

**‘YOU’RE
HELPING ME
JUST BY
LISTENING’**

TOOL KIT

A tool kit and guide for practitioners and services based on the findings from 42nd Street’s young adults peer research project.



NHS

AGE:
16-25 YRS.
DOB: EVERY
GENERATION.

TITLE:
YOUNG
ADULTS
EVERYWHERE.

TREATMENT = AGES 16-25 YRS OLD.

PRESCRIPTION

x 12 SESSIONS
OF
BEING LISTENED TO.

(CAN ADDITIONALLY
REQUEST BEING
RESPECTED, VALIDATED
& BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY)

SIGNATURE: ALL DOCTORS. | DATE: NOW!

NHS



IN THIS TOOLKIT

You will find insights directly from young adults about what **works for them** when it comes to getting support for their mental health and wellbeing, and practical tips and tools to help ensure services can better meet the needs of young adults.

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Introduction to the research project

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Case studies

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'How to' guides based on trauma informed principles

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Make a pledge

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In 2023, we spoke to over 150 young adults from across Greater Manchester about their experiences of accessing support for their mental health and wellbeing. The results of this research showed that many young adults don't feel acknowledged and understood by mental health services. They struggle to navigate the complex landscape of mental health support on their own. And when they do get support, they are waiting often without contact for long periods.

One of the key things we found was that it is often 'the little things' that we may sometimes overlook that make a huge difference to how someone experiences a service. We noticed that these elements mapped onto the core principles of trauma informed mental health care.

Therefore, this toolkit is designed to dig a little deeper



AND YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND
WHERE I'M
COMING FROM!

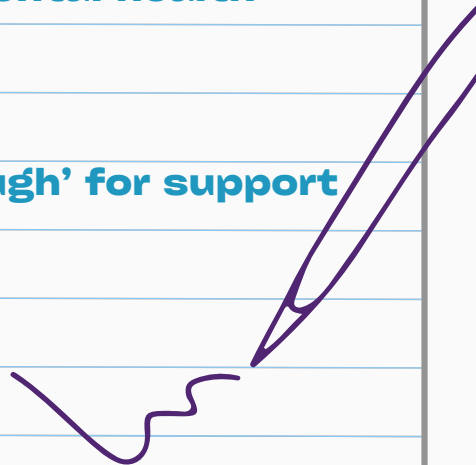


ASKING FOR HELP IS HARD.

Before a young adult gets access to mental health support they need to be able to ask for help. Asking for help when you are struggling with your mental health can be a challenge and unfortunately this is made harder by the additional barriers that prevent young adults from getting the support they need.

WHY IS ASKING FOR HELP IS HARD?

- Negative early experiences of reaching out for support
- Waiting times
- Navigating the mental health system
- Not being 'ill enough' for support



**UNDERSTANDING
WHERE THINGS ARE
GOING WRONG, AND
CONSIDERING HOW
THEY CAN BE IMPROVED
IS A GOOD FIRST STEP...**



What Young adults told us:

'you feel almost like you're an imposter like you shouldn't be there you're taking up someone's place that's worse.'

'I don't want to go to the NHS for my mental health because it feels like they don't care... I'm very reluctant to kind of asking for help now.'

'I referred myself and then waited over a year until someone contacted me again...there was no check in to let me know I am still on the waiting list'

How could this be improved:

Creating non-judgemental environments.

Validating young people's past experiences of support (even if they were caused by other services:

**'I can understand why..'
What a frustrating/upsetting situation'**

More psychoeducation for young people around mental health presentations

Understanding **why** young people may feel apprehensive about accessing support.

Different options/ways to reach out for help.

Every time a young person reaches out for help they are met with understanding and a willingness to figure out what the right support looks like.

Remove the uncertainty of waiting.

Being explicit about current waiting times at point of referral.

Check ins and ongoing communication with young people who are waiting for support.

Alternative offers of support, either from within your service/knowledge of what else is available.



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HELP HERE!

