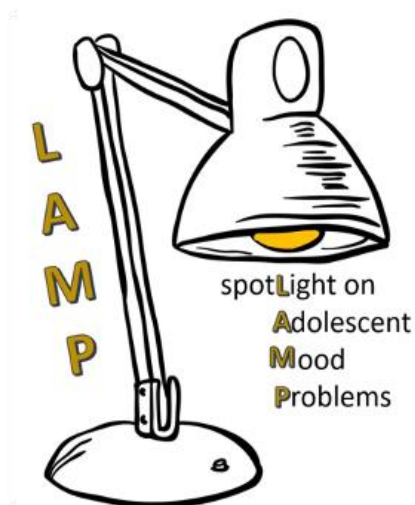


Analysing qualitative data with diverse co-researcher and advisory input:

Participatory qualitative methods in co-produced research with young people and parents

Prof Maria Loades, Dr Nina Higson-Sweeney, Natalia Kika

SWDTP Webinar, 7th May 2026



Housekeeping

Please let us know in the chat:

- Where you're from and any past experience with participatory research
- Any questions throughout the session



Overview

01

What is
participatory
research?

02

Can We
Connect Study

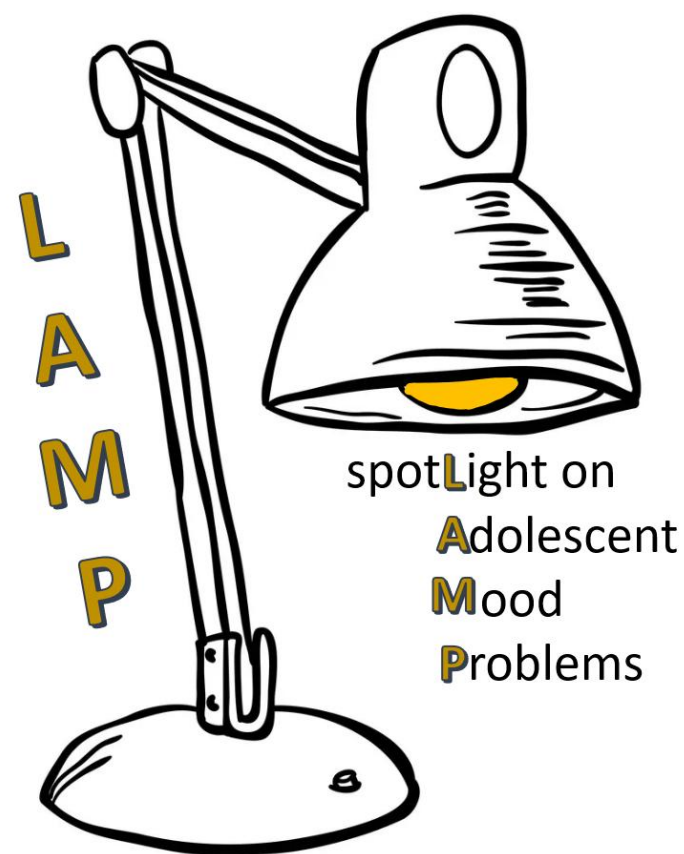
03

Participatory
qualitative
methods

04

Parental
Involvement
in PhD
research



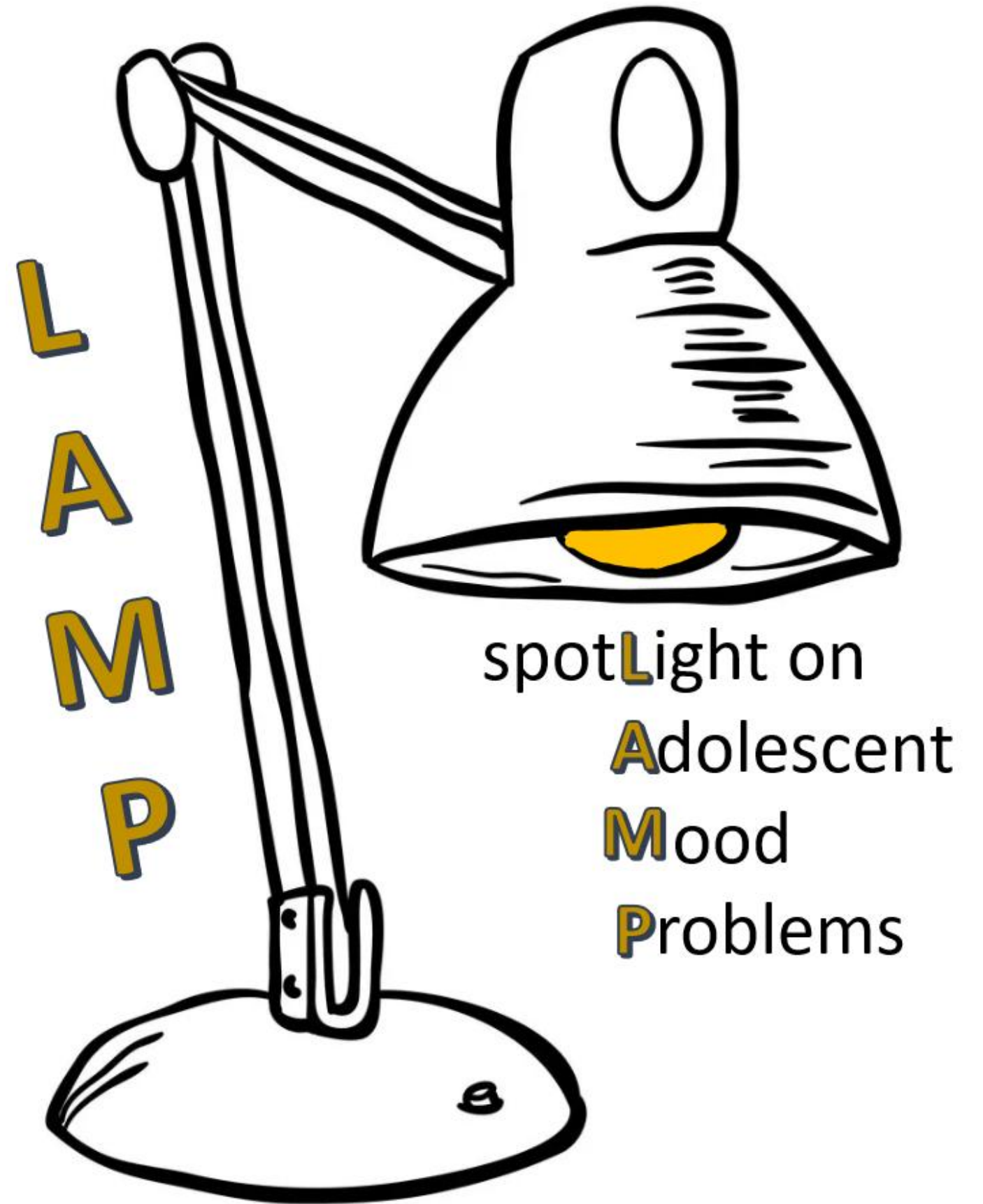


Online mental health help-seeking: Can we Connect?

