



THE REVOLUTION RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO CO-PRODUCING RESEARCH

Blackpool Council

University of
Cumbria 



University of Brighton
Centre of Resilience for Social Justice

#ResilienceRevolution

    HSBlackpool

This guide has been co-produced by a group of youth co-researchers from Blackpool known as the Revolution Researchers, alongside adult supporters from the Resilience Revolution and the University of Cumbria.

Authors; Revolution Researchers

Adam
Codey
Danielle
Ellie
Jamie
Jess
Kaden
Lexus
Tom

Contributors; Resilience Revolution

Alice
Rochelle
Sam

With particular thanks to Professor Kaz Stuart, Director of the Centre of Research in Health and Society, University of Cumbria

To cite this guide in your work please use:

Revolution Researchers (2020) The Revolution Researchers' Guide to Co-producing Research. Blackpool: Resilience Revolution

Published January 2020



We are the Revolution Researchers and we are part of the Resilience Revolution in Blackpool. The Resilience Revolution is using resilience approaches to develop new ways of working right across Blackpool to support young peoples' mental health and wellbeing, with young people involved as co-leaders.

Over the last couple of years we have been taking part in lots of different elements of research to develop our skills and knowledge; from understanding the importance of consent and ethics, to interviewing people and creating infographics.

Some of our research tasks have focused on supporting different areas of the Resilience Revolution, and other areas we have decided to research because we are interested and passionate about these things.

We have covered a lot over the last two years and we would like to share our learning with you.

In this guide we will talk about the things we have enjoyed whilst developing our research skills, as well as some of the things we have found more challenging.

This will be useful and interesting to those who are already working with young people as co-researchers, for those who might be considering involving young people in research for the first time, or those who are completely new to working co-productively with young people.

We hope whatever the purpose, you find our information and tips helpful. One of our reflections is that feedback is really important, especially when you're producing something for a different audience, so we welcome any feedback. You can email headstart@blackpool.gov.uk if you want to pass on any feedback or comments and please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like a copy of some of our outputs.

Thanks for reading. 😊 Enjoy!

The Revolution Researchers

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO...?

We've done some big pieces of work, for example:



Consent video – Together, we created a consent video which describes what consent is, how to agree and disagree and the different ways you can give consent. All of us had to analyse definitions and examples of consent so that we could disseminate them in a young person friendly way. www.youtube.com/watch?v=837PKalAk24



Art Therapy interviews – The Art Therapy project was our first big project. Our aim was to research how Art Therapy increased young people's resilience. The first thing we did was a series of interviews with one teacher, three resilience coaches and an Art Therapist about their experiences of Art Therapy.



Co-production report – We created a questionnaire that asked young people how co-production benefits young people and we made a tally chart of our findings. We made a report which was sent to many people including the Head of Blackpool Council and other organisations that may be working with young people.



Favourite places project – Our aim was to research good places that young people can go to in Blackpool. We made a giant map of all the fun places we like to go. We created an interactive voting system at a local youth conference where young people could vote. It was really exciting to see young people suggesting their favourite places, even if we didn't all agree!



Therapy dog research – Our aim was to research if therapy dogs help people with problems. We searched the internet for the positives and negatives of having a therapy dog. We then did a debate; half of us argued for using therapy dogs and the other half argued against it. We then observed a meeting with teachers to see if their experiences of dogs in their schools was similar to what we'd found on the internet.

We've also done some smaller pieces of rapid research, including:



Taste tests – Sometimes we start sessions by doing our own version of market research, where we try different brands of food or drink and see if we can spot the difference. This came about as a result of one group member suggesting she could taste the difference between different bottles of still water. We put her to the test and the activity has stuck since then.



Improvement science – We did a short activity developed by Dr Moira Inkles that used Mr Potato Heads to teach us about improvement science. We predicted how quickly and how accurately we could recreate the character with the right pieces in the right places. We repeated this several times, each time trying a new method and testing whether it worked.



Developing session feedback tools – Our aim was to find the best way to rate a session. At the end of our sessions we have tried many different ways of giving feedback on how we found the session, including filling out a paper survey, using an online tool, and more. We have shared which methods we like best with other groups in the programme.