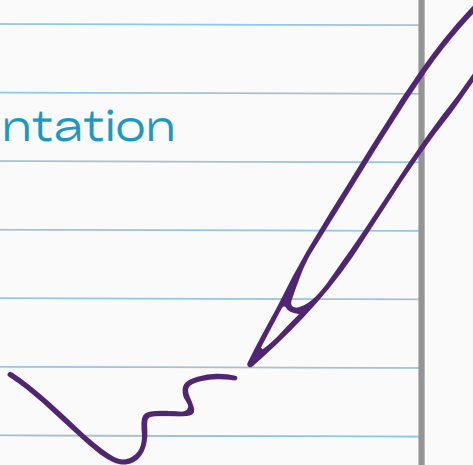


YOUNG ADULT'S EXPERIENCES IN SUPPORT

Young adults should expect a high quality of care, which includes access to peer support, social support and to evidence based interventions (RCP). Conversations with young adults have revealed that gaining access to support not only significantly influences their mental health but also has enduring effects on various aspects of their broader lives.

WHAT INFLUENCES YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCES IN SUPPORT?

- Choice
- Communication
- Feeling invalidated
- Lack of representation



What often happens:

'I feel like when you have mental health problems or physical disabilities or you know long term conditions, you become your own health secretary as well as trying to do life as a not completely you know healthy person.'

'The people who are trying to understand you are really not understanding you, because they've not got the same life experiences, they are completely blissfully ignorant about what you are going through'

'Even a 15-minute chat with someone could have helped more... I feel like she was quite rushed to sign-post different things'

How could this be improved:

Advocating for the needs of young people - when they may struggle to manage the admin that surrounds getting care.

Communication from services that involves young people, and doesn't leave them responsible for how that is managed.

Doing more to understand people's lives and their situation. Being open to learning from young people rather than coming with answers.

More access to services and approaches to support care leavers delivered by practitioner's who **understand** the system.

Opportunities for peer support from people who can relate.

Slowing things down and knowing the value just having someone to talk to can have.

Understand the young person and their needs before signposting and referring to other services.

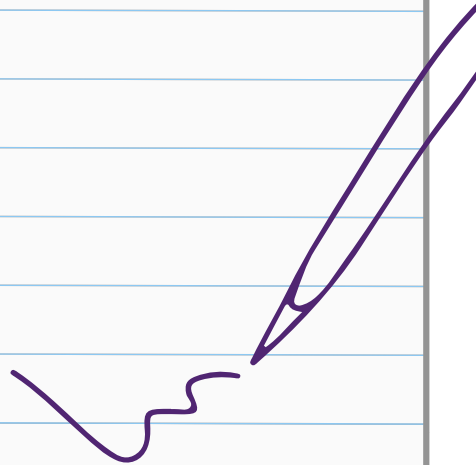


SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULTS AFTER A SERVICE

What became clear in our research was that young adults encounter problems at every stage of their journey through mental health services. We have seen the difficulties that people have had trying to gain access to the right support, and how their experiences within services can often have a negative impact on their mental health. It also then becomes evident that we need to offer a better level of support to young adults after they are discharged from mental health services.

SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULTS AFTER A SERVICE

- **Making it easier to re-access support**
- **25 can be an additional cliff-edge**



What often happens:

'Finishing with someone, and then not having that support after. But then trying to access support or get support after that it's finished, it's just extremely stressful'

'Therapy is really good, but I don't feel much benefit beyond the therapeutic hour, which is frustrating, I wish I felt more empowered to be more self-sufficient but that's the struggle.'

'People become really sceptical about what actually happens after I'm 25, because you become not dependant but you get used to accessing these services...so I think there is a lot about healthy endings around the 25 mark'

How could this be improved:

Supporting young people to navigate other options for support when ending with one service:

Lower level support
Peer support groups

Better understanding of the needs of young people to ensure they are actually accessing the **right** support and not just whatever is available.

More practical tools that young people can utilise within their daily lives.

Exploring options around peer support/creative groups which may provide young people with a different set of tools. Learning from others and themselves around new ways to manage their mental health.

