of anxiety, we have a podcast coming out in the future, and are thinking of ideas to keep students engaged and make them keep coming back to do the questionnaires."

5. NEVER FORGET YOUR VOICE MATTERS

"We've advised on pretty much all of the engagement that's done with our target audience... essentially just being part of the process in every important way and every important conversation that impacts the cohort."

Please see the REACH [website](#) for more information on the status of the project.





REACH

Resilience, Ethnicity, and AdolesCent Mental Health

About the Centre

The REACH study is part of the ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health. The Centre is a collaboration between the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, and the Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy at King's College London, in partnership with the University of Manchester (UK), University College London (UK), Mannheim University (Germany), McGill University (Canada), and Indiana University (USA), and with community organisations, user groups, and charities.

Our Centre aims to improve understanding of the complex interrelationships between society and mental health. It is central to our ethos that research and other outputs are co-produced with mental health service users and affected communities and groups.

The Centre for Society and Mental Health is an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Centre based at King's College London [ES/S01256/1]. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Economic and Social Research Council or King's College London.

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or Email csmh@kcl.ac.uk

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About the McPin Foundation

We really enjoyed working on this resource with the REACH team. Please get in contact if you'd be interested in working with us.

We are a mental health research charity. We believe research is done best when it involves people with relevant personal experience that relates to the research being carried out. We call this expertise from experience and integrate this into our work by:

- Delivering high-quality mental health research and evaluations that deploy collaborative methods
- Supporting and helping to shape the research of others, often advising on involvement strategies
- Working to ensure research achieves positive change.

Research matters because we need to know a lot more about what works to improve the lives of people with mental health difficulties, their families and ensure people's mental health is improved in communities everywhere.

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