

Impact Report

The Emerging Minds Network 2018 – 2022

Action for child mental health

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Introduction to the Emerging Minds Network

Emerging Minds was a mental health research network funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) between 2018 and 2022. The Network aimed to facilitate research with the potential to reduce the prevalence of mental health difficulties amongst children and young people.

We have encouraged and enabled research focused on: preventing mental health difficulties, mental health promotion, and early treatment and support.

In early 2019, we worked with YoungMinds and the Centre for Mental Health to hold priority setting workshops with young people, family members, practitioners, and policy makers to inform 4 research challenges for the Emerging Minds Network to address. Since then, we have worked with young people, their families, and so many colleagues across sectors and disciplines to tackle these 4 research challenges.

We have focused on encouraging research collaborations through our regular newsletter, cross-sector placements, supporting Special Interest Research Groups, a targeted grants programme, and support for early career researchers through training, internships, and development programmes.

In this report, we will focus on the impact the Network has had so far. We have been able to bring together a broad range of people and organisations passionate about children and young people's mental health, and have fostered collaborations and working relationships which will extend far beyond the life of the Network.

We have been constantly inspired by all our network members, awardees, advisors, partners, and collaborators. A huge thank you to all who have been involved.

You can find out more about the story of the Emerging Minds Network over on our legacy website at <https://emergingminds.org.uk>.



Professor Cathy Creswell

Emerging Minds in Numbers



13

Kick-off events



6719

Twitter followers



37

Newsletter editions



15

Projects funded



19

Special Interest Research Groups



4

Cross-sector placements



18

GROW Early Career Researcher Development Programme participants



5

Emerging Minds interns



394

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) on mailing list



8

Open Lab events



2157

Mailing list subscribers



15

Podcast episodes



81%

Funded projects had an ECR as the lead applicant



87%

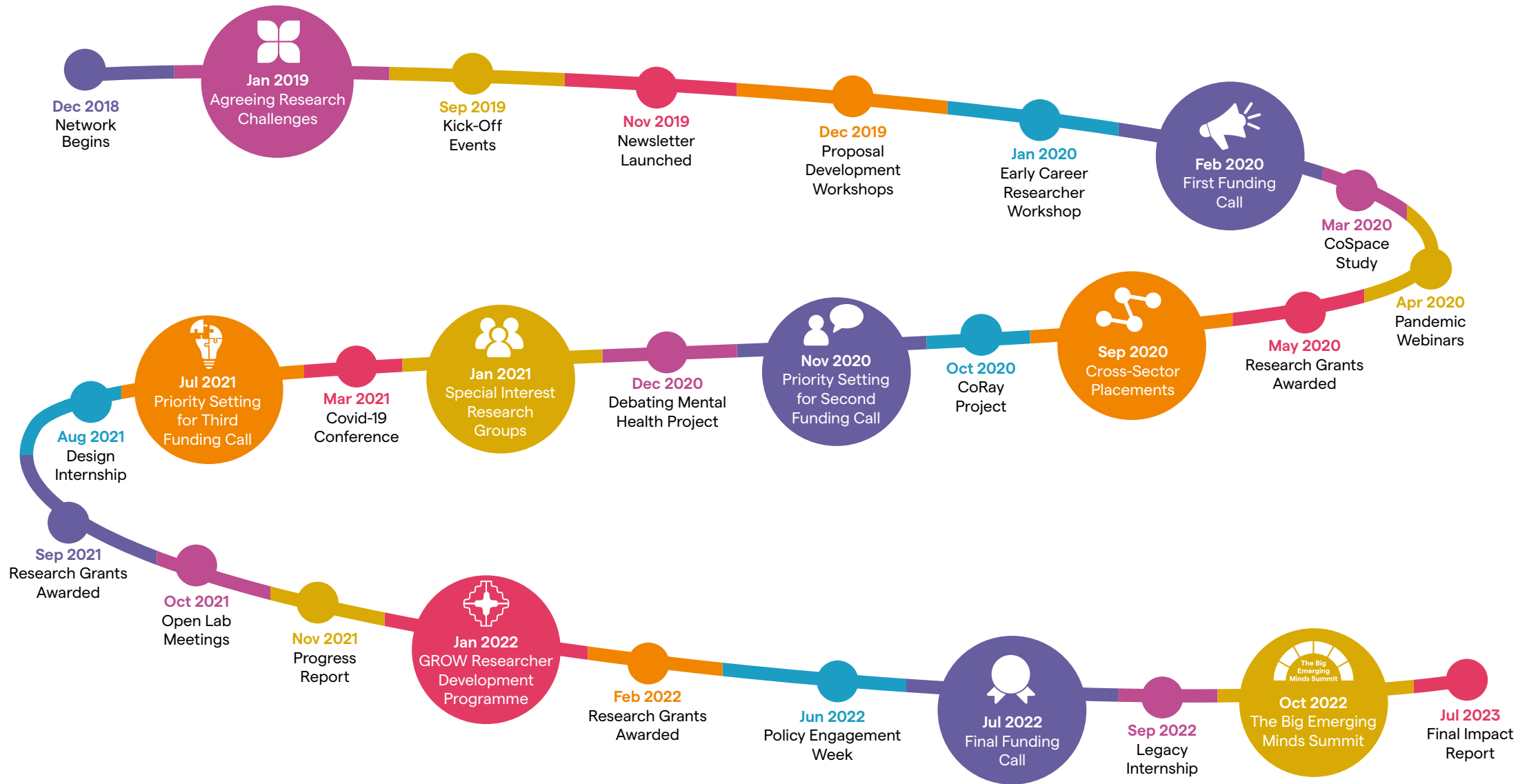
Funded projects had multi-disciplinary involvement