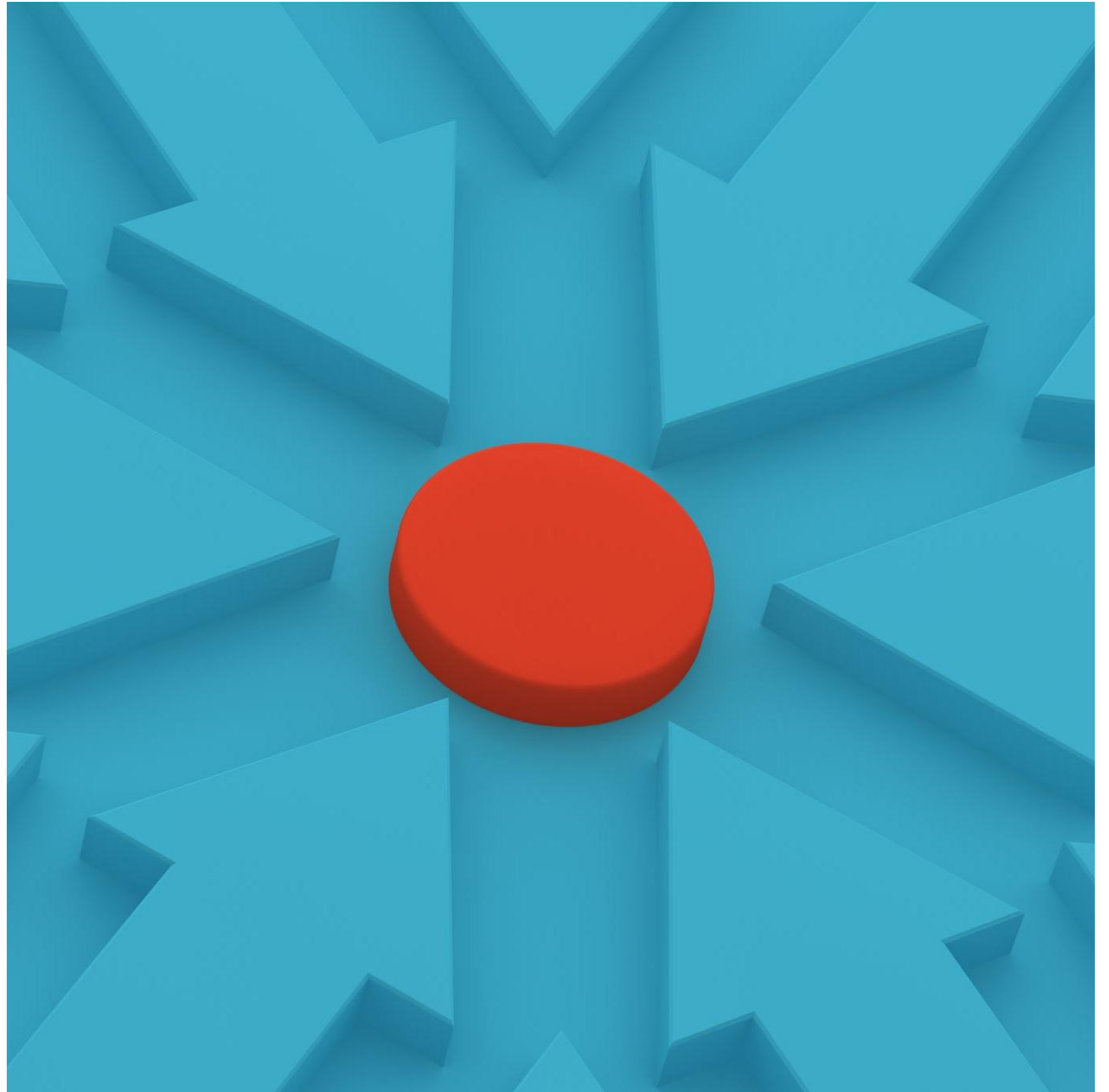
- Dr Maria Loades, Clinical Psychologist, Professor

Mission

- All young people
- Thrive
- Live their best lives



Aim: improve
access to help
– YP with low
mood



Programme of work



FUNDED BY
NIHR | National Institute for
Health and Care Research

YP seeking help online

Benefits: accessibility, anonymity, degree of control

Barriers: lacking trust in internet, lack of confidentiality, not feeling like they have an appropriate problem to seek help for

3 potential functions of online information and support for help-seekers:

providing information about their symptoms

connecting them to others, like professionals or peers

as an alternative to other offline sources of help

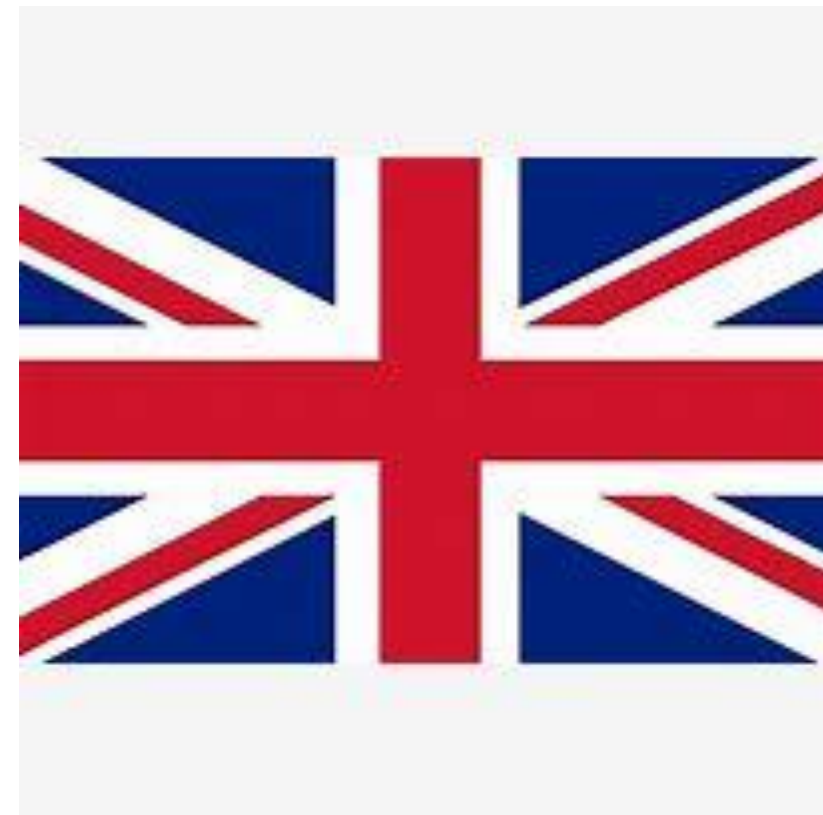


CAN WE CONNECT STUDY

<https://osf.io/jy73b/>

Can We Connect Study *Research Questions*

- 1) Where do YP look for information when they start to experience symptoms of depression?
- 2) Where do they look for information via the internet and social media, and do they use different platforms for different purposes?
- 3) How do they search for information and what are their experiences of what they find?



Can We Connect Study

- N= 24
- Semi-structured interviews
 - *Sally is a 15-year-old girl from a mixed race background. Over the past few months, Sally's parents and teachers have become increasingly concerned about her low mood and withdrawal from life; she has been less interested than usual in seeing her friends and is reluctant to go out and about with family members, preferring to stay at home. Her form tutor has noticed that she is much more tearful than usual at school, and even relatively minor things, like getting a B grade in a test rather than an A, have been very upsetting to her; she also told her mother that she doesn't think she is good enough. She continues to go to school, but isn't doing as well as she usually does, and her grades have slipped. She has opted to give up dancing, which she previously enjoyed.*
- Think aloud techniques
 - Show us how you search the internet
 - Tell us what you think



YOU!

—

IF YOU ARE 13-18 YEARS OLD AND BASED IN THE UK - WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU LOOK FOR INFORMATION ONLINE WHEN YOU FIRST START TO EXPERIENCE LOW MOOD.

Participants will receive a £20 gift voucher for their time!

Participants

TABLE 1 Participant demographics characteristics.

Characteristic	Response options	<i>N</i>	
Age (years)	13–14	0	
	15–16	6	
	17–18	18	
Biological sex at birth	Female	17	
	Male	5	
	Prefer not to say	2	
Gender identity	Woman/girl	16	
	Man/boy	4	
	Genderqueer	1	
	Male-to-female transgender	1	
	Agender	1	
	Non-binary	1	
Ethnic group	White	9 English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/ British 2 Other (Russian/Ukrainian; Jewish)	11
	Asian/Asian British	1 Bangladeshi 1 Indian 2 Other (Taiwanese; Afghan)	4
	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British	6 African 1 Other (no further information given)	7
	Mixed/Multiple	1 White and Black African 1 White and Black Caribbean	2
McArthur Scale of Social Status	Compared to families in the UK	Mean 5.17 (SD = 1.69), range 3–9	
	Compared to families in their school	Mean 3.92 (SD = 1.91), range 1–8	
PHQ-2 score		Mean 2.29 (SD = 1.73), range 0–6	



Depression (low mood)

- What do you think about this information?
- How trustworthy is it?
- How relevant is it for a young person?
- How credible/believable is it?
- What do you like about it?
- What don't you like?
- How could this website be improved for young people?

Help / Parents & Carers / Depression (low mood)

Depression is a mental health difficulty that involves persistent low mood (continuing for a long time). It impacts on the way people feel, think and behave. Depression can happen as a reaction to difficult experiences such as bullying, bereavement or family relationship difficulties. It can also happen without any obvious trigger or reason.

People with depression can feel a range of emotions including sadness, stress, hopelessness, loneliness, irritability (anger), emptiness or numbness. People with depression often have negative thoughts about themselves, other people, the future or life in general. It can be hard to carry out usual routines and tasks including self-care (showering/ brushing your teeth), eating and sleeping.

People with depression often stop enjoying activities or seeing friends as they can feel tired and have no energy or motivation. People with severe depression, and/or depression that has been going on for a long time, sometimes have thoughts or urges to harm themselves or to end their lives. It is important to tell someone so that a safety plan that



Depression

Depression is a mental health condition that makes you feel low for a long time. Find out more about the symptoms of depression, where to get help and what you can do to get better.

