



GLEE:

Guiding Lived Experience
Engagement (Youth)

Checklist Guide

Foreword

The Guiding Lived Experience Engagement – Youth (GLEE) Project is an initiative by the Brisbane North PHN Regional Youth Advisory Group (RYAG). This GLEE Checklist guide outlines supplemental information to help guide the implementation of the GLEE checklist and is accompanied by the [GLEE Checklist](#) and [Project Report](#). Together, these three documents aim to provide youth service providers with information and tools to ensure they are set up for successful and sustainable youth engagement and participation. Whilst the context of this project was to support youth mental health services to have better engagement strategies for the purpose of service design and improvement, the recommendations outlined in these documents can be broadly applied to any organisation that is working with young people and wants to uplift the youth voice. We would like to thank all the participants who generously gave their time to contribute to this piece of work and for sharing their insights.

All work for this project from the initial concept to stakeholder consultation and report writing was completed by young people, for young people. The GLEE Project has been one filled with earnest passion and commitment and is a powerful testament to the work that young people can do to drive system reform when given the right platform and supports.

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions and support of all the current RYAG members without whom this project would not have been possible: Mahalia King (lead author), Kai Boswell, Jesse Cotter, Jasmin Murphy, Kennedy Schroeder, Hannah Walker, and Jeyden Young.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people of Australia and custodians of the land on which we live, work, and learn. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual connection to land, waters, and community. We acknowledge that we are on stolen land, that sovereignty was never ceded, and this always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

This guide provides supplemental information to help guide the implementation of the GLEE checklist. All suggestions are created by young people and reflect the ideas of the RYAG and other consulted young people for how services may be able to engage with young people in a way that meets their needs.

Before the consultation (fail to plan, plan to fail)

SYSTEMS CHECKS

- ☐ **Does your organisation have a process in place to facilitate regular, ongoing collaboration with young people for the purpose of service delivery improvement?**
 - Is there an evidence-based framework in place to guide this process?

Below are links to different frameworks that outline principles of appropriate youth participation. Consider adapting one of these frameworks to your organisation.

It is also suggested that the graphics for Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992), Shier's Pathway to Participation (Shier, 2001) and Treseder's Model of Participation (Treseder, 1997) are used as reflective tools to assess where your organisation is currently sitting and what levels of participation you are aiming for. It is important to get both organisational and client (young people) perceptions of the current level of participation as these may be different.

- ☐ **Does your organisation support lived experience engagement across different levels of participation? Have a look at Hart's Ladder of Participation and Shier's Pathway to Participation for ideas on different types of participation.**
- ☐ **Does your organisation have a policy that outlines a commitment to youth participation for service design and improvement?**
 - If yes, were young people involved in the creation of this and other organisational policies?
- ☐ **Does your service have a policy that outlines how it values and supports the lived experience of staff members?**

It is crucial that young people are involved in the creation of policies that are about them to enhance ownership and reduce power dynamics. It is also key to imbed lived experience into your organisation more broadly as this helps to develop a culture where lived experience knowledge is valued. This facilitates a more collaborative approach and moves away from the medical model where service providers are inherently in a position of power and are the assumed knowledge holders.

- ☐ **Are your staff members chosen in collaboration with young people? e.g., having young people on interview panels.**

Our findings showed that it was important for young people to be able to 'choose their own leaders'. Developing trust with a service was a key step in order for young people to want to engage in community consultation and ensuring that staff members are appointed with the consideration of young people's views demonstrated that their opinions are valued.

- ☐ **Is mandatory staff training provided to support a work culture that values and understands the importance of lived experience engagement in the youth space?**
 - If yes, was the training facilitated or created by young people?

A key finding of this work was that lived experience engagement work required two main things; for it to be protected in policy and other key documents (e.g. funding agreements) and for staff to value its importance. Youth participation training is essential to ensure that staff understand the value of this work and therefore prioritise it.

It was also evident that young people are very aware of staff attitudes towards lived experience engagement and are less likely to engage in opportunities if staff are perceived to have closed body language, be judgemental, or use non-strengths based language.

- ☐ **Is your organisation ready to share decision making powers with young people?**

BUDGET – MONEY AND TIME!

- ☐ Is there protected funding for conducting lived experience engagement activities in a sustainable and ongoing basis?
- ☐ Is there a budget to remunerate young people for their time and expertise? Remember – even on the smallest budget there is always something that can be done to thank people for their time!
- ☐ Is lived experience engagement (or community consultation) assigned within a staff members position description to ensure there is continuity of activities?
- ☐ Have budget considerations been made to support capacity building and personal development for young people who are engaged on ongoing consultation activities?