100%

Funded projects had ECRs in team

Timeline



Our Research Challenges

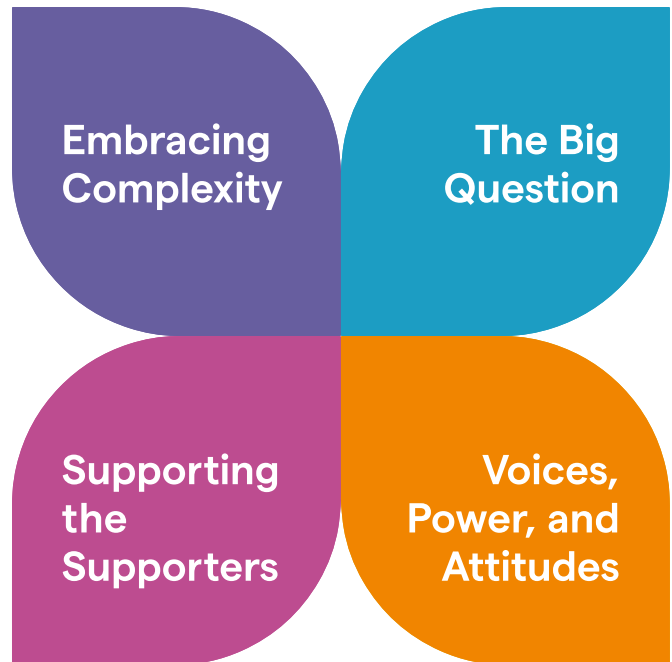
Developing Our Research Challenges

In early 2019, the Emerging Minds Network worked with charity partners YoungMinds and the Centre for Mental Health to hold priority setting workshops with young people, parents and carers with lived experience of mental health difficulties, practitioners, and policymakers.

These workshops [informed 4 research challenges](#) focused on improving mental health promotion, prevention, and early treatment, which underpinned all our subsequent Network activities.

Ultimately, the research challenges were intended to bring together teams from across sectors and disciplines to tackle the [Department of Health and Social Care's ambitious goal](#) of facilitating research to help people experiencing mental health problems.

We have compiled a [dedicated report \(May 2023\)](#) on how we drew together our research challenges, the progress made towards them, and our perspective on what remains to be done. We would love you to take a look.



The Big Question

How do we implement effective promotion of good mental health, prevention, and early treatment for mental health problems at scale amongst children and young people, and in ways that are accessible and continue to be effective?

Our [third funding call](#) (February 2022) focused on this research challenge and asked:

- Why even when we know ‘what works’ isn’t this necessarily implemented in policy and practice?
- How do we improve evidence-based decision making?
E.g. how can we successfully inform commissioning and policy decisions, and how can we ultimately increase implementation of research into practice?



Projects seeking to address this research challenge included:

- [Bridging the Gap: Optimising implementation of evidence in children and young people’s mental health](#)
Research project led by Dr Holly Bear (University of Oxford)
- [The implementation of evidence-based practice in Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services \(CYMHS\) across the UK: What can we learn from the Child Wellbeing Practitioner \(CWP\) workforce?](#)
Research project led by Dr Jonathan Parker (University of Exeter)
- [Optimistic Minds: An innovative approach to evidence-based decision making in youth mental health through the performance of a State of the Youth](#)
Research project led by Dr James Duggan (Manchester Metropolitan University)
- [Building Research Implementation to Develop and Grow Evidence-based practice in children and young people’s mental health \(BRIDGE\)](#)
Special Interest Research Group led by Dr Tim Clarke (University of East Anglia)

Voices, Power, and Attitudes

How can we amplify young people's voices and change societal attitudes in ways that positively impact on mental health? How can societal values, attitudes, and behaviours be changed in ways that have a positive impact on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing?

Our [second funding call](#) (September 2021) was centred on this theme, with particular emphasis on the following questions:

- What is the impact of racism on the mental health of children and young people in the UK?
- What interventions will be effective in addressing racism in ways that will benefit children and young people's mental health?



Projects seeking to address this research challenge included:

- [Transmission of Experiences of Racism, Anxiety and DEpression in families \(TRADE\)](#)
Research project led by Dr Yasmin Ahmadzadeh (King's College London) in partnership with the Centre for Mental Health
- [Young people & self-stigma in mental health](#)
Special Interest Research Group led by Dr Nicola Cogan (University of Strathclyde), Tom Sharpe and Molly Murray
- [Understanding young people's experiences of racially motivated appearance-focused \(RMAF\) bullying](#)
Research project led by Dr Shioma-Lei Craythorne (Aston University)
- [LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health Research Showcase & Partnership Building](#)
Collaboration-building project led by Dr Hazel Marzetti (University of Edinburgh) and Dr Catt Turney (The Kite Trust/Off the Record Bristol)
- [Improving wellbeing and mental health relating to racism in 10-11 year olds: a Bristol case study](#)
Research project led by Dr Verity Jones (University of the West of England)

Supporting the Supporters

How can young people be better enabled to help each other promote good mental health, and prevent and overcome emerging mental health problems? How can family members be supported to help promote children's good mental health and overcome emerging mental health problems? How can settings and activities where young people do or could have regular interactions with adults (e.g. football club, GP surgery, school) support mental health promotion, prevention, and early treatment?

Projects seeking to address this research challenge included:



- [Developing web-based support for parents of children who self-harm](#)
Research project led by Dr Faith Martin (Coventry University)
- [Developing social prescribing to improve mental health and wellbeing for children and young people](#)
Research project led by Dr Emily Stapley (University College London) and Dr Daniel Hayes (Anna Freud Centre)
- [Can an online teacher training programme improve identification of mental health difficulties in primary school children? A feasibility study](#)
Research project led by Dr Emma Soneson (University of Oxford)
- [Understanding online help seeking of young people