[Home](#) > [I am a young person](#) > [Mental health conditions](#) > [Depression](#)

Guide Menu

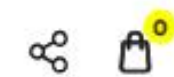
Hide menu

Guide contents

On this page

1. [What is depression?](#)

➔ Young people ➔ Parents ➔ Professionals



- What do you think about this information?
- How trustworthy is it?
- How relevant is it for a young person?
- How credible/believable is it?
- What do you like about it?
- What don't you like?
- How could this website be improved for young people?

HOW WE INVOLVED YOUNG PEOPLE

Co-researchers

Young Research Team

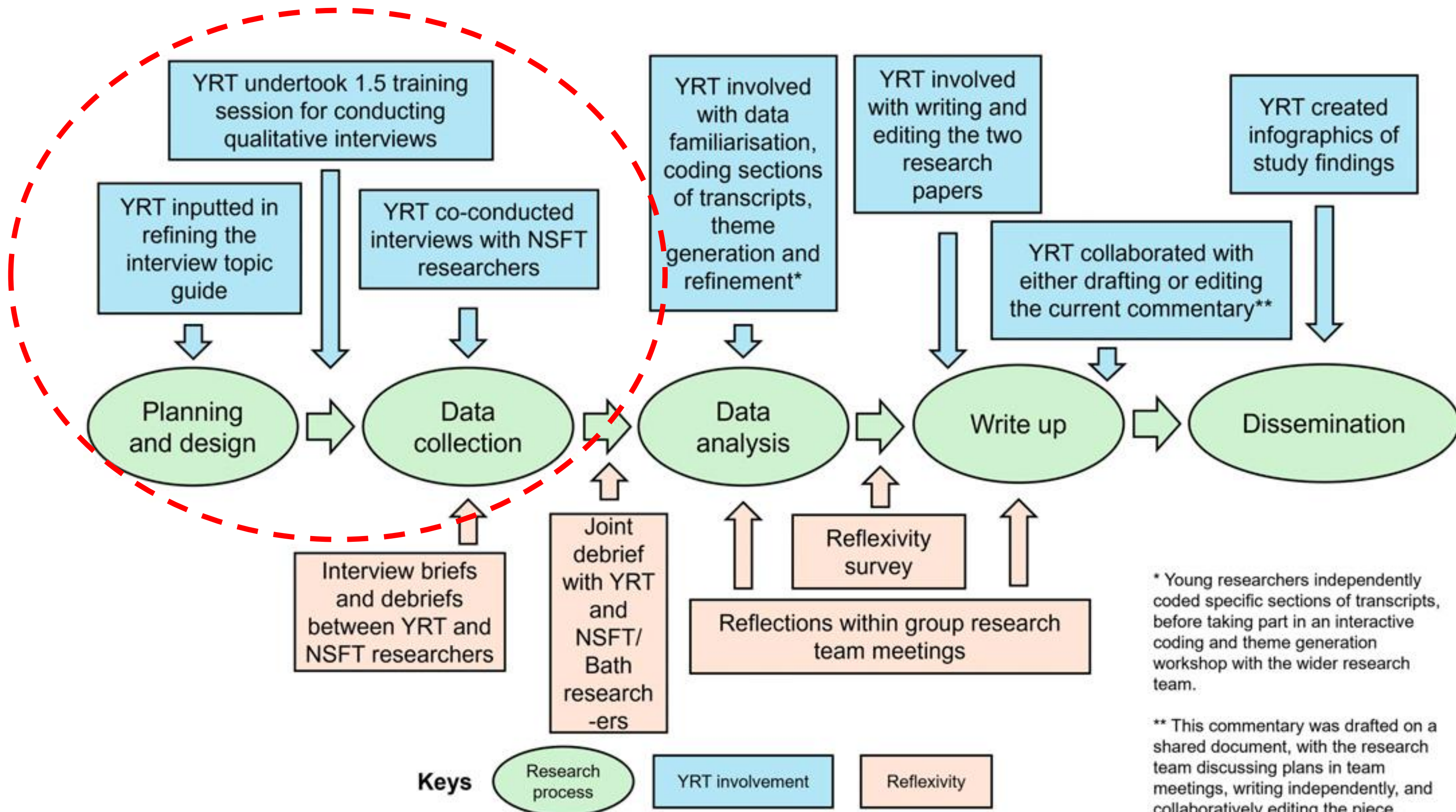
N = 4

16–18-year-olds

NSFT research



Norfolk and
NHS Foundation



* Young researchers independently coded specific sections of transcripts, before taking part in an interactive coding and theme generation workshop with the wider research team.

** This commentary was drafted on a shared document, with the research team discussing plans in team meetings, writing independently, and collaboratively editing the piece.

How YP were involved in data collection

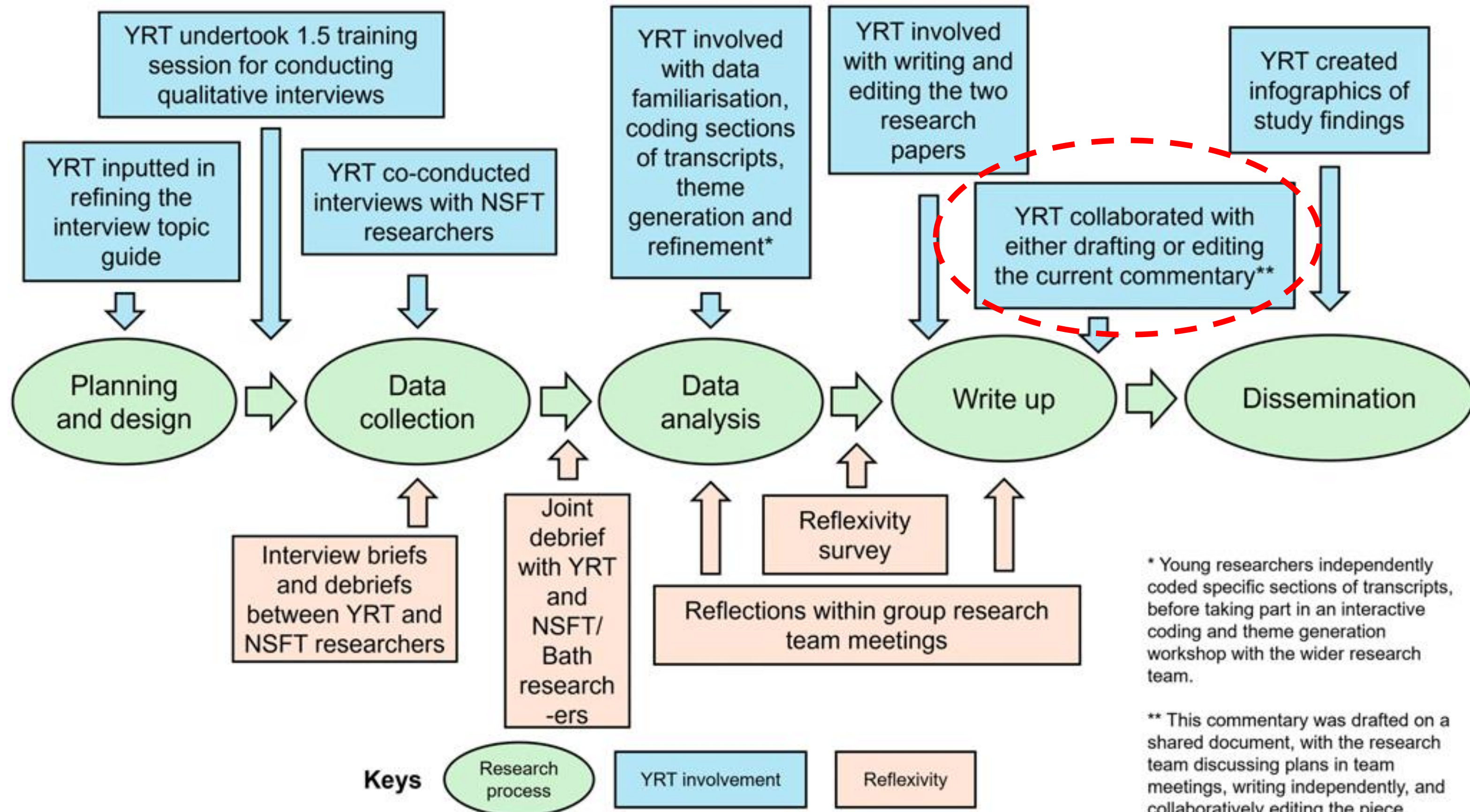
- 1.5-hour training
 - Qualitative interviews
 - Interview processes and guide
 - Confidentiality
- Interviewer pairs
 - Pre-meet
 - co-interview
 - Topic guide sections
 - Debrief
- Concluding debrief group meeting








What helped?

