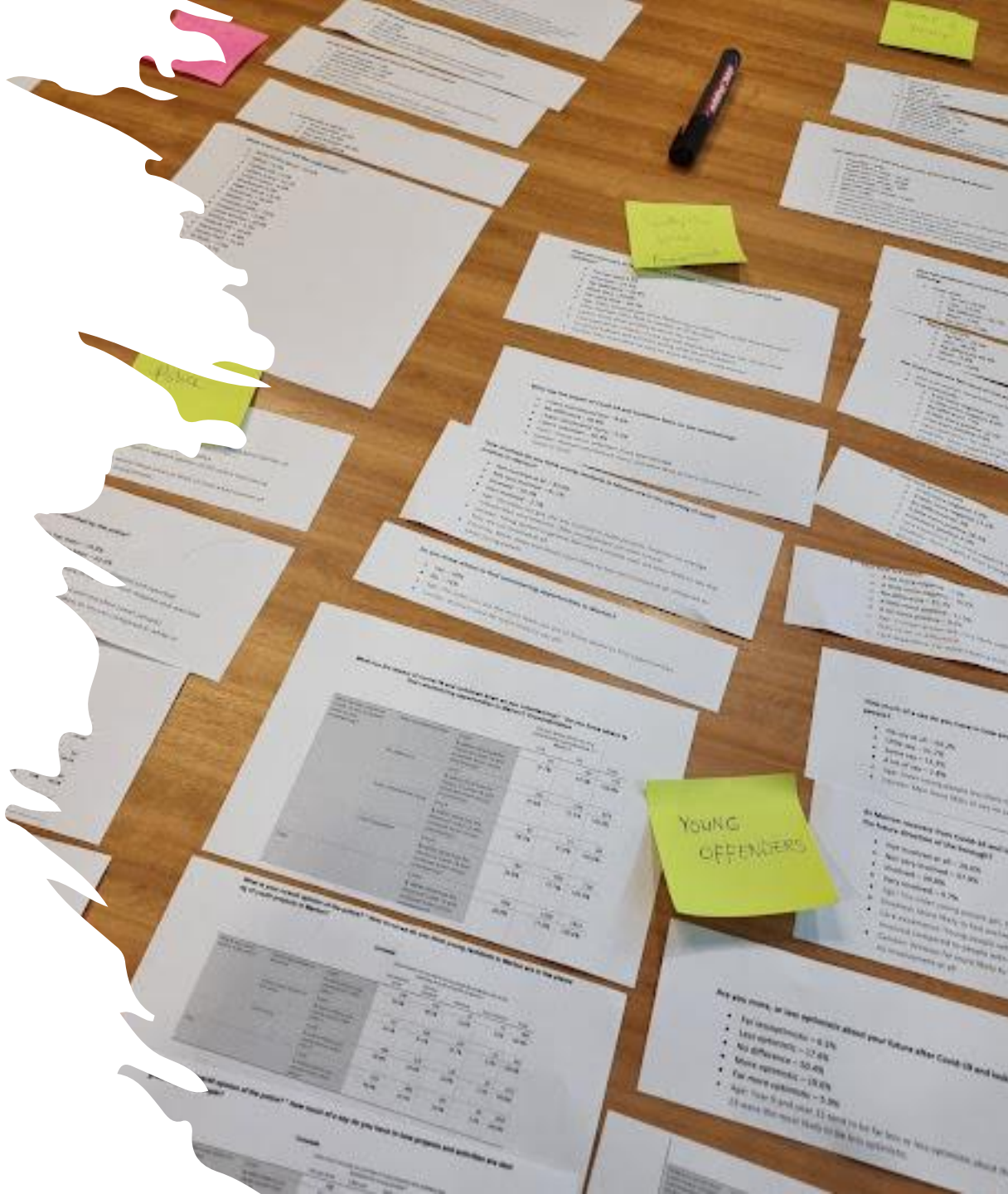
# Peer research, evaluation, and co-design: influencing policy and decision making

Partnership for Young London



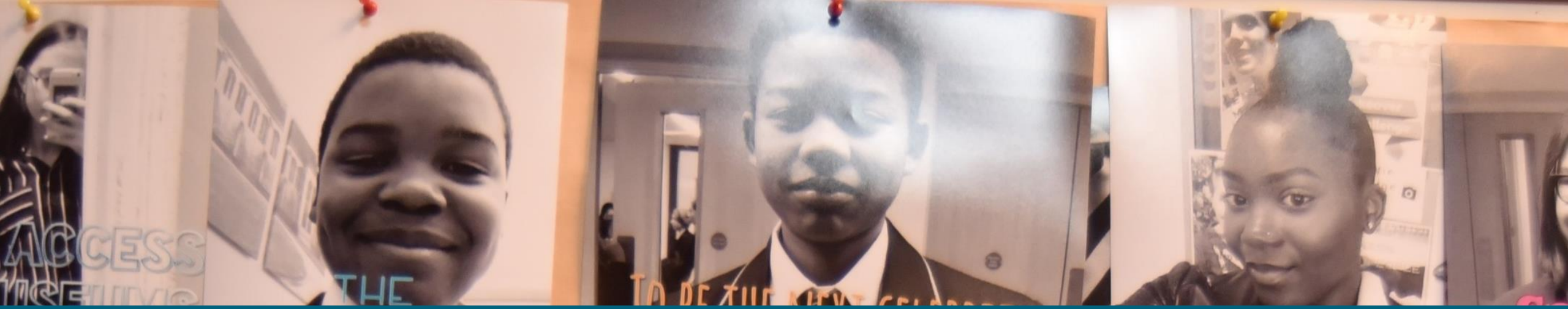
# About Partnership for Young London

Partnership for Young London

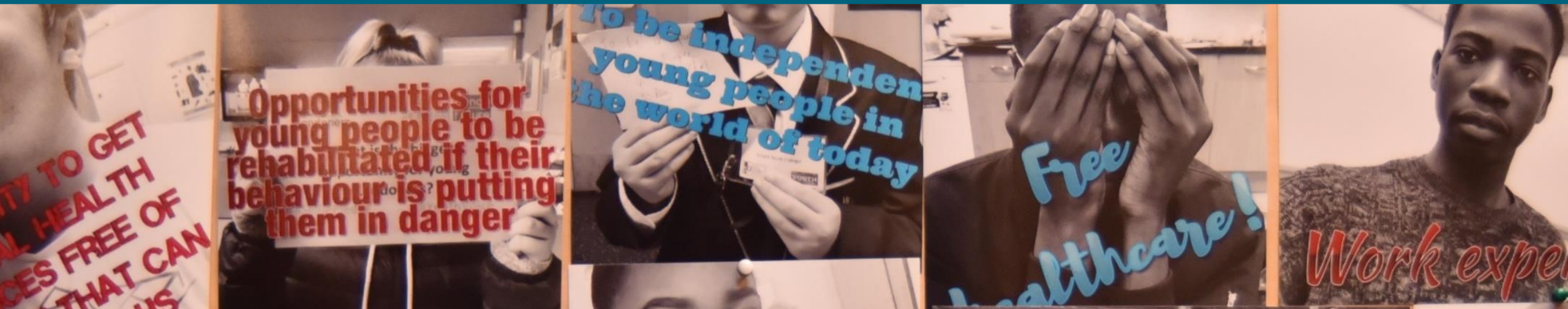
Trust for London

Tackling poverty and inequality

- Independent charity, set up in 1997 as the Regional Youth Unit for London.
- London Young Researchers is a three year programme funded by Trust for London.
- Supported over 12 organisations to conduct their own peer research projects in the past three years.