Start supporting young people to transition out of these services earlier to avoid abrupt endings.



OUR CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusions from the research led us to make recommendations to the mental health system that centre around 5 key areas:

1. WAITING TIMES

2. NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM

3. UNDERSTANDING THE KEY ISSUES YOUNG ADULTS ARE FACING

4. DEVELOPING STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT AND EMBED LIVED EXPERIENCE PRACTITIONERS

5. THE 'LITTLE THINGS' THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

The 'little things' that make a big difference...

Young adults we have spoken to reported that it is often the 'little' things which make a difference to how a service is experienced. The interactions with staff, the type of support received, the space where the support takes place are all reported as being important. And when young adults reflect on negative experiences it has been because they haven't felt heard and their needs haven't been understood.

Though not named explicitly, it is the principles of trauma informed care that young adults value as being important.

Through the rest of this toolkit we have created 'how to' guides based around each of the trauma informed principles. This information has been gathered from recorded conversations with staff and young people.



‘HOW TO...’

**TRAUMA
INFORMED
PRINCIPLES
EDITION**

SAFETY



I think feeling safe is one of the most important things when you're receiving support because in order to receive the support you need to be quite open with who is offering it.

If I didn't feel safe, I wouldn't feel comfortable, I wouldn't feel relaxed, I'd feel like I was in a meeting.

We don't ask people enough what they want.

we need to try our hardest to make this happen from the get go so that the thought of going to their first session or their first appointment isn't linked with fear or anxiety.

You can say all the right things but if you don't make someone feel like they can approach you- they just won't.

**Young
Adult**



As an organisation we are responsible for keeping YP safe but what we do really well is ensuring that safeguarding doesn't become surveillance. This means that YP don't feel like they're being watched or like they are unable to have their own autonomy in the work they do with us.

Ensuring that YP know they are under no pressure to share anything but if they do wish to do so, there is always someone there to listen.

Look at the internal and external things that can make YP feel unsafe and at risk to ensure YP feel held, supported and safe in the space. Give YP their own autonomy by giving them the space to make safe risks/decisions around what and when they share things as well as what they create and what materials they create it with.

Offer intro sessions to young people to enable them to get familiar with the space and test out the group to see if it works for them sessional workers or parents may accompany the YP for the first session whilst they settle into the space but, they are then asked to leave to allow the space to be young person centred and a safe, free space.

Open access groups, this alleviates any pressure around attending as they can drop in and out when it suits them and what is currently going on in their life.

**Creative Mental
Health Practitioner**



TOP TIPS

YOUNG ADULTS

If young people don't feel safe in the environment, they won't feel safe enough to open up, especially if they have experienced trauma. Having non-clinical spaces really helps this.

Young people need to feel like their voice and experiences are listened to, respected, heard without judgement and remain confidential.

Coping mechanisms post trauma can look like shutting down, withdrawing and repressing. So if a young person feels unsafe in the room then it is likely they will revert to these mechanisms and therefore not get the most from the support and delay this support process as they feel unsafe – tell them this is okay.

PRACTITIONERS

Always make sure there is a seat around the table that's welcoming and shows the young person that it doesn't matter how long they haven't attended, they are encouraged to be there and show them that you're happy to see them.

Safe risks/decision making are really important!
Encourage young people to have autonomy in their work/sessions.

Ensure that safeguarding doesn't become surveillance.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION



“It’s very important because it’s understanding that people come from different backgrounds and it makes that person, them, so you need to understand that you can only support someone if you’re learning about them because its person-centred care.