- NSFT research
- Honorary contracts
- Vouchers
- Laptop loan



How can we connect with young people? A commentary and recommendations for co-production within qualitative youth mental health research

Sophie Dallison¹ , Anastasia Slastikova^{1,2}, Hannah Peel^{1,2}, Grace Chamberlain^{1,2}, Lucy Biddle³, Bonnie Teague^{2,4}, Maria Elizabeth Loades¹  and Nina Higson-Sweeney^{1,5} 

Clinical Child Psychology
and Psychiatry

2025, Vol. 30(4) 811–821

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What we did

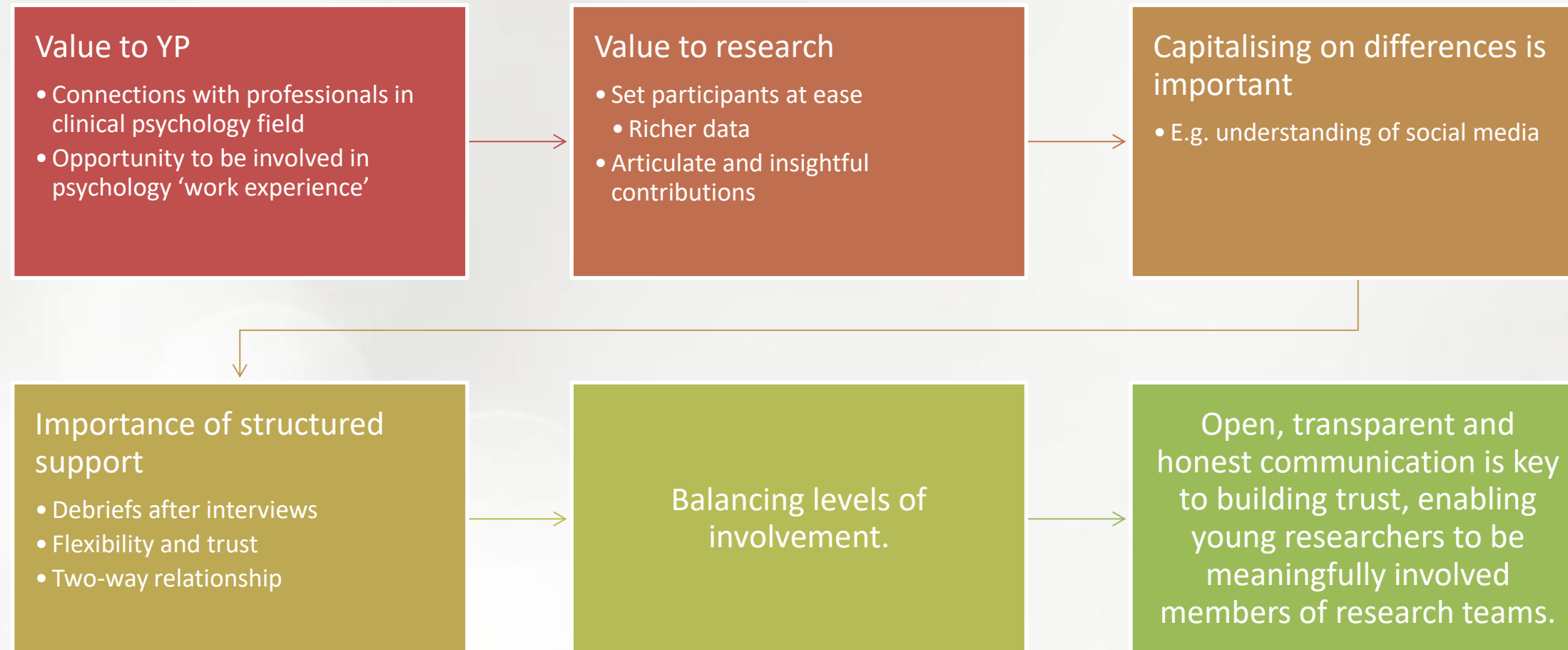
Who?

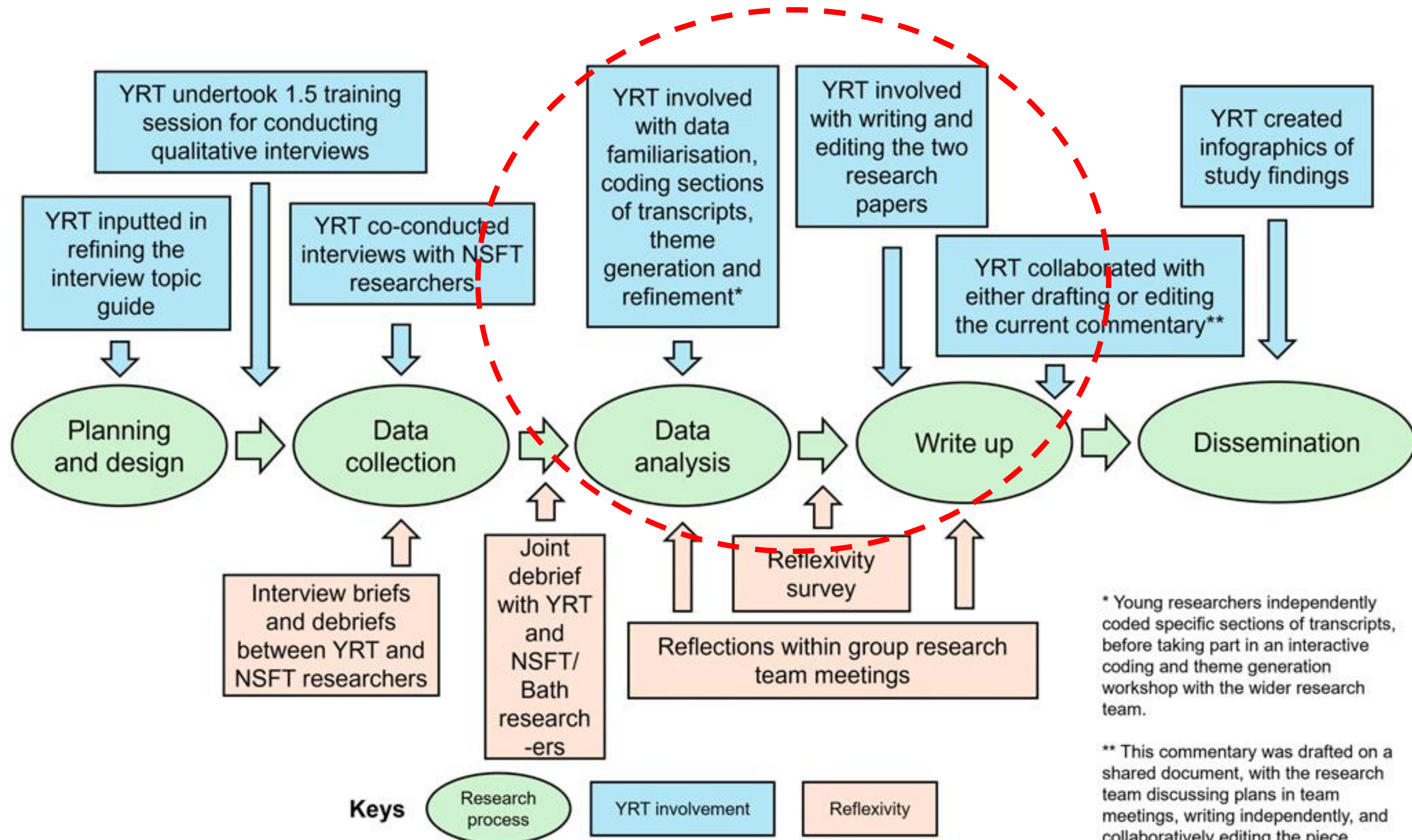
- Research team $n = 12$
- including 4 young researchers

What?