# What is peer research?



Partnership for Young London

# What is participation?

"Participation means the **involvement of intended beneficiaries in the planning, design, implementation and subsequent maintenance** of the development intervention. It means that people are mobilized, manage resources and make decisions that affect their lives" (Price and Mylius 1991)

"….collaborating by partnering with affected communities in each aspect of decision making including the development of alternatives and identification of solutions, and **empowering communities to retain ultimate control over the key decisions** that affect their wellbeing." World Health Organisation 2019

Partnership for Young London

# Common uses of peer

1. **Peer support -** Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other. They can share experiences, create a safe space, and is about giving and receiving support. (Mind)

2. **Peer Mentoring** - Peer mentoring is traditionally a one-to-one non-judgemental relationship in which an individual (mentor) voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another (mentee). (Kelsei)

3. **Peer learning -** The process of students learning with and from each other. This is usually facilitated through teaching and learning activities such as student–led workshops, study groups, peer-to-peer learning partnerships, and group work. (ECU University)

4. **Peer led interventions** - To be classed as a peer-led intervention, programmes needed to include a substantial component in which peers were involved in the delivery of the intervention; for instance, via the direct delivery of curriculum components, or by acting as a mentor or 'buddy' to study participants. (Research paper)

Partnership for Young London

# Form of participation: peer research

**"Peer research is research that is steered and conducted by people with lived experience of the issue being studied."**

- Young people are trained as researchers, and given power to make decisions about the process.
- Empowers young people to take the findings forward and create change from it.

Additional reading

What is Participatory Research? A video, SAGE research methods

Introduction to Co-Production and Participatory Research Workbook, Cardiff University, 2017

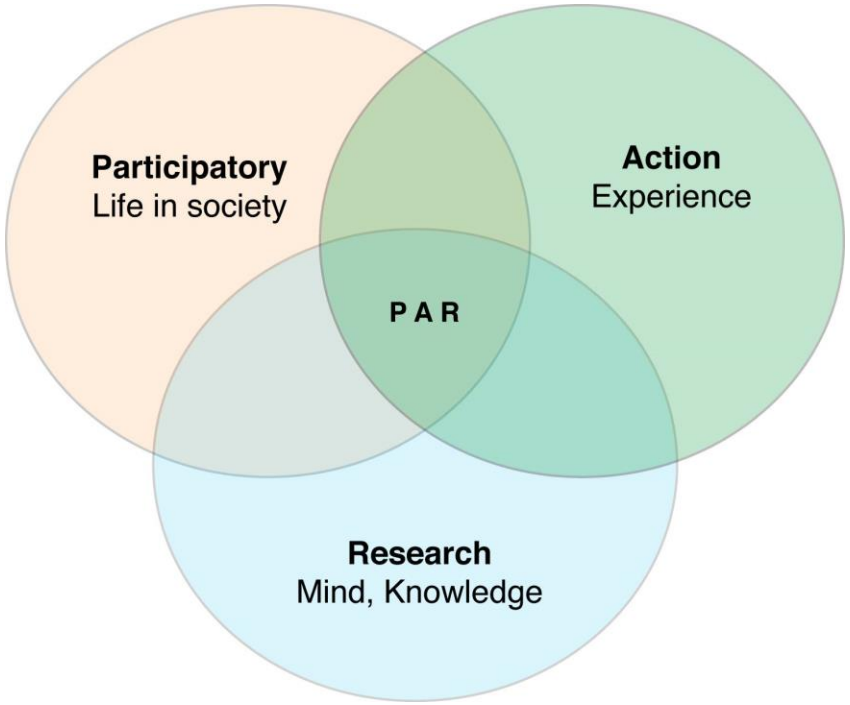
Peer Research: How to make a difference, Centre for Children and Family Research, 2012

Who is a peer anyway?, McPin Foundation

Participatory research: What is the history? Has the purpose changed?, Ann C Macaulay, 2017

Partnership for Young London

# Peer Research as PAR




- **Participatory –** The project is owned and controlled by the community. In this case young people participate fully in decision making.
- **Action –** The project addresses an issue or acts on a possibility, and the action is guided by that goal. This is not research for research's sake, and is, in the best cases, creative and transformative.
- **Research –** The project is grounded in research approaches, using qualitative (interviews, focus groups) or quantitative (surveys) tools to investigate an issue and identify solutions.