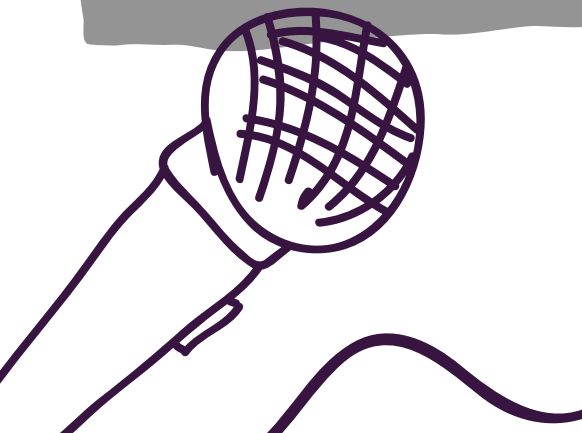
Having staff from different kind of backgrounds and different life experiences, it really does change the service and it really does make that difference.

No one will understand you as well or as much as someone who has come from that same background where they have that life experience.”

It can be so easy for all services to do it, there isn’t really an excuse for it to not be given and not be shown, its just normal respect and decency at this point.

The UK is quite a diverse country and if you’re not holding that diversity or sharing that diversity, you’re excluding so many people.

Young Adult



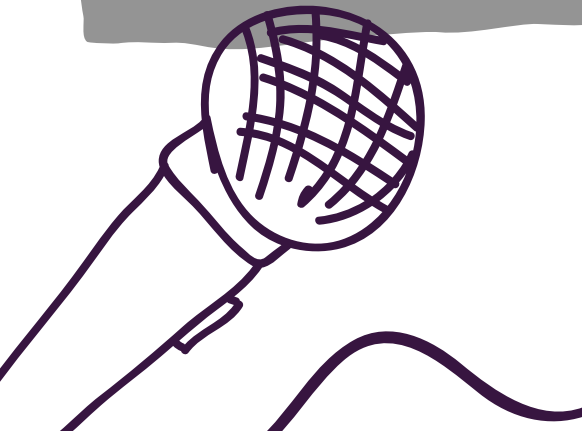
The more you consider different cultures and the ways in which different cultures work, understand, interact, manage expectations will increase accessibility for young adults.

I see you,
I value you
and I wanna
know more,
let's
collaborate,
let's
communicate.

Sometimes that can feel like it's quite a labour, if that makes sense, to try and consider all the different needs of YAs from global majority communities.

For me it's about including them because they are worthy too, they are humans too and they deserve the full holistic offer.

Senior Mental Health Practitioner



TOP TIPS

YOUNG ADULTS

When culture is not considered when supporting YAs with their mental health, it can feel like an 'outside experience' and leave YAs feeling quite isolated, therefore if we ask questions, check in and learn about their background and what would work for them, we can avoid this.

Accommodating needs and preferences can make the intense and difficult experience of accessing support, that little bit more validating and manageable. For example, accommodating an extra room for YAs and guardians to pray when accessing the service. There may be times where the YAs well-being needs to take priority over their religious beliefs and culture in terms of mental and physical safety, but this should be done on an individual basis, assessing the YAs care plan and making informed decisions.

You can teach more diversity by training staff to improve this within staff teams and working with YAs and employing staff from different backgrounds and life experiences (extra top tip: use the knowledge shared by practitioners and YAs from different cultures and backgrounds to shape the training).

PRACTITIONERS

The first step is to learn. Consider the different cultures the YP you are working with come from to enhance their comfort and feelings of safety in the space – this also enables YP to feel seen, heard, understood and valued as a person in their own right and agency.

Be curious! Ask questions!

Accountability and responsibility.

Set out a goal and if it isn't reached or isn't being done properly or enough, hold yourself accountable to ensure everything is included in your service/work to meet the needs of young people from global majority communities. It's okay that everyone is different, don't be afraid of the difference, celebrate it!

Educate yourself through training.

Re-language yourself through education and recognise that your world/myopic view is not the only view.

CHOICE



“
Having someone say, we trust you, we trust you to make this decision, we trust you to look after yourself, we trust you to help yourself get the support you need, we trust you to know what's best for you, we trust that you know how, how you're going to respond to things – I think that can really build trusting and fruitful relationships.

When you have certain pathways or, certain methods or, certain approaches just thrown on you uhm, it causes a little bit of resentment.