Financial barriers are noted as a consistent issues in facilitating youth engagement consultations. Whilst paying young people wages may not be viable (or appropriate) depending on the engagement activity, compensation suggestions include:

- reimbursement for travel
- gift cards (minimum of \$20) for Coles, K-Mart, Woolworths etc.
- catering during engagement activities.

Young people don't like participation awards or certificates! Save the trees and provide some yummy snacks instead.

The consultation process (the fun part!)

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- ☐ **Have you promoted your opportunities widely and in a range of locations? e.g., public transport hubs, social media platforms, schools, etc.**

Suggestions include:

- social media (Instagram and Tik Tok, not Facebook)
- places of education (schools, TAFE, universities)
- public transport hubs (bus interchanges, train stations)
- libraries
- shopping centres
- waiting rooms.

Young people reported that they are less likely to respond to opportunities solely distributed via email!

- ☐ **Are you confident that the spaces in which you are advertising your opportunities are safe and accessible for young people?**

- If yes, how do you know?

If you are unsure, ask them! Ongoing collaboration is key to successful engagement activities.

- ☐ **Do you have a strong induction process that supports young people to engage in lived experience work, including the opportunity for personal development?**

- If yes, were young people involved in the creation of this process?
- Are young people involved in the facilitation of this process?

Suggested information to include in the induction process:

- the scope of the role (hours per week, length of commitment)
- how the opportunity fit more broadly within the organisation
- how the organisation fits within larger systems
- key terms and acronyms that are commonly used in the field
- who to go to if you have questions and how to ask them (email, phone call, etc)
- exploration of what the young person is hoping to get out of participating (goal setting)
- expectations of young person: attendance, communication, participation etc
- if for an ongoing role, individualised capacity building to ensure young people have the needed skills to fully participate in the opportunity.

THE PURPOSE OF CONSULTING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- ☐ Have you provided young people with a clear outline of the purpose of this consultation?
- ☐ Have you provided young people with the opportunity to ask questions on how findings from the consultation/s will be used? e.g., anonymous questions, organisational point of contact.

It was identified that young people are sometimes distrustful that their feedback is being used and felt that their suggestions just 'stay in the [feedback] box'. Young people stated that ongoing communication and explanation of how their feedback is being used and implemented would increase feelings of trust. Transparency was a common theme that was highly valued by young people. Even if it may be common knowledge to you, there is often a lot of jargon and assumed knowledge in health services and young people appreciate having the context explained with no assumptions.

Suggestions include:

- providing a handout summary of why the activity is happening and how you hope to use the feedback
- provide information regarding the timeline of the activity and when feedback may be implemented
- provide young people the option to receive updates on how their feedback is used
- allow time for questions to be asked – this may require contact information being shared.

ETHICS AND SAFETY

- ☐ Have you explored if parental consent is needed for young people to participate in lived experience work at your organisation? e.g., are there any considerations needed for working with vulnerable populations including young people under the age of 16 and people with disabilities.

Ensure all staff have the needed qualifications (Blue Card, Yellow Card) and that there are options for engagement for young people who are unable to obtain parental consent.

- ☐ Have you created a wellness plan with all young people (and staff!) that outlines agreed upon steps that can be taken if young people are experiencing distress or ill-health of any form?

Young people are generally open to wellness plans and suggestions on basic inclusions are:

- preferred strategies for managing distress (sensory items, breathing, music)
- any sensory preferences
- contact details of a trusted adult if additional support is needed
- list of young person's self-identified strengths.

It is important that these are created collaboratively, and it is clearly communicated when and how the information in the plan will be used. Using information without the young person's knowledge e.g. contacting nominated support person without prior notification may be seen as a breach of trust and damage the relationship.

- ☐ Do you have the capacity and skills to provide ad hoc support to a young person who becomes distressed while engaging in consultation activities? This could include access to an employee assistance program (EAP) or on-site mental health practitioner.

Whilst this may not be relevant to all activities, it is suggested that all staff undertaking youth engagement activities are skilled in working with young people and have basic knowledge of crisis de-escalation. A good starting point could be to complete suicide prevention training or a mental health first aid course.

CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Are there multiple ways in which young people can engage with these processes? e.g., advisory group, feedback forms, focus groups.
- ☐ Are there different versions of engagement activities to accommodate different support needs and communication styles? e.g., one on one and group interviews, written and verbal, using imagery and video, online options.