Reflected on our experiences of either being, or collaborating with, a young researcher in CWC
Responses to a survey in Qualtrics with a few semi-structured prompts.
Making sense of this and writing it up led by young co-researchers with support from RA

What we found





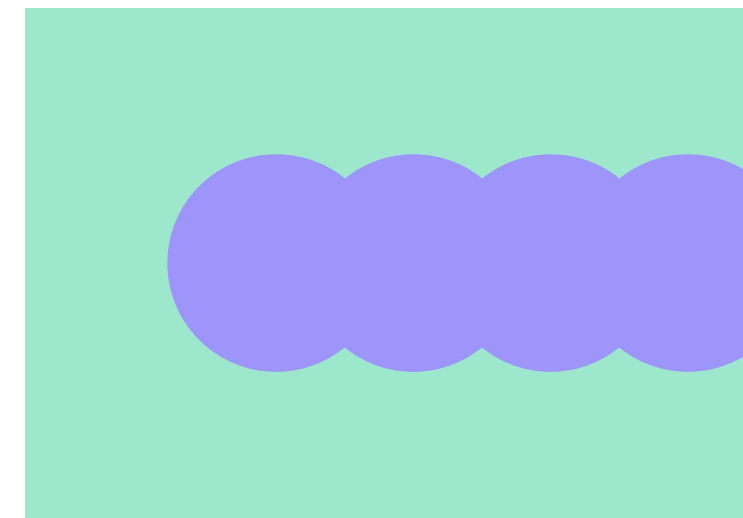
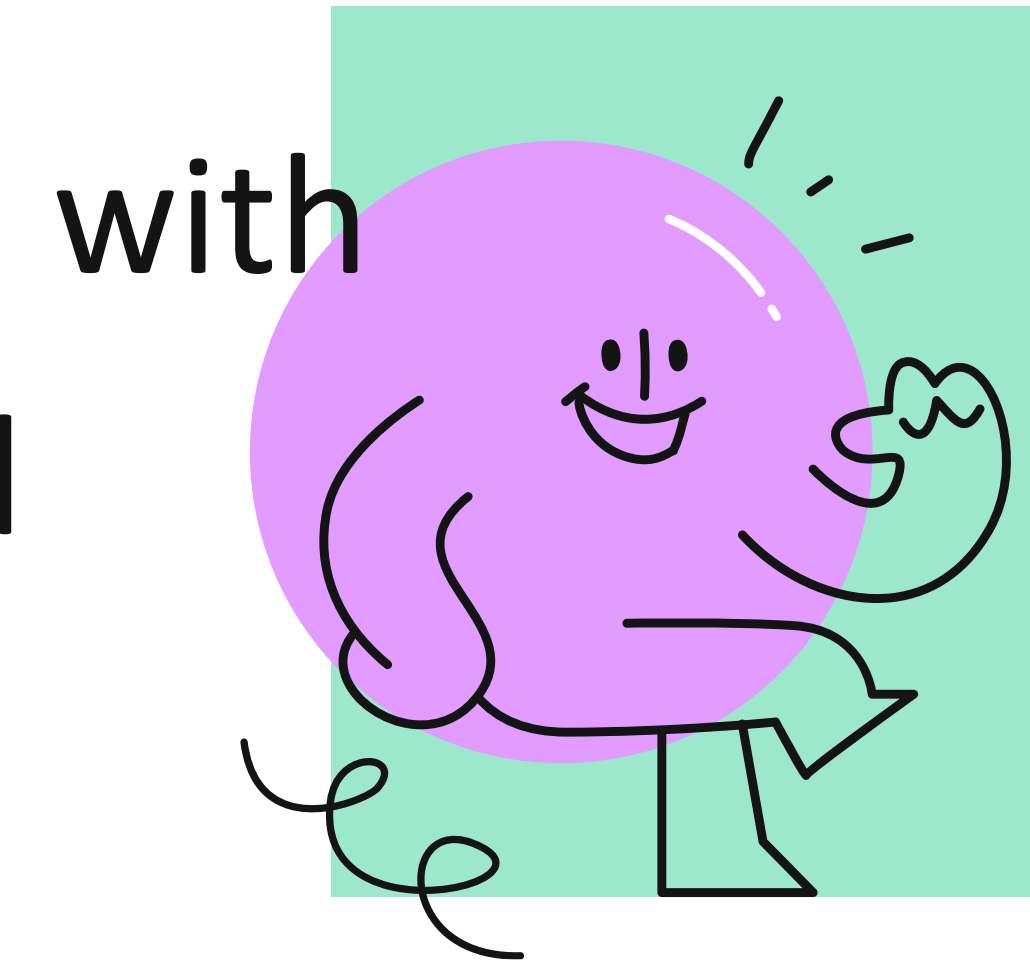
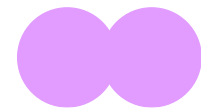


Analysing qualitative data with diverse co-researcher and advisory input:

Participatory qualitative methods in co-
produced research with young people
and parents

Part 2: How did we do it?

Dr Nina Higson-Sweeney



Part 2 of this talk will cover...



What is RTA?



Collaborative RTA



Considerations



Process

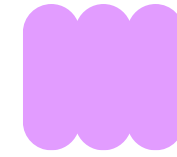
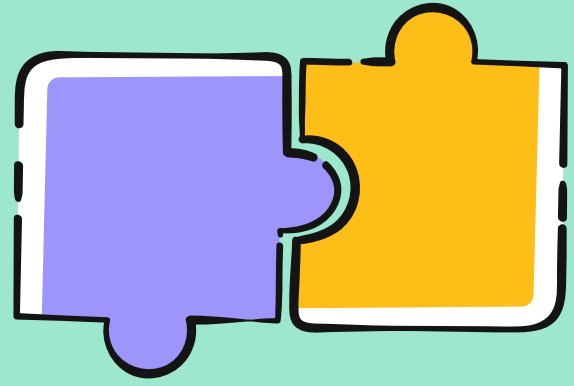


Impact



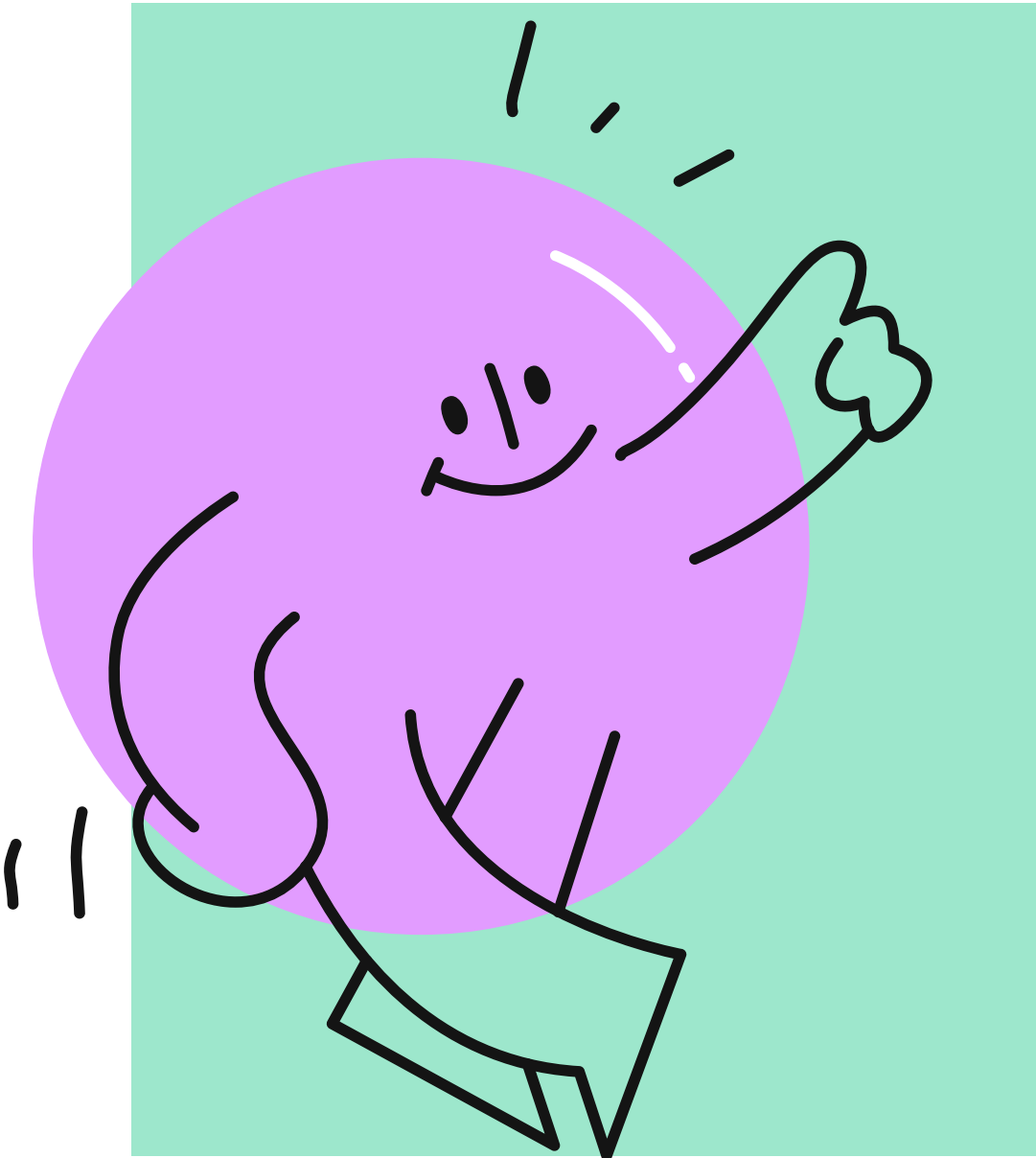
Take-home messages

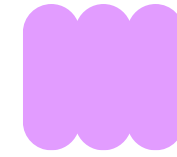
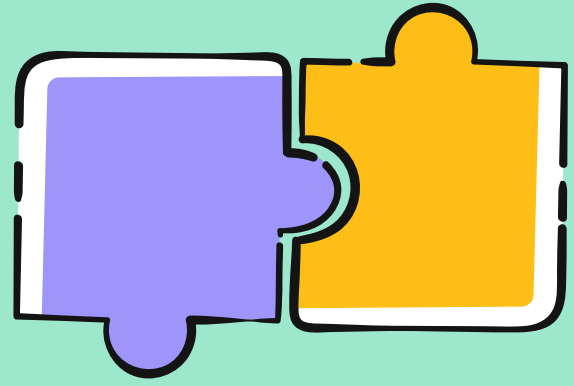




What is RTA?