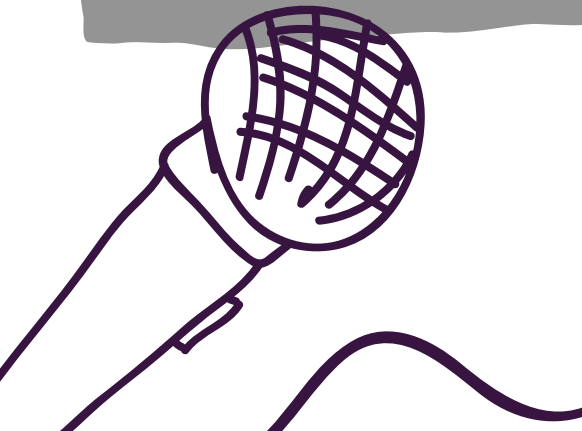
Just having a little bit of control over your fate

It can just be a few options that you can tailor to yourself
”

I think choice is probably one of the most important things... because choice is empowering.

Finding a service isn't going to be the only thing you're ever doing, its got to fit in around your life... and choice will help with that.

Young Adult



They are young adults that might be getting treated like children and that just feels suffocating sometimes you want to be considered like everybody else and like an adult would and when you're not, that's when you feel completely shot down or minimised, like your feelings aren't taken seriously.

Young people should have the autonomy about the support that they're gonna engage in

it feels like, nonsensical to not involve a young person in support that they're gonna engage in

I think just having that 1 on 1 contact with a YP where you fully hear them, see them, feel what they're going through and give them the tools to be able to manage that in real time is powerful.

Its their life and they need to feel listened to, heard, seen, validated.

Mental health practitioner on the counselling and therapy team



TOP TIPS

YOUNG ADULTS

Handing some control over to the person receiving support is a really positive thing which helps to build trust.

Feeling like you have some control can come from having choice and being trusted to make decisions about what you need is really empowering.

You can offer choice on small things; the little things that make YAs feel valued and like they matter, such as the type of room, time or practitioner & these little things which are often dismissed actually play a big part in how YAs engage and experience support!

We are all different with different lives and needs so it's important to have an element of choice to tailor the experiences received. The act of CHOOSING is really important, it makes you feel less out of control.

PRACTITIONERS

When working with young adults it is important to break down any potential hierarchy and meet them where they are at. In terms of choice, this means not only building a relationship of trust, empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence but also, hearing them out and checking in at the beginning of each session to understand what they need from that session instead of focusing on goals constantly.

Giving young adults autonomy really transforms the therapeutic experience. This autonomy can be given by giving young adults the choice over which room they receive their session in, what time and date their appointment, whether they need water or would like the window open for example.

It is really important to be comfortable when receiving mental health support or it is not going to work as effectively so it is important to break down the power imbalance by implementing choice, naming things that may be uncomfortable within the room, for example, the room being hot, and asking open ended questions to find out what the young adult needs.

COLLABORATION



When you do have that collaboration, it makes you feel a lot more involved with your care because it's a horrible feeling when you're just like, oh everything is being done but I have no say in anything.

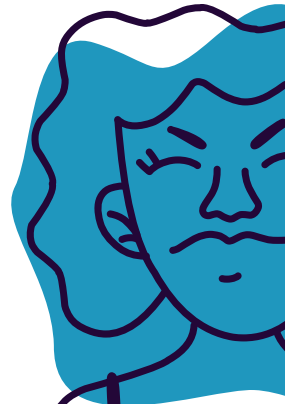
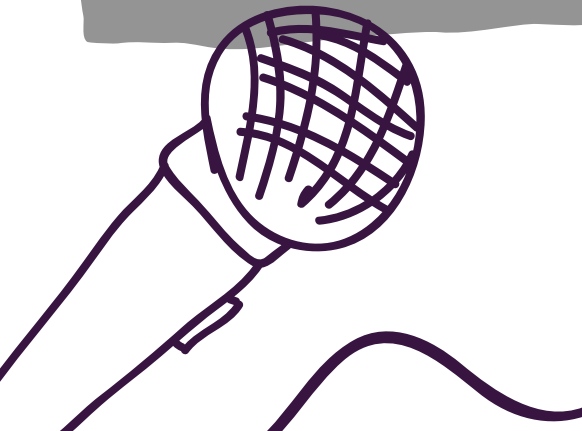
In the past when I haven't had collaboration it really has been useless it hasn't been effective and it can even make the situation worse in a sense where you feel a lot more let down by services.