Partnership for Young London

# Participatory process

1. Project set up
2. Recruitment phase
3. Project plan

4. Focus group
5. Identifying research or evaluation aim
6. Identifying the approach

7. Designing the research tools
8. Designing safeguarding and ethics

9. Practice and testing
10. Carrying out the research

11. Conducting the analysis
12. Research write up

13. Action
14. Evaluate and share

**1 – Planning phase**

**2 – Project design**

**3 – Approach design**

**3 – Fieldwork**

**4 – Completion**

**5 – Impact**

# What methods are peer researchers using?

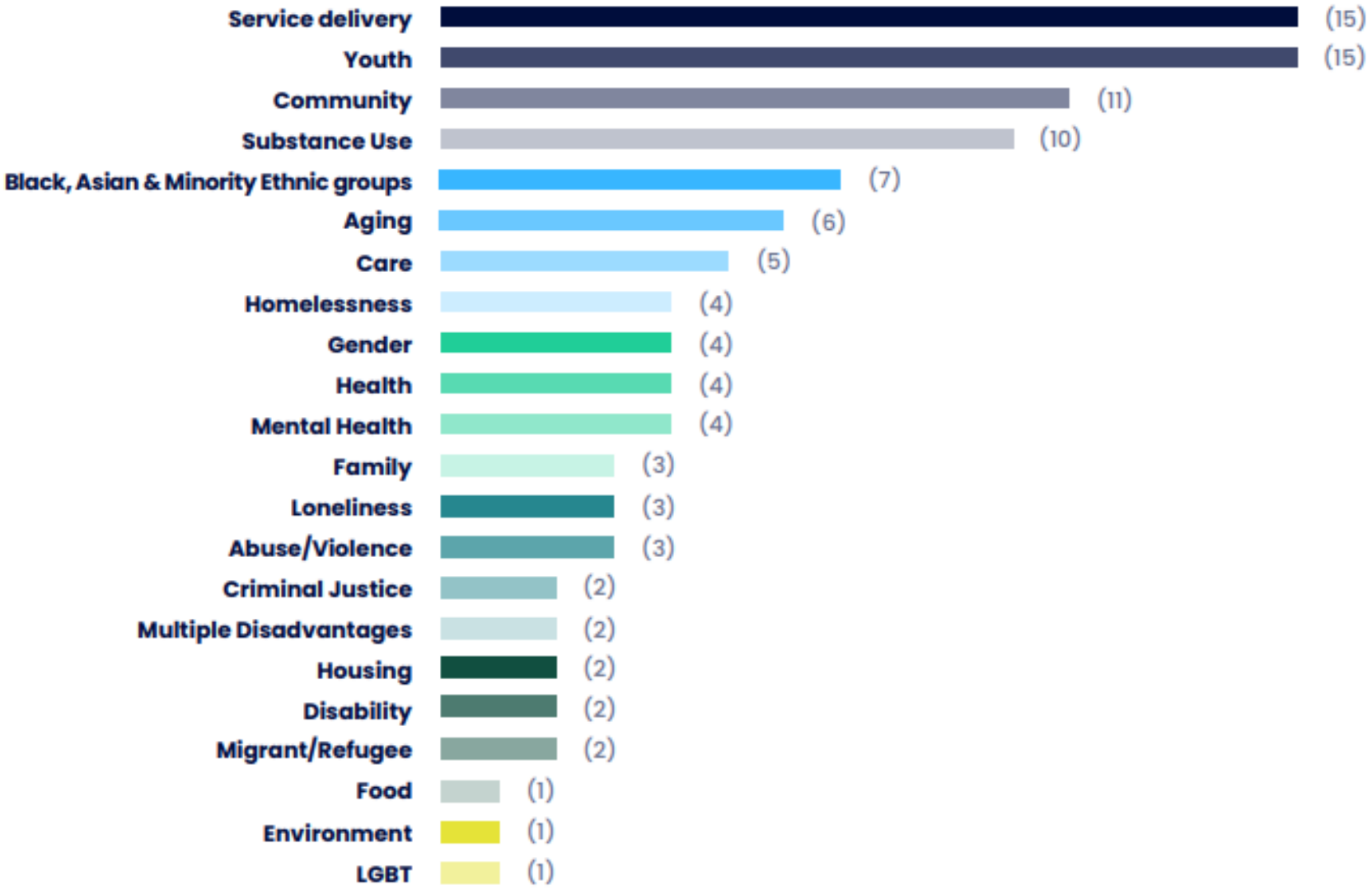
Partnership for Young London

- Interviews (19)
- Focus Groups (11)
- Surveys (10)
- Creative Methods (4)
- Workshops (3)
- Participatory Mapping (3)
- Photo Diaries (1)
- Participant Observation (1)
- Consultation Events (1)
- Participatory Video (1)

Peer Research in the UK – Young Foundation

Partnership for Young London

## Topics in peer research




[Peer Research in the UK – Young Foundation]

# Principles of good peer research: 1 - Power sharing

Partnership for Young London

- Young people should be equal partners in decision making
- Young people should have final say, or veto, on decisions
- Young people understand the power they have in the process
- They are present and involved in all conversations

# Principles of good peer research:
# 2- Mutual respect for experience/expertise

Partnership for Young London

- Young people should be renumerated or paid for their time and expertise in the project
- Organisations should evaluate the impact that young people's involvement had to them as an organisation i.e the co-learning
- Peer researchers bring their expertise, and organisations bring their own expertise, and it needs to be shared

# Principles of good peer research: 3 - Informed decision making

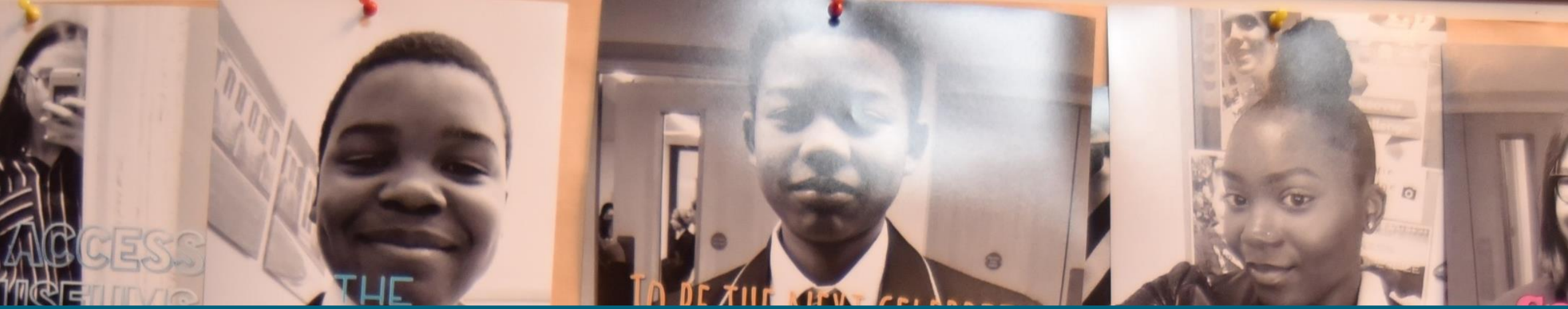
Partnership for Young London

- Training should be mapped to decision making so young people have a clear understanding of what the options are
- Their skills and learning need to evaluated and monitored to make sure that the training programme is working
- Support for aspects like fieldwork should be provided for where training might not be sufficient

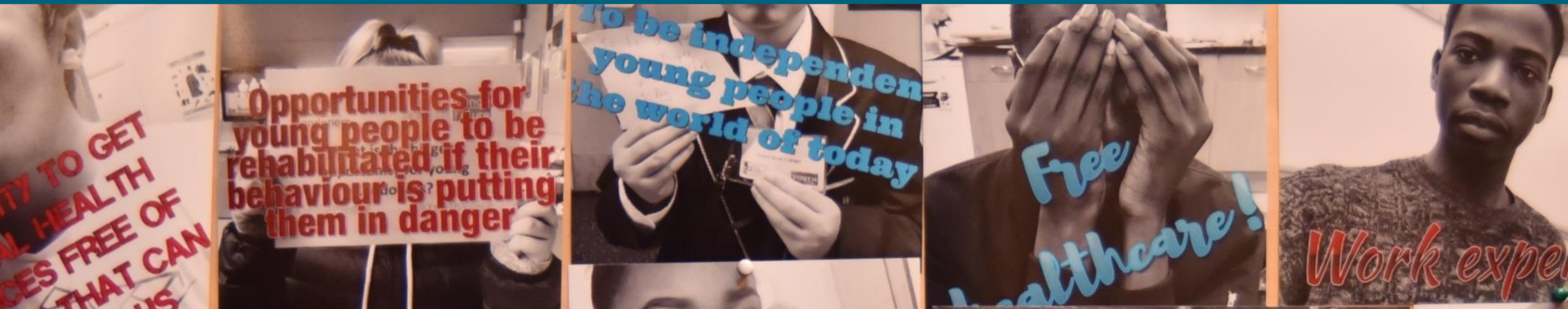
# Principles of good peer research: 4 - Maximum involvement

Partnership for Young London

- Young people should be involved in decision making of as many aspects of the process as possible
- Research decisions, organisational decisions, and design and communication decisions
- Not all young people want to be involved in everything, so roles and responsibilities are important



# Benefits and challenges



Partnership for Young London

# Outcomes for young people

| Category | Outcomes for young people |
|---|---|
| **Knowledge and skills** | Enhanced knowledge of and access to decision making<br>Research Skills<br>Team work<br>Specific knowledge on a topic<br>Leadership, public speaking<br>Technology and design |
| **Educational outcomes** | Improved academic/career outcomes<br>Strengthening college applications<br>Improvements in literacy |