- A method for systematically developing, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across a qualitative dataset
- Originally referred to as ‘thematic analysis’, but refined to ‘reflexive thematic analysis’ in 2018 to centre the reflexive researcher
- Reflexivity refers to the process of critically reflecting on and interrogating “what we do, how and why we do it, and the impacts and influences of this on our research” (p.5)
- A theoretically flexible approach, considered good for “beginner” qualitative researchers, but used by all





What is RTA?



1 Familiarisation

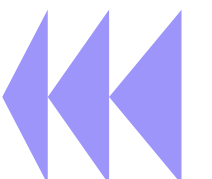
2 Coding

3 Generating initial themes

4 Developing and reviewing themes

5 Refining, defining, and naming themes

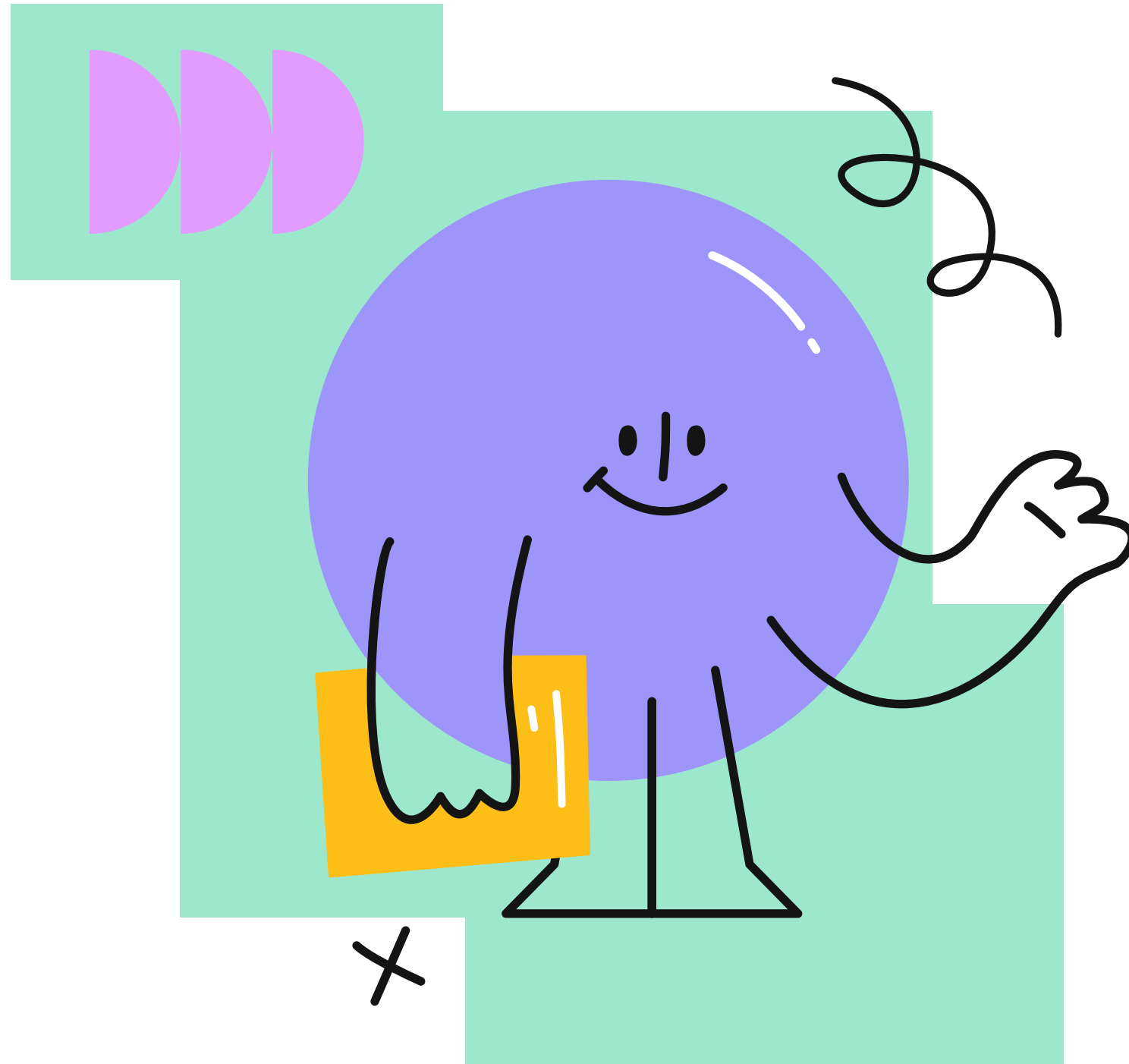
6 Writing up

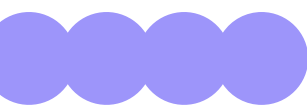




...are we allowed to do RTA as a team?

- YES!
- RTA is grounded in the idea that themes are actively generated by researchers, not objective truths
- More researchers = more interpretations, perspectives, experiences and ideas
- We are not aiming for consensus, inter-rater reliability, or to “resolve disagreements”



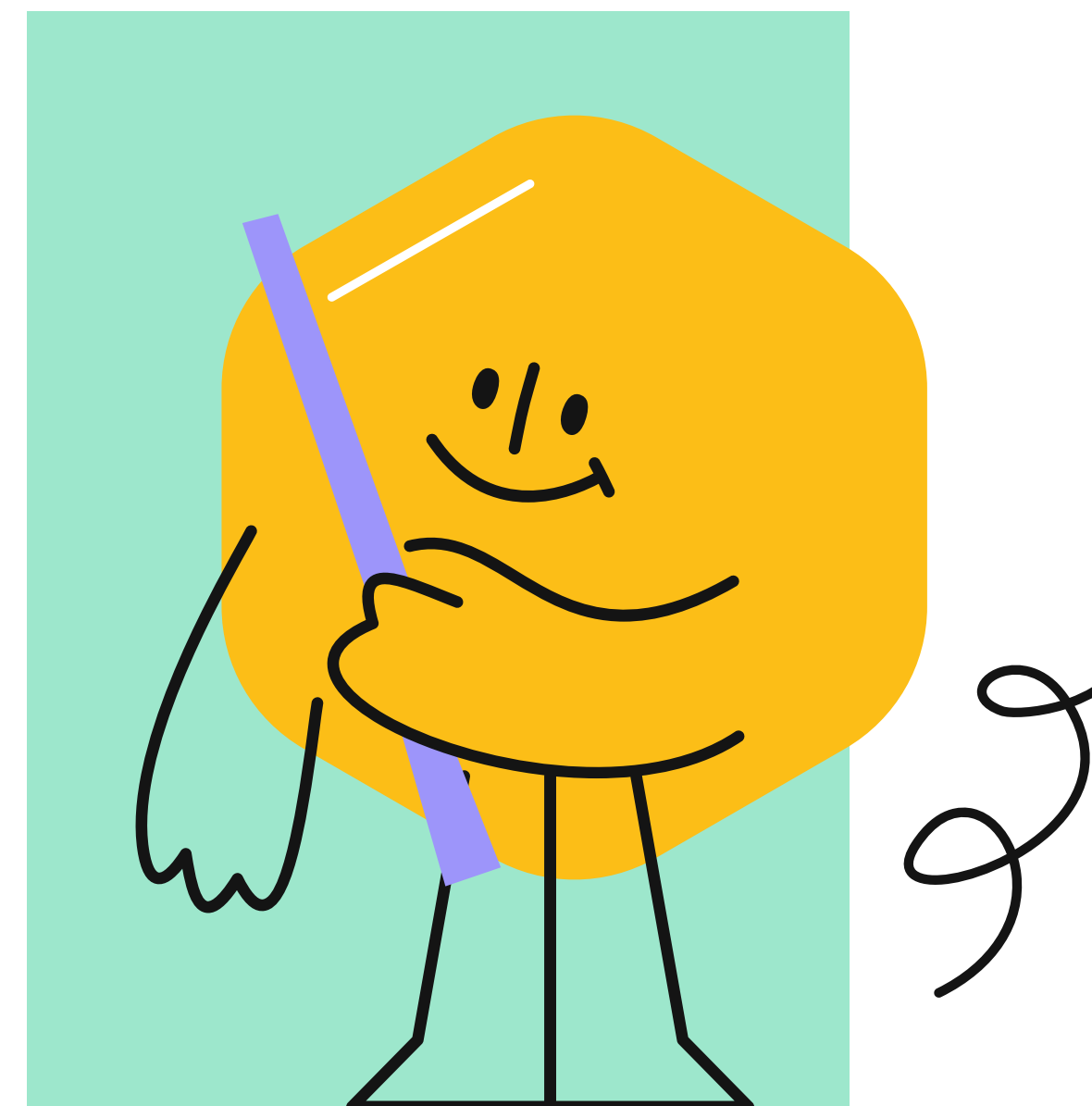
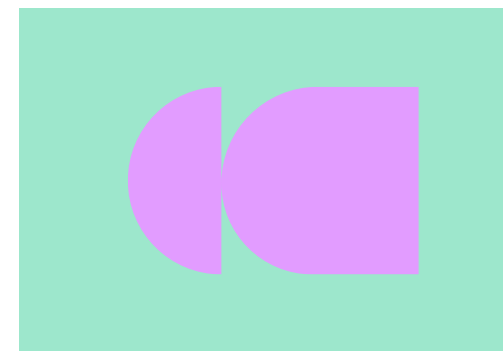