Testing surveys – We tested how long it took to complete a survey and made sure the words on questions were understandable. This helped teams to reorder their survey questions and to think about how they might deliver these questions when they are working with young people in the classroom.



Reviewing and designing the programme's Annual Report – Each year we have helped to design graphics and make sure the programme's annual report was clear to lots of people from different places. We do this because there are lots of numbers, graphs and quotes and we know the best way to make this fun to read.

"Whether it's been a big piece of research or a smaller task it has really helped us to learn about research." (Jess)

THE RESEARCH RESIDENTIAL 2019



In August 2019, we went on a residential trip to the University of Cumbria to further develop our research skills. If you get the time with young people, we would really recommend a research residential. It was a great way to spend focused time deepening our learning of the research phases and we were able to do a lot more work than we normally could in our usual 2 hour sessions.

One of the things we really enjoyed at the residential was a brilliant whole day activity where we explored the similarities of research to the process of a criminal investigation. We had to solve a crime and find the thief. This involved: looking for clues that were spread all over campus; reading case files; designing interview questions; carrying out interrogations with our suspects; reviewing all of our notes and evidence; and arresting the person that we thought was responsible (we even read him his rights!). We also had a court case, where we split up into prosecution and defence; both sides prepared their arguments and presented their findings to a judge. This was a really fun way to end the activity and showed us that research can be more interesting than we had thought.



We also did some great work around research ethics at the residential. We learnt a lot by hearing from Professor Kaz, who taught us the key principles and told us about some interesting real-life examples of ethical issues in research. We also really enjoyed an activity where we were asked questions like “Is it okay to interview someone you know?” and asked to stand on either side of the room depending on whether we agreed or disagreed. We liked talking about different scenarios like this and had some great debates about what is right and wrong in research. We are hoping to create a poster that will teach other young researchers and adult researchers alike about ethics.



“At the residential we learned that we make great detectives, we all support each other, and that we have accomplished a lot!”

(Revolution Researchers at the Residential)

GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT



One of the things we like most about the group is the structure that we have. We meet twice a month and we have a Google Hangouts group to chat about things before and after the sessions. We meet for 2 hours from 5pm – 7pm and during this we have an agenda which means we know what we will be working on and roughly how long it will take.

Being in the same building with the same staff supporting each week has helped newer members of the group feel more comfortable and it has worked well for young people that are brought to and from the sessions. Lots of snacks are essential for any session. Keeping things moving is also important so after a busy day at school or college, we prefer the sessions to be split into different small tasks.

The culture of our group is something that is really important and has been a huge contributing factor in why we come and continue to develop our group. The informal nature of our group and how young people and staff interact with each other has been really important to us. It has kept us going when some of the research tasks have been challenging.

"We recognise that our group is about more than just research. We go out and do fun activities like high ropes, laser quest and escape rooms to build our relationships as a team."

(Sam)

THINK ABOUT THE LANGUAGE YOU USE AND INTRODUCE US TO



Now you might have already seen a few words that do not make sense or are a bit tricky to understand. This brings us to a really important point. We have found in research that it is really important to make sure that the language is as easy as possible to understand.

This does not mean that we want you to avoid teaching us things that are challenging, you just need to make sure it is clear to understand.

"Some words that were introduced to us were really confusing. However with the words 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' we had a table that was young people friendly and really easy to understand. I remember that quantitative sounds like quantity so I think most quantitative questions as being about numbers or a question where I can count responses. Qualitative reminds me of English because of the word lit and so I think of this as questions that involve more words and explanations."

(Danielle)

MAKE IT INTERESTING AND CHANGE IT UP!



One of the most important things that we could encourage anyone involving young people in research to do is to break it down into small sections of learning.

There is so much to talk about and so much for us to learn, don't worry about teaching us all of the detail straight away. Just make it clear what it is we are learning, how it applies to research, and how it helps us become better researchers.

Do it in exciting ways that really grab our attention when explaining things that might be a bit tricky to understand.