Source: The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation, peer research by Children and Young People and their allies, 2021

Partnership for Young London

# Outcomes for young people

| Category | Outcomes for young people |
|---|---|
| **Personal development** | Increase confidence and self-esteem<br>Greater responsibility and independence<br>Positive self-identity and sense of purpose<br>Feeling valued<br>Building new relationships |
| **Collective outcomes** | Empowerment and agency<br>Making a positive difference<br>Collective identity<br>Developing an understanding of community and social issues |

Source: The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation, peer research by Children and Young People and their allies, 2021

Partnership for Young London

# Benefits for the research quality

| Benefit | Detail |
|---|---|
| **Better research design** | Creation of better research questions<br>More relevant methods and questions |
| **Accessibility** | Better research method design<br>More access into certain groups |
| **Better data collection** | More understanding of what works<br>More trust between researcher and participant<br>Bigger sample |
| **Better data analysis** | Utilising lived experience into data analysis<br>Better understanding of the sample, and underlying issues |
| **Better identification of themes** | Different perspective yields different themes<br>Sense check of findings to results |

Partnership for Young London

# Benefits for the organisation

| Benefit | Detail |
|---|---|
| **Accountability** | Organisations and practitioners are more accountable to young people, and those who might engage with their services, by supporting them to control the research. |
| **Improved practice** | Organisations can improve services based on the research and the involvement of young people and embed their participation in decision making at the organisation. |
| **Better relationships** | Organisations can improve their relationship with the young people and community that they work with, especially with other organisations. |
| **Signposting and increased engagement** | Young people involved in the research can be signposted into other participation programmes. |
| **Better influence** | Peer researchers can be more effective communicators for research to other practitioners, decision makers, and funders. |

Partnership for Young London

# Challenges with young people

| Benefit | Detail |
|---|---|
| **Limited time** | Young people have limited time, with exams, or school work. |
| **Disconnection between peer researchers** | Lack of commonality<br>Age gaps, gender, ethnicity |
| **Fluctuating participation** | Having a consistent cohort is important<br>Young people drop in and out |
| **Unmanageable meetings** | Collective decision making can be difficult<br>Online participation can be particularly difficult |
| **Different skill floors** | Young people have different skills<br>Those with better soft skills can be more dominant |

Partnership for Young London

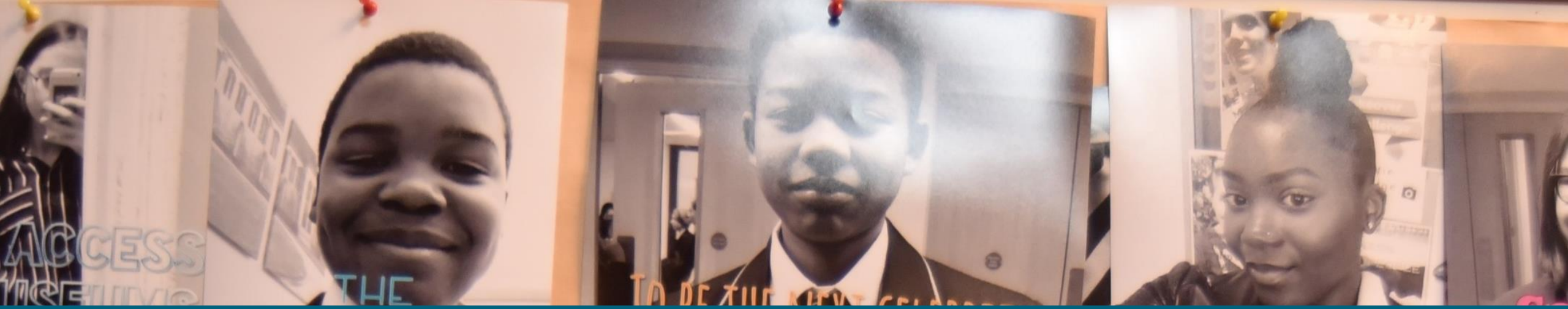
# Challenges for the research

| Benefit | Detail |
|---|---|
| **Issues with confidentiality** | Multiple peer researchers handling data can be a challenge<br>Multiple recording devices, data agreements, anonymity |
| **Training might be inadequate** | Certain aspects of research hard to teach<br>Young people need ongoing support in the field |
| **Safeguarding and ethics** | Additional safeguarding risks with research<br>Ethics can be challenging to co-design and get right |
| **Recruitment can "stack the deck"** | Recruitment can heavily influence the rest of the process<br>Creates sampling errors from the start |
| **Research expertise still needed** | Data analysis and preparation needs expertise<br>There should be clear roles of the young people and organisation |