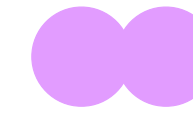
Considerations for involving young co-researchers in RTA

- ✓ Training and knowledge

- ✓ Power and epistemic authority

- ✓ Practicalities and accessibility






Process of involving young co-researchers

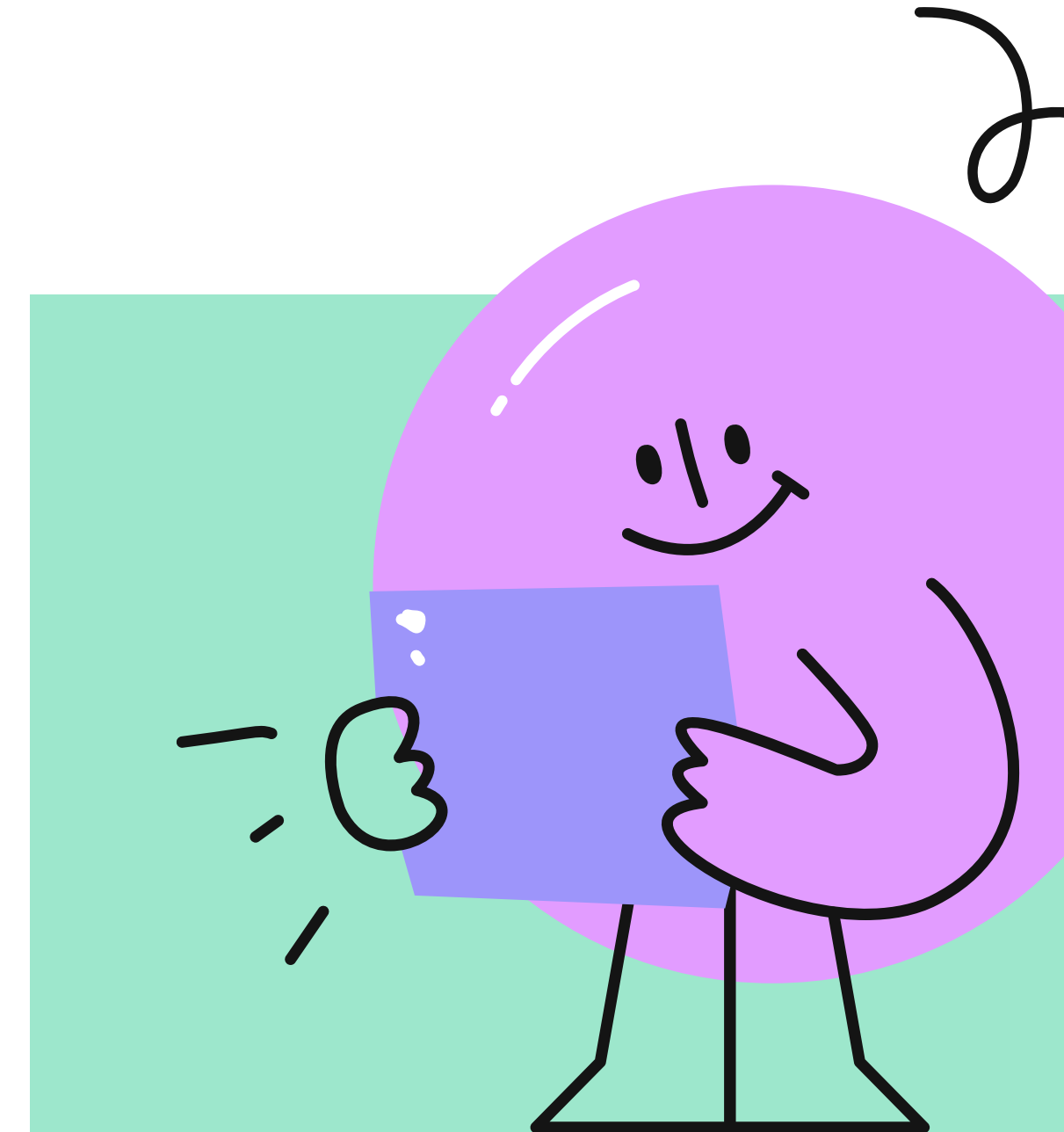
Three different papers, three different levels of involvement

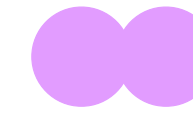
**What do they look for and what do they find?
A coproduced qualitative study on young people's
experiences of searching for mental health
information online**

M. E. Loades¹  | N. Higson-Sweeney¹ | B. Teague^{2,3} | J. Leas¹ |
C. Payne-Cook¹ | A. V. Slastikova² | H. Peel² | G. Chamberlain² |
L. Ferguson² | K. Janes² | T. Rhodes² | E. C. Roupa² | L. Biddle⁴

Involvement during:

- Coding
- Developing and reviewing themes
- Refining, defining, and naming themes
- Writing up





Process of involving young co-researchers

Three different papers, three different levels of involvement

RESEARCH

Open Access

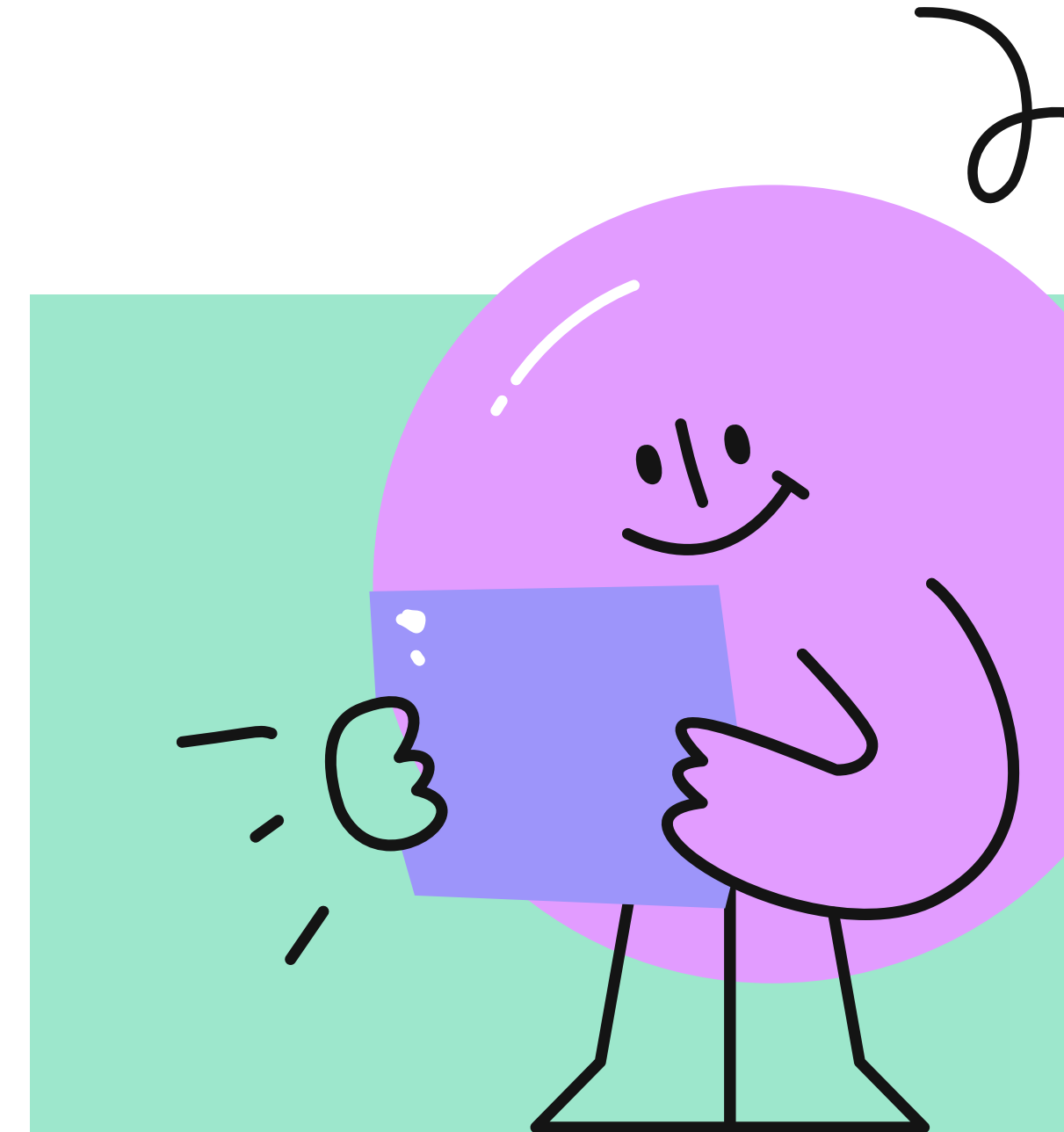
Young people's attitudes towards online self-help single-session interventions: findings from a co-produced qualitative study