I feel like it is important to have that open communication instead of just assumptions.

You're working with a service to improve yourself and improve your living situation, so it's all about growth so you can't be doing the same thing when the person has grown.

If they don't listen to you it's really useless, like it's not important, it doesn't do anything, it has to be collaborative for it to make any kind of impact.

Young Adult



“ If you know that there is an area of work that you're not doing well, particularly if there's inequalities or inequities involved, i think that you've got to support young people who have gone through those similar experiences to talk to young people so you can get really honest replies.

Hearing what young people are experiencing directly & having them shape what we do means that I can design & get money for & deliver & look at the quality around services that are relevant for you!

It makes me better at my job.

If there's a critical mass of young people saying it and giving solutions at the same time - we need to do something.

We owe it to them to listen to them.

CEO



TOP TIPS

YOUNG ADULTS

To work collaboratively, you need input from both sides in order to build up a trusting relationship. Working on this from the first session, checking in with the YA about the time and date of the appointment and the room you will be working in (does it fit the YAs needs? e.g., sensory needs) is most effective in enabling YAs involvement and enhancing a trusted working relationship.

When working collaboratively, the work we do is more effective and therefore more beneficial. This can be done through 'small' things such as, having a check in at the beginning of every session to see where the YA is at. This input can help shape the session on the day to be more useful and also ensure that the work you are doing together is still effective and helpful for the YA.

Ongoing communication is really important in ensuring usefulness of sessions. In order to help YAs growth, we need to have reviews and communication around what is working and what isn't and what needs may have changed due to the progression of the work being done. Consistently involving YAs in these conversations where they can talk openly and free of judgement is vital to healthy collaboration.

PRACTITIONERS

Do and read peer research! By giving YP the opportunity to speak to other YP who have experienced similar things enables honest responses which resonate with the peer researchers allowing greater understanding.

You can improve services without spending more money – e.g., services for 18-25 year olds can be improved by having 18-25 year olds with lived experience train practitioners about some things to look out for.

Involve YP in commissioning decisions and scrutiny of services...

You do not have to stop what you are delivering and completely re-design, just integrate what YP are saying into your ways of working.

TRUST



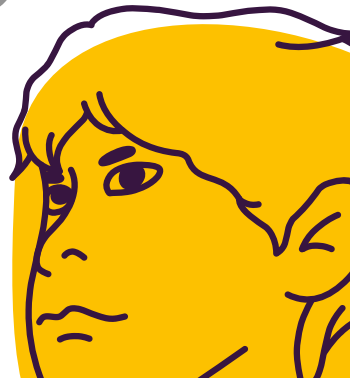
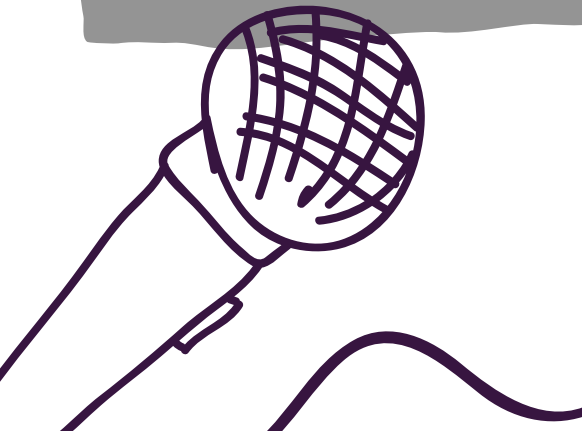
“ For the ones (practitioners) that I have got on with and worked well with, they just treat you like another person, like you’re not there for a specific reason, like you’re just treated like every other person is. Uhm, where some practitioners just undermine you and talk down to you and just kind of like belittle you and yeah, that can make you feel like you can’t trust them or like, they, you’re just another number to them instead of actually being someone that they want to help.