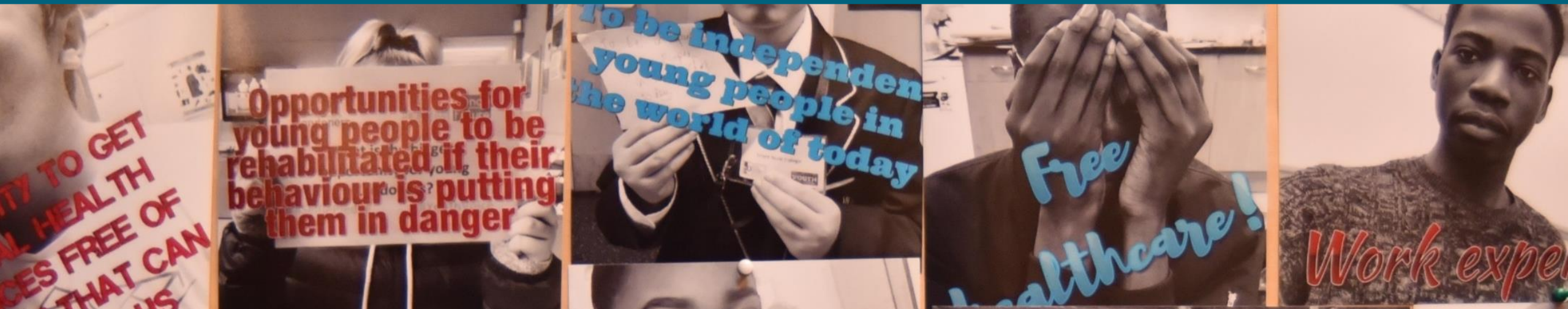
Partnership for Young London

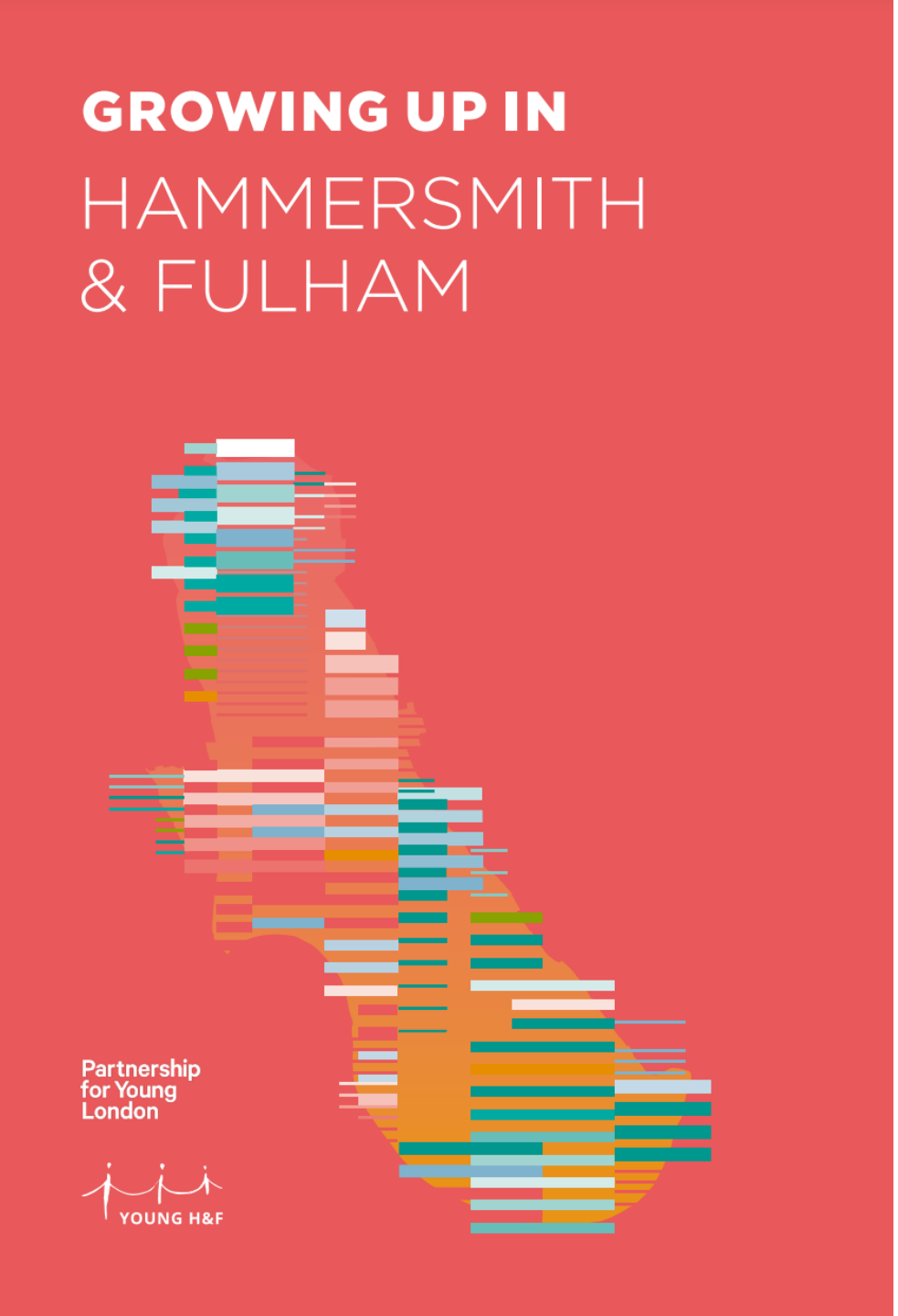
# Challenges for the organisation

| Benefit | Detail |
|---|---|
| **Difficult to plan and predict** | If young people make decisions, it is harder to plan<br>Harder to write funding bids as a result |
| **"Experts by experience" vs expertise** | There is a fine balance to be made between participatory, co-design, co-producing and valuing the expertise of both equally |
| **Change needs to be built in from the start** | Peer research is double edged sword<br>Avoid data for data's sake, and ensure change is built in |
| **Reliant on existing relationships** | Needs strong relationships in that community<br>Needs the ability to recruit young people with lived experience |
| **Training those involved in the research** | Training needs to be thorough for meaningful decision making<br>Needs to be flexible depending on their decisions |
| **Costly and time consuming** | All of this can be costly<br>All of this takes additional time |



# Examples of policy change and practice






Partnership for Young London

# Peer research examples

- The Roundhouse: Self-Made Sector: Working in the creative industries (report link)
- Young Women's Trust: Valuing Unpaid Work (report link)
- Barnardo's: Evaluating TIGER services report
- Young Harrow Foundation: Northwick Park Hospital (report link)
- Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation: Growing Up in Hammersmith and Fulham (report link)
- Young Westminster Foundation: City within a City follow up report
- The Housing Project: Evaluating Housing Projects in England and Scotland

Partnership for Young London

# Merton Case Study

- Peer research project in Merton
- Survey designed by Young Inspectors
- Interview guides designed by young inspectors
- Over 2,000 young people in the survey
- Over 200 young people in interviews and focus groups
- Fieldwork took over three months

NO MEAL
ALL DAY
2:20 / 10:26
Whilst 1 in 20 had to not eat for a whole day

Partnership for Young London

# House Project Case Study

- Peer evaluation of the House Project
- Survey designed by Care Leavers National Movement (CLNM)
- Interview guide designed by CLNM
- The peer researchers spoke to 13 local House Projects across England and Scotland.
- The peer researchers spoke to over 25 young people.
- They conducted over 15 in-depth interviews and supported 3 focus groups.

CARE LEAVERS
NATIONAL MOVEMENT
YOUNG PERSON'S VOICE
1:06 / 2:50

# London Young Researcher grants

Partnership for Young London

Young people who live in London and are aged between 14-25 can apply for grants of up to £8,000, to undertake research, they will need to be supported by a youth worker and experienced youth organisation.

They need to be looking at some aspect of:

- Access to youth services
- Barriers to attending youth services
- Young people's specific needs and the type of activities young people want

Round one:

Haringey Community, The Avenues, Chicken Shed Theatre

ROCKET SCIENCE

SUPPORTED BY

MAYOR OF LONDON

youngharrow foundation

# Young Londoners Research Grants

## Round 1

3 funded organisations:

1. Chickenshed Theatre
2. The Avenues Project
3. Haringey Community Gold

Project closure **March 2023**

## Round 2

6 Funded organisations:

1. Covent Garden Dragon Hall
2. the Albany
3. Highbury Roundhouse Association
4. Merton Young Inspectors
5. Resources for Autism
6. Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation

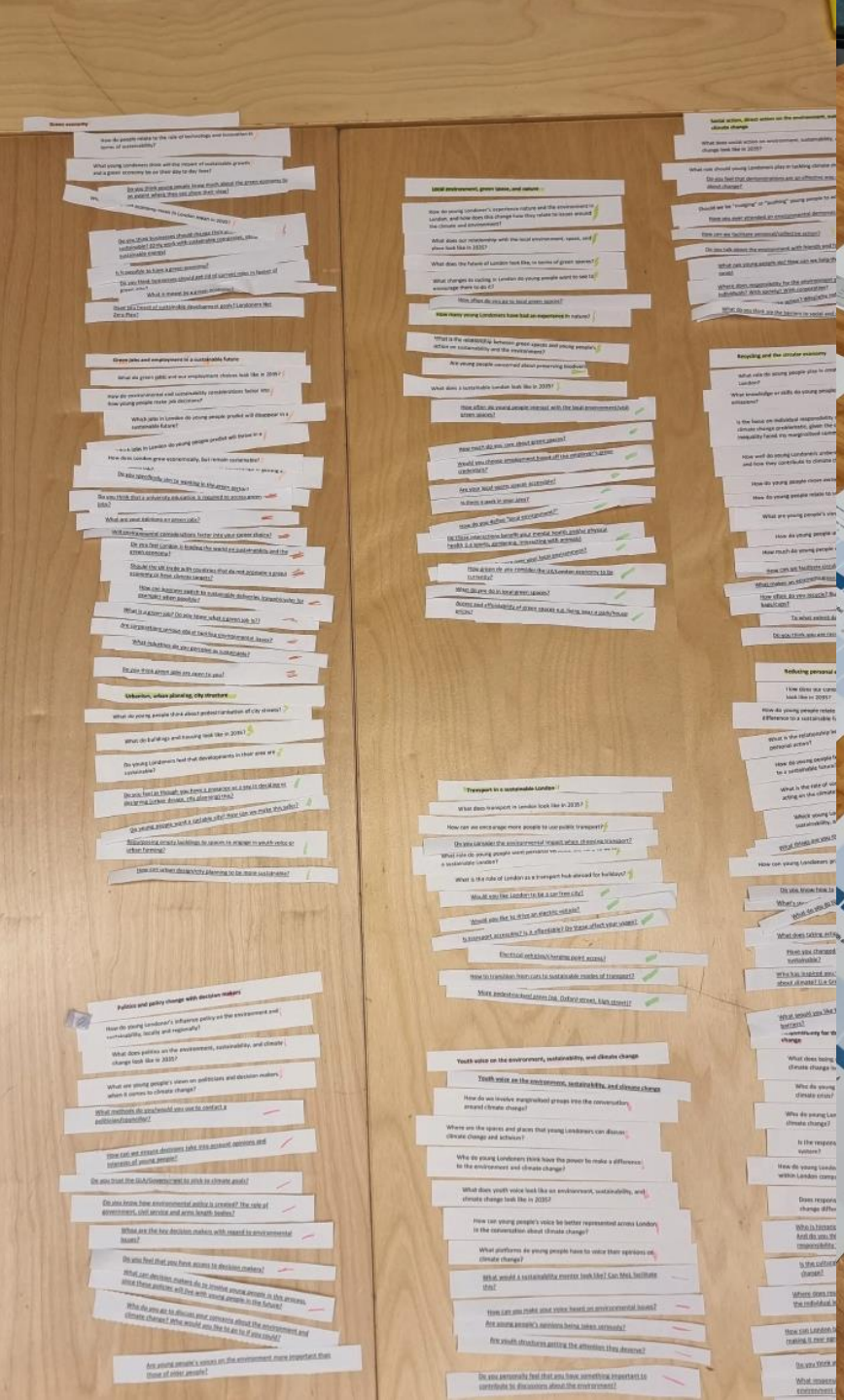
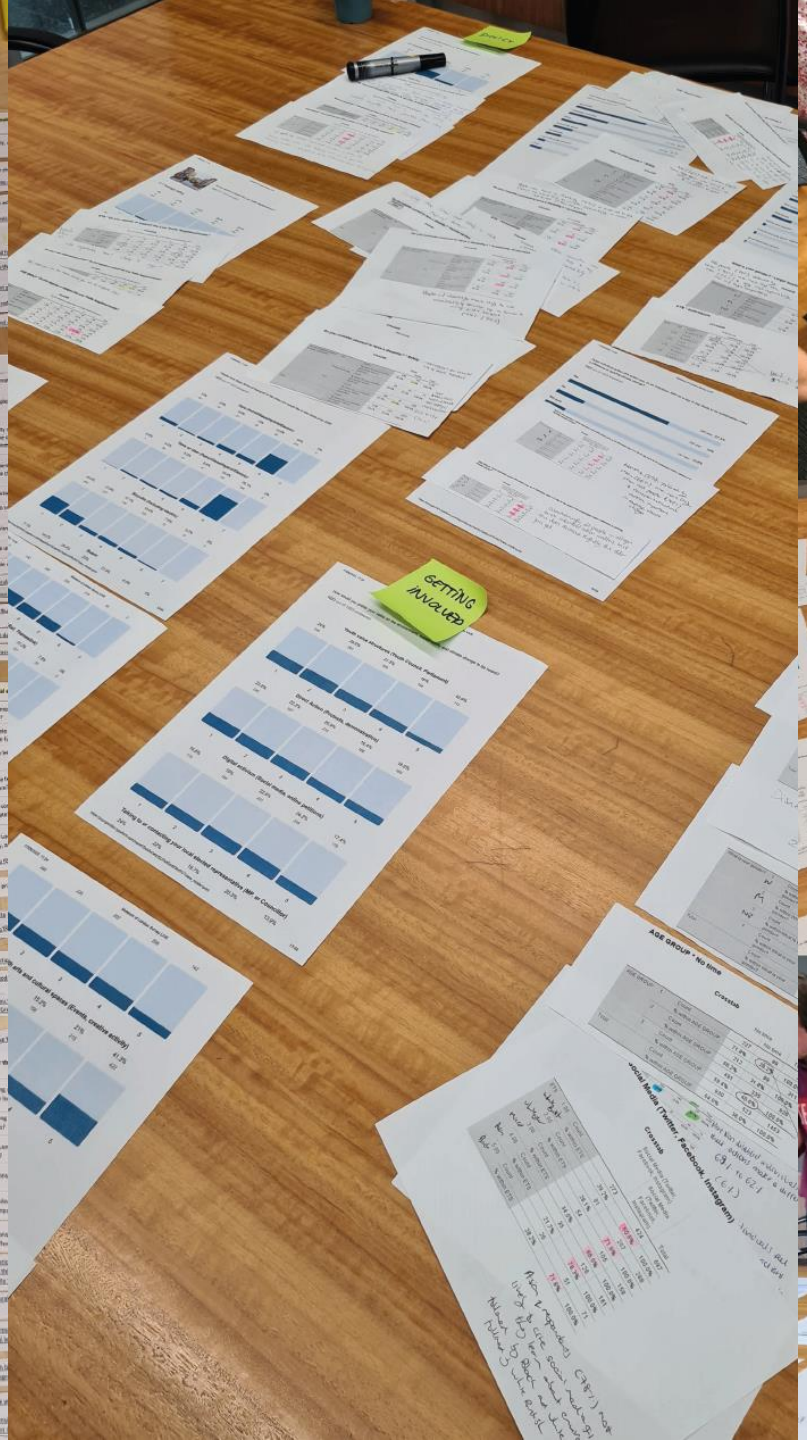
Project closure **March 2023**