Be flexible. Young people's lives are constantly changing, and commitments vary when transitioning out of high school, moving into the workforce, starting university, or living independently. This instability means that young people are likely to have highly variable capacities for engagement. It is recommended that a wide range of consultation opportunities are offered with young people being able to 'opt in' to the opportunities that suit them. For example, having a network of young people available to participate in lived experience engagement work not only diversifies the voices that are being heard, but also provides young people the autonomy to engage only in the work that they are passionate about.

It is suggested that a project-based format as opposed to a more traditional format of regularly scheduled meetings may be more appropriate and better suit the dynamic nature of young people.

FACILITATORS

- ☐ When consulting with young people from diverse and marginalised groups, do you have representatives who are happy to share their identity as part of those groups to help increase feelings of safety? e.g., having someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+, First Nations, or as having a disability in the consultation?
- ☐ Was the consultation format developed with people from the community you are seeking expertise from to ensure it is culturally safe?

Cultural safety was another theme that came up strongly and young people highlighted the importance of intersectionality and ensuring that organisations were trying to consult with a diverse group of young people. Young people stated that having diverse representation across staff members increased perceptions of culturally safety. Young people also stated that if an organisation had a more visible presence of young people, they would be more likely to feel like that organisation will value their contributions.

It is recommended that for any consultation with a diverse or marginalised population, priority is given to ensuring the activities will be facilitated (at least in part) by people who openly identify as part of that community.

Please contact the RYAG for support with connecting with culturally safe facilitators.

LOCATION

- ☐ Have you provided young people with multiple location options for where consultation activities can occur? e.g., online, at school, on-site.
- ☐ Have you prioritised young people's preferences for where they would like participation activities to occur?

Suggestions include:

- at school
- on-site at the service provided there is an appropriate space to conduct the activity
- blended options for remote and in person attendance
- if appropriate, casual consultation is accepted at community events such as local sporting and recreational hubs.

- ☐ If consultation must happen in a specific location, have you provided options to increase accessibility? e.g., taxi vouchers or travel stipends.

Travel costs were noted as a barrier to engagement and reimbursement for public transport or other methods of transport was of high importance. It is suggested that this information is shared upfront as young people may dismiss the opportunity if they believe they will be unable to afford the travel expenses.

TIMING

- ☐ Have you provided multiple options for times when young people can engage in consultation activities that includes opportunities outside of typical business hours?

Young people's preferred times for consultation activities were:

- During school hours (if taking place at school)
- after 3.00 pm weekdays if taking place anywhere else
- Saturdays
- after 6.00 pm for older young people who are working or at university.

After the consultation process (ensuring longevity)

EVALUATION

- ☐ **Do you have a process to evaluate the evaluation? Do you have a measurable way of gauging if lived experience voices are being used effectively?**
- ☐ **Are there opportunities for young people to evaluate your lived experience engagement processes?**

The consultation doesn't stop after the data has been collected! It is suggested that after each engagement activity young people are given the opportunity to provide feedback. This doesn't need to be complicated and could include:

- a suggestion or feedback box at the service
- a rating bar at the end of a survey
- debriefing after a period of consultation e.g. at the completion of a project or term in advisory group
- should include opportunities to provide positive and negative feedback
- if part of an ongoing network of young people, having a representative to liaise between young people and the service can be a helpful way of streamlining feedback
- feasible, external evaluation of processes.

- ☐ **Is there ongoing communication with young people to share how their contributions are being used?**

Communication is highly valued. It is suggested to give young people the option to receive follow up about the project and how their feedback and contributions are being used.

- ☐ **Do you have structures in place for a transition to other roles or other types of involvement for young people who age out of the youth bracket?**

One of the biggest barriers to effective youth participation that arose was the high turnover and issue of 'aging out'. These are our suggestions for how to minimise this:

- Plan for transitions. Young people will know if they will soon be ageing out and it is important to raise these conversations early and collaboratively plan for the next steps. It is suggested that young people are provided options instead of a harsh forced eviction when they age out. Options include, staying involved until the end of a specified project, staying until the end of an appointed term or year, or allowing young people to slowly reduce engagement as they transition into new things.
- Use their knowledge! It is suggested that older young people could be retained as mentors or leaders for the service and support the new wave of young people who are wanting to be involved in lived experience engagement. These experienced young people are great for running inductions or being a safe space for new members to ask questions without needing to ask a staff member.
- Have frequent intake periods. It appeared to be a common theme that (particularly for advisory groups) engagement was likely to go through extremes of high and low participation rates as opposed to stable and sustainable ongoing engagement. Most advisory groups have set intake terms where new members can apply and it is suggested that a more fluid approach is used where young people can join at multiple times throughout the year.