If you’re not gonna be able to trust them, you’re not gonna open up, you’re not gonna tell them the truth and they’re just not gonna be able to help you.

Trust is one of the biggest things when you’re accessing a service.

They just treat you like every other person but they’re there to help and they show that they actually want to help you and you’re not just another number on a long list of people that they’ve got.

Young Adult



“ Young adults coming to services for support are in a vulnerable situation where you're about to share quite a lot of personal stuff about yourself and be in a vulnerable position. Uhm, so, it's really important that, that the person you're about to share your challenges with, your struggles and your needs, is somebody that you feel you can trust with that information – someone that isn't gonna judge you, that's gonna respect that because that's precious.

I think to trust someone you have to know that what they say they're gonna do, is what they're actually gonna do.

If we are another person that builds that narrative that you can't be trusted and you said you were gonna do one thing and didn't, often we might get young people that disengage from services – so kind of like, by coming into a room, if I don't trust you that's a scary environment and that's not safe anymore, I'd rather just disappear and you know, not come back.

Psychosocial service manager



TOP TIPS

YOUNG ADULTS

Show active listening and care for the young adult when communicating with them in order to portray that you actually want to help them individually and that they are not just another number on the list.

Be professional but friendly - treat young adults as a whole person and not just as the difficulties they are accessing support for - this can be done through simply showing interest in other areas of their lives.

Think about communication with young adults and be conscious to work in ways that do not present as patronising and belittling.

PRACTITIONERS

Put yourself in someone's shoes who is in a vulnerable situation and think about what you would want to be put in place to help you feel like you can trust them.

Follow through- ensure that your actions reflect your words and show you can be there for young adults and be consistent and transparent with young people especially when it comes to confidentiality, this can build trust and respect which go hand in hand.

Remember that what young adults share in the room is precious and we must show no judgement and lots of respect!

Also, we are relational beings so eye contact and mirroring young adult's emotions is really important!

EMPOWERMENT

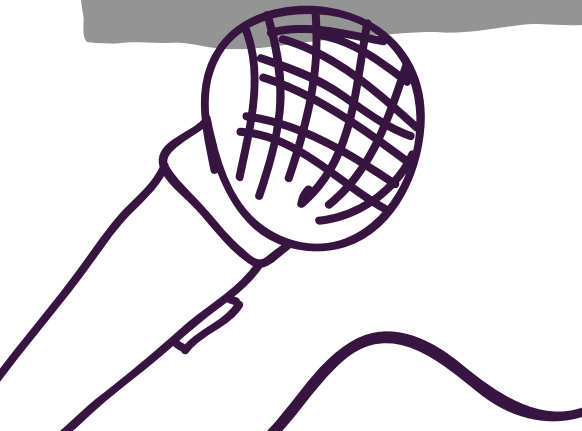


A country wide approach would be helpful and simplifying systems because a barrier to accessing support for mental health really can be that first step of applying for things and if that is a really, like, hard to penetrate system and it's just so much paperwork and off-putting – you're not gonna feel empowered, you're gonna feel restricted and bogged down and just kind of put off by all these things.

It's just about showing up somewhere and just being told, there's no wrong answer, you can do what you wish and having that space to like grow and breathe and see what you can do and not be confined in like ways that would restrict that.

As much as it's giving people the opportunity to feel empowered, it's also recognising situations where they can feel powerless and just, uhm, not only giving people platforms to go forward but like, reassuring them about where they are – and things like existing systems in place to put support, because how can you feel empowered if you don't even feel secure with where you are.

Young Adult



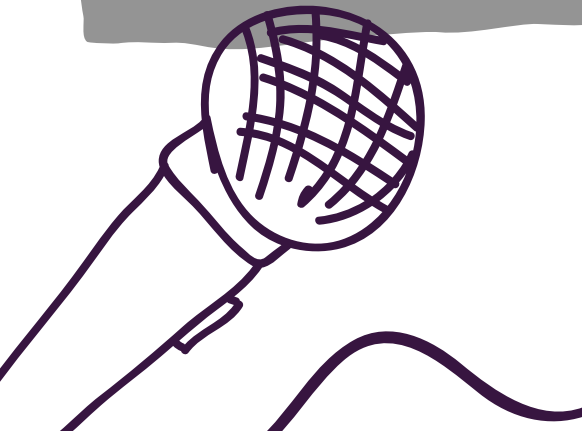
“ We need to give young adults a different message, they are going into the world of adulting but, it feels almost like we’re saying to young adults, you’ve got agency, you can vote, you uhm, should be able to refer yourself or you should be able to turn up for an appointment... but them being quite dis-empowering at the same time.

I think when you’re empowering young people... what we’re saying is actually what you’ve learnt about yourself and your voice and your importance in this world, is not true for one, but also that you do have these skills and that you should be listened to as well.

When I think about empowerment it feels almost like how can young people feel some level of agency, some level of like, I can do this

Empowerment can be various different things but I feel like it’s almost like, I presume, I kind of get a sense of it’s like a bit of a feeling that you have which is like uhm, ‘it’s okay for me to advocate for myself’, ‘it’s okay for me to be true to who I am’ and share that.

**Workforce
Development
& EDI Manager**



TOP TIPS

YOUNG ADULTS

Freedom and choice are very important - it is empowering to have an idea and see it through.

Recognise situations where young adults feel powerless, reassure where they are and provide platforms to aid them moving forward and look at accessibility by making hard to penetrate systems, easier.

Giving young adults choice and control to engage with a space how they wish to and take on opportunities in accordance to how they feel they want to engage, ensuring that young adults are not confined, whether that be to a space or an idea.

PRACTITIONERS

Give young adults as much agency as possible and be able to give up a little bit of power to let the young adult take the lead a little bit, it can be empowering to feel like you have power within the service and the support you are receiving.

Show clear interest in what young adults are telling you, show that the information they are sharing is important, providing this validation to ensure the young person you are working with feels heard and understood.

Recognise that sometimes empowerment is dropping seeds that you may not see grow whilst working with the young adult but, keep planting them!
Be adaptable, transparent and hope for the young adults, highlighting their potential when they cannot see it.

COMMITMENTS

This tool kit has been designed to distil the data collected in our peer research and offer some guidance as to how we can make mental health support more accessible and work better for young adults.

Our recommendations as to how this can be done are broad and wide ranging and many will require the current mental health system to shift the way it is working. We want to also ask individuals to reflect on what they can take away from this research and commitments they can make in relation to their services/individual practice.

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'YOU'RE HELPING ME JUST BY LISTENING'

A PEER RESEARCH STUDY INTO YOUNG ADULTS'
JOURNEY THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
IN GREATER MANCHESTER

Toolkit Podcasts



Safety

Discussing safety and it's importance to trauma informed support with Lucy,, young adult 42 Change Ambassador

What safety means and safety in the creative process - with Katie, Mental Practitioner, The Horsfall

Trust

Discussing the importance of trust and how to implement it within therapeutic relationships with young adults with Amy, Service Manager 42ndstreet

Discussing how having trust within mental health support, enhances the experience of receiving support with Hannah

Cultural Consideration

Fatma shares the importance of cultural consideraiton

A conversation around the importance of cultural consideration with Angeli, 42nd Street Senior Mental Health practitioner

Collaboration

Simone, 42nd Street's CEO on why collaborative working is vital when supporting young people

How collaboration impacts therapeutic support for young adults with Fatma

Choice

Discussing choice with Rachael

How providing choice can be therapeutic in itself - With Sian, Young Adult

Empowerment

Why is empowering young adults so important, discussed with Jasmine

The importance of empowerment within the workplace and therapeutic environments with Katrina