"We were given a fake consent form that made us sign up to setting fires, giving a fellow researcher doughnuts whenever they wanted, and other silly things. This made learning about consent interesting and inspired us to create a consent video to share our learning."

(Danielle)

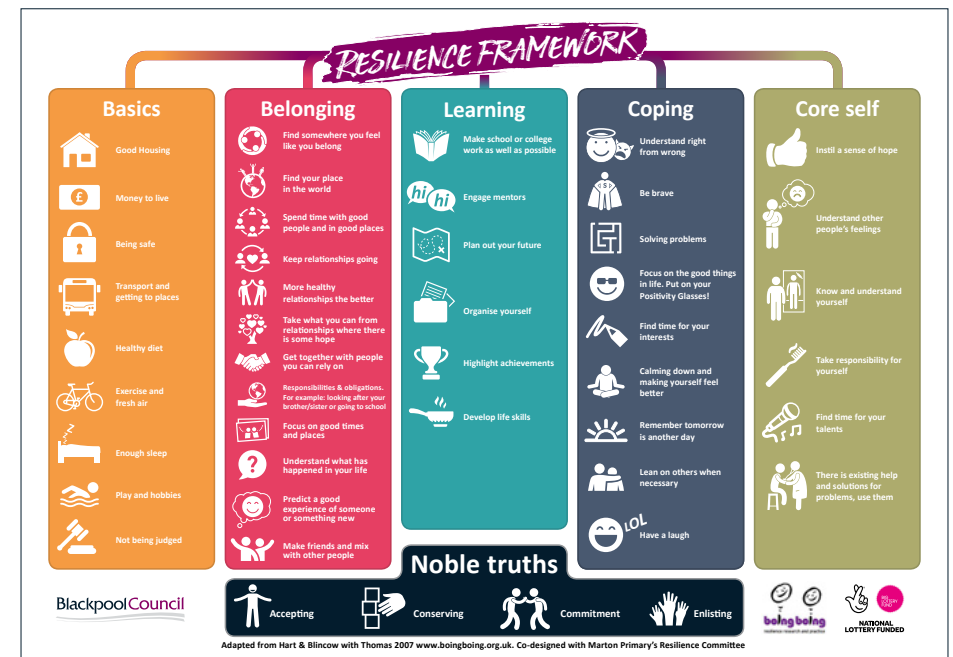
When engaging young people in research, don't be afraid to try something new and think outside of the box. A really good example of how we have done this is when we worked on our interviewing preparation. As a group we had to find a place to practice interviewing, however unbeknown to us, the staff had set it up so that in each of the different rooms we tried, or there were lots of things going on like people already having a conversation, there being nowhere to sit and feel relaxed to do an interview. It was frustrating until we realised it was all part of the activity. It taught us about the importance of not only how to interview someone but having the right conditions as well.

BRING IN NEW PEOPLE!



We love nothing more than being able to share our knowledge and skills with different audiences. We like working with real people, who have real challenges, and need support with their research. We have had many visitors to the group. This ranges from people who want to come and help us to develop our research skills, people who would like to co-produce research with us, and people who have brought different activities for us to get involved with.

Bringing new people into sessions has been really helpful for our development as researchers. It helps us feel valued and supported and means we can enlist the help of others when we need it or we are not too sure. This is one of our noble truths from the Resilience Framework, enlisting help when we need it.



WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALL
THE STAGES OF RESEARCH
SO WE KNOW WHAT COMES NEXT...



The phases we have been working through...



Our first research project about Art Therapy taught us how important it is to know all of the stages of research before picking a project. The topic was interesting but because we were learning through doing, we didn't know all of the work it would involve or some of the issues we might come across before we started our research.

We had hoped to interview young people that had taken part in Art Therapy, but it was decided that because this was our first set of interviews, there would be less risk of harm to interview practitioners only. This was a shame as we were looking forward to interviewing young people directly.

Another thing we learned was how long it would take us to transcribe, as we had to listen to the recordings of our interviews and type word-for-word what had been said. It also took ages to code the interviews. Here we read through the transcripts and grouped people's comments using the Resilience Framework.