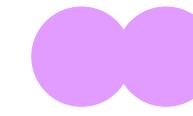


N. Higson-Sweeney^{1,2*}, S. Dallison¹, E. Craddock¹, B. Teague^{3,4}, C. Payne-Cook¹, J. Leas¹, A. V. Slastikova¹, H. Peel¹, L. Biddle⁵ and M. E. Loades¹

Involved during:

- Familiarisation
- Coding
- Developing and reviewing themes
- Refining, defining, and naming themes
- Writing up








Process of involving young co-researchers

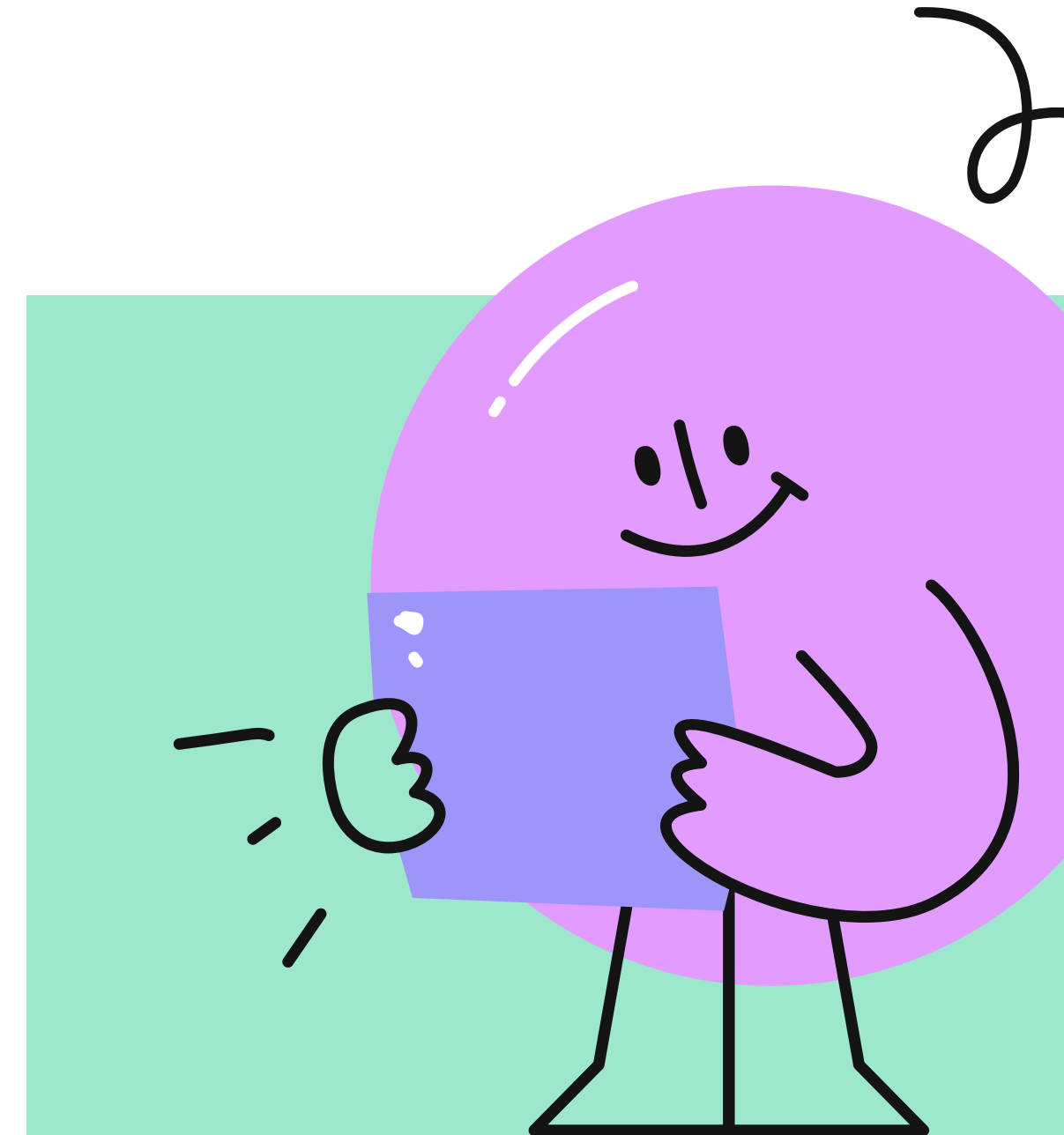
Three different papers, three different levels of involvement

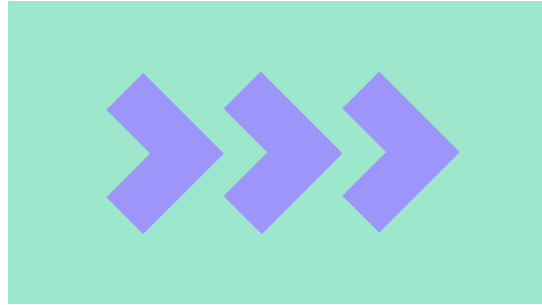
Commentary



How can we connect with young people? A commentary and recommendations for co-production within qualitative youth mental health research

Sophie Dallison ¹, Anastasia Slastikova^{1,2}, Hannah Peel^{1,2}, Grace Chamberlain^{1,2}, Lucy Biddle³, Bonnie Teague^{2,4}, Maria Elizabeth Loades ¹, and Nina Higson-Sweeney ^{1,5}





What was the impact?



Increased richness
Of analysis and overall paper

Enhanced reflexivity
Different perspectives visible

Upskilling for all
Everyone learnt something new

Increased relevance
To young people and their meanings

Areas for learning: more roleplay interviews during training; upfront introduction to analysis, academia, and co-production





Take-home messages

Our recommendations for you

Ensure
shared
value

Provision of
support

Authentic
involvement

Autonomy in
involvement

Clearly
signpost
opportunities





PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PHD RESEARCH

NATALIA KIKA, PHD RESEARCHER

Overview

01

What we did

02

**Practical
challenges**

03

**Involvement
vs.
participatory
research**

04

Tips for ECRs



What we did:

Parent Advisory Group

Involvement from the beginning

Online meetings & email input

Examples

- Meta-synthesis
- Qualitative study
- Intervention development

Practical challenges

Budget and
compensation

Timelines

Meeting
attendance

Input format

Involvement vs. participatory research

Practical constraints to upskilling advisors

Finding the right balance - focus on input quality

Examples from our systematic review & metasynthesis

Tips for ECRs

01

Involvement from the start:

It's rewarding to have a consistent group!

02

Be flexible and creative where possible:

Input format, meeting times, budget management

03

Quality of input over the amount of content covered:

Ensures depth and that advisors feel valued

04

Maintain rapport:

Prompt vouchers, be available to answer questions, send regular updates

Thank You!

Questions?