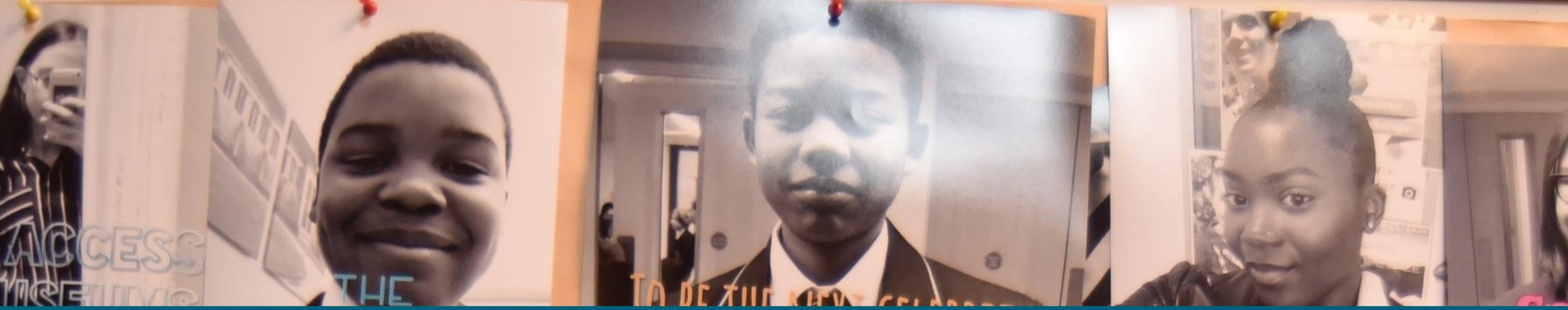
Partnership for Young London

# A sustainable London 2035

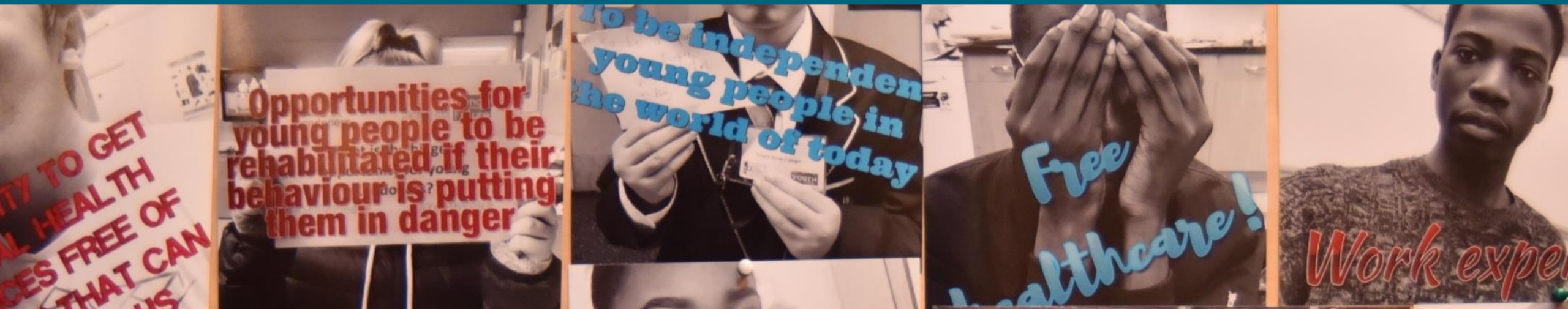
- Peer research designed by five young Londoners
- Over 1,000 young Londoners surveyed
- Survey questions and interview questions created by the peer researchers
- Clear opportunities to influence Museum of London relaunch

Partnership for Young London
MUSEUM OF LONDON CURATING LONDON
Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND


Green economy
Green jobs and employment in a sustainable future
Urbanism, urban planning, city structure
Transport in a sustainable London
Local environment, green space, and nature
Recycling and the circular economy
Reducing personal
Politics and policy change with decision makers
Youth voice on the environment, sustainability, and climate change