Now that we have learnt what is involved in each stage, we think we can make better choices about how to plan and choose our projects.

But we do not have to do it all!

As we said earlier, learning about the different aspects of research is really important. But this doesn't mean that we need to spend a long time doing the same thing. We prefer it when our time is used effectively and working with practitioners who have research skills, means that they can teach us what we need to know and then take the lead on doing some of the work.

In our Art Therapy project, we wanted to know how to transcribe but capturing every sigh, cough and laugh can get pretty repetitive. Once we learnt what we needed to do, we did not want to spend hours of our time developing the same skills. We were really glad when adults finished off the rest of the transcribing so we could move on to a different phase of the research.

We have taken on board this learning and we try to repeat this for each piece of research. Once we have learned what we needed to, we try to quickly move on to other things to keep the sessions engaging.

WHAT'S THE POINT?



It is really important to be clear about why you are doing the research and knowing what you want to find out.

This helps us to really focus on how we plan out and do our research. If we are not sure what we want to find out or why we are researching something, it makes it quite difficult and can mean we lose interest, or it takes too long to get things done because we are not certain about what we are doing.

If we know the aim of the research and what the end product might look like, it makes it easier to follow and helps make the sessions more meaningful.

An example of where we felt really confident with what we were doing was when we did some research about the benefits of co-production. We knew a lot about the topic and we were clear about what we wanted to find out. One thing we still found a bit challenging was what our findings would look like and who we would share this with. This brings us to our next point...

KEEP THE END GOAL IN SIGHT!

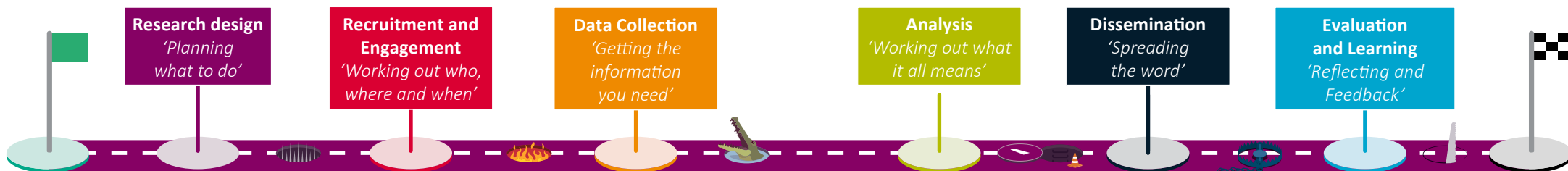


We think it is extremely important to know what our end goal is, including how we want our research to be shared and who will be learning from it.

In our co-production research, we were unsure at first what we would do with our findings. We were asked to carry out this research but when it came to planning how we would share our work, we found it difficult to decide what format we wanted it in and who would see it. We didn't know whether to write a report, create a video, make a poster or do something else altogether. We also weren't sure exactly who we would be best sharing it with and how.

In the end though, we made a really interesting report with the help of a graphic designer. Reports can sometimes be quite boring with lots of numbers and text, so we wanted to make our report really engaging. We came up with lots of ideas for graphics to represent our findings in cool ways. This was a lot of fun and taught us to stay motivated by knowing what our hard work can achieve at the end.

The co-production report has been shared with lots of people, from the HeadStart Blackpool Executive Board, to other co-production groups, and at conferences across the world. We felt amazing when we got feedback from young people and colleagues. For some people this was a real learning curve about the value of co-production and we felt very proud to play a part in that.



Now that you have seen our guide to co-producing research we hope that you find it useful and can take on board our advice and use it to influence your work. Please feel free to take as many of our tips and ideas as you can – our end goal was to spread our research message. We would like to thank you for taking the time to read it; making all of the time, effort and research we have put into creating this guide worthwhile.

Now that we have shared our tips and learning with you, we would love to hear from you about the great work that you might be doing for the first time, or how you've used some of our tips to support research you might already be doing.

We would also like to thank Kaz Stuart from the University of Cumbria for her support at the Research Residential and for helping us to develop our skills and knowledge.

THE REVOLUTION RESEARCHERS

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 **COMMUNITY
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