GETTING INVOLVED
AGE GROUP - No time
Crosstab



# Peer research support



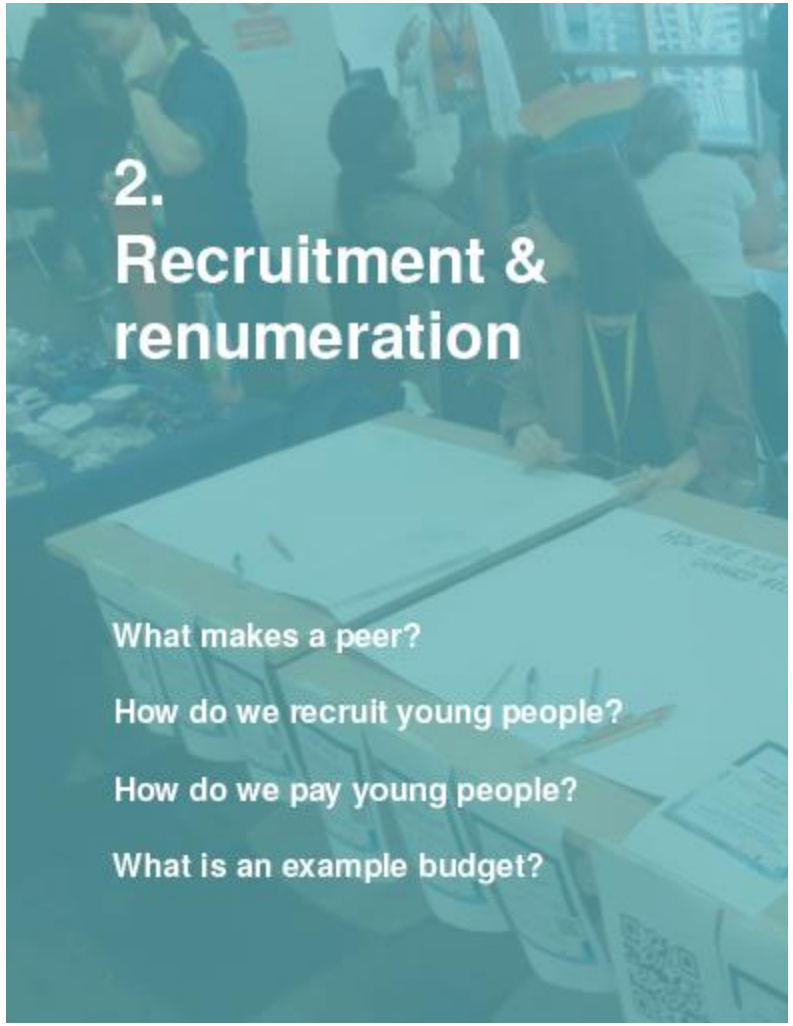
Partnership for Young London

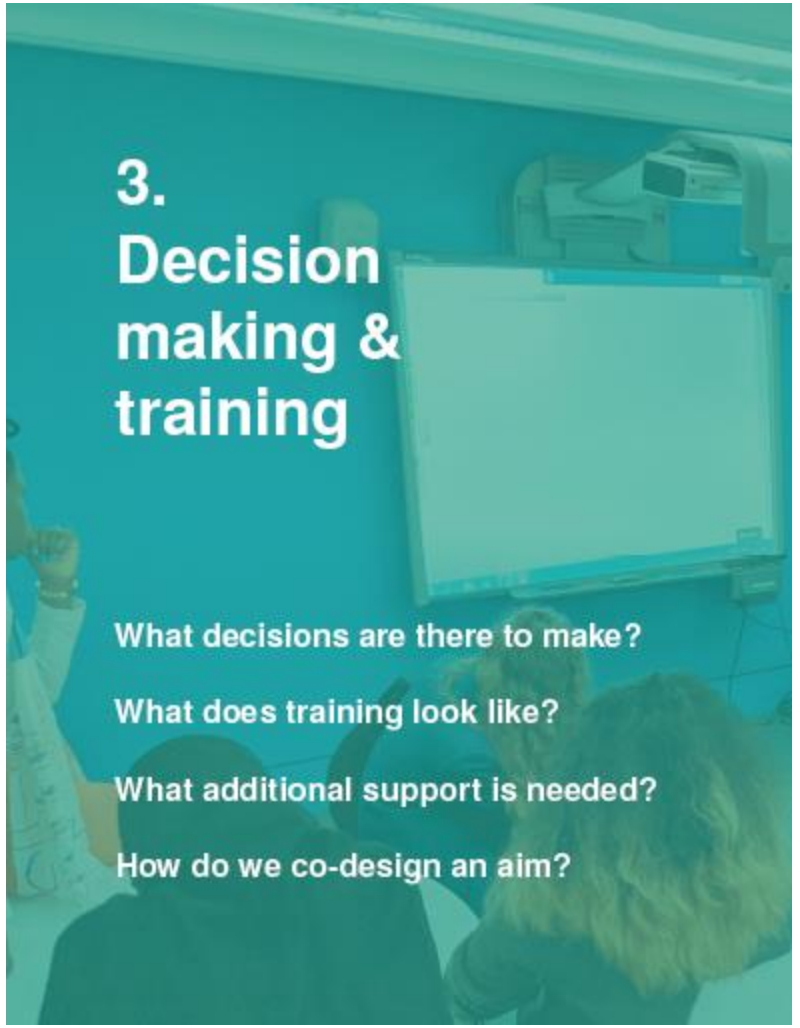
# Participatory toolkit

- Follow up to Involving Young Londoners: A review into participatory approaches in the youth sector
- Based on our learning conducting peer research projects, and from conversations with other youth sector practitioners.
- We spoke to 17 organisations, and transcribed over eight hours of conversation.
- We interviewed four peer researchers for their perspective on being involved in different aspects of the research process.

# A peer research toolkit

Partnership for Young London



# A peer research toolkit

Partnership for Young London

## 4. Deciding on methodology

What are different research methods?

How do we co-design a survey?

How do we co-design interviews?

What are some creative approaches?

## 5. Fieldwork & delivery

What does survey collection look like?

How should we conduct interviews?

What are research ethics?

What are safeguarding risks are there?

## 6. Co-producing analysis

How do we analyse the data we collect?

How do we analyse qualitative data?

How do we analyse quantitative data?

How do we design recommendations?

Partnership for Young London

# Offer of support for 2022

- We have a peer research support offer for young people and organisations.
- We are focusing on youth-voice, political engagement and participation.
- We will provide free training of young people, staff, and support with evaluation.
- Please get in contact to talk to us about it.

Partnership for Young London

# Peer Research Evaluation Framework

- We are looking to develop a youth peer research evaluation framework with partners.
- Will be trialled with Phase 1 and 2 organisations as part of the grants programme.
- Combines soft skills, research skills, and looks to measure outcomes specific to peer research.

Partnership for Young London

# Three aspects

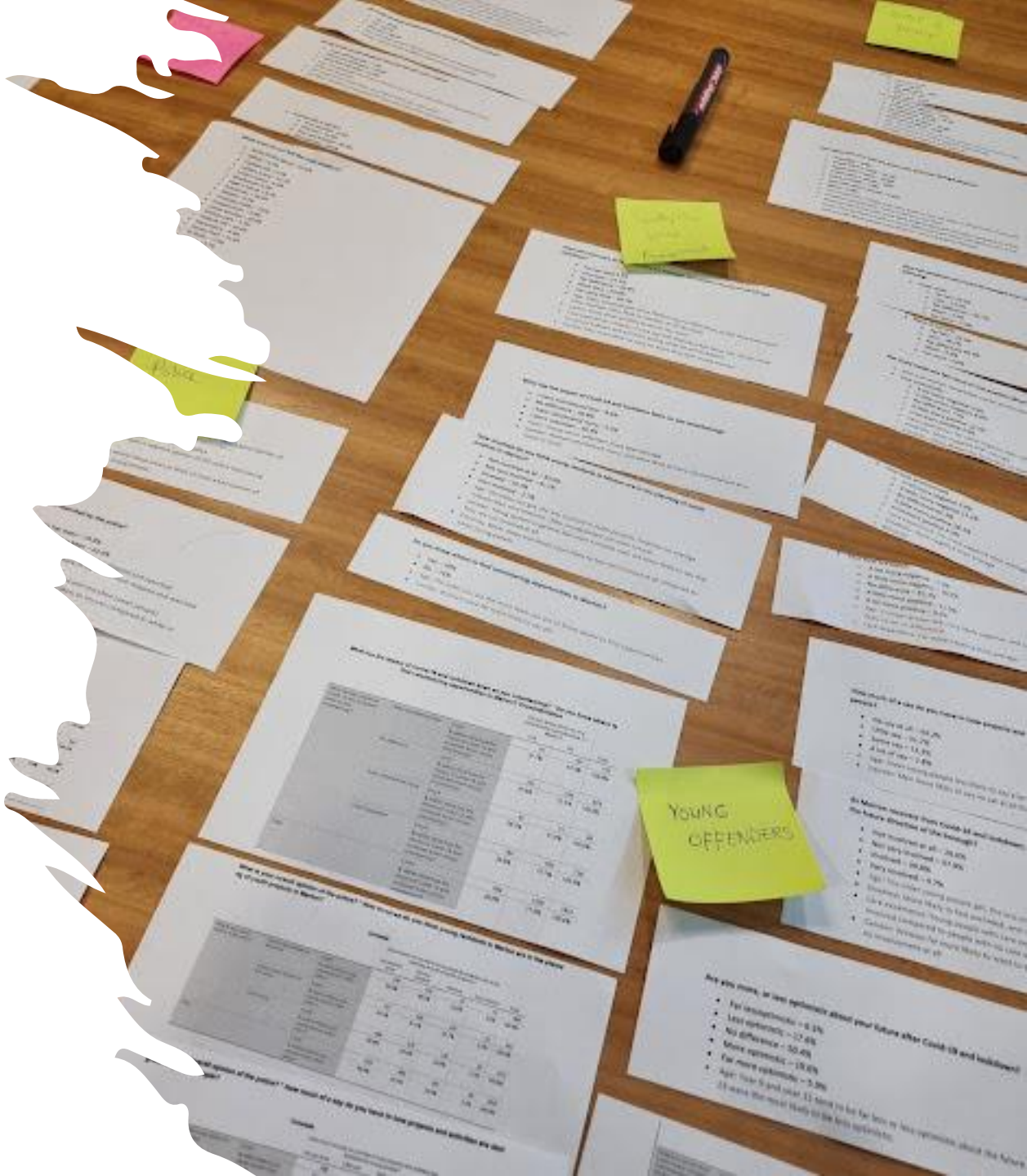
Skills Builder PARTNERSHIP

The Young Foundation

1. **Soft skills –** Skills Builder to measure skills like listening, leadership, and teamwork.
2. **Research skills** – We would look to capture young people's progress on research specific skills.
3. **Peer research benefits** – We also want to capture benefits like ownership, or agency, in the design process.

# Matthew Walsham

Matthew.Walsham@cityoflondon.gov.uk


Partnership for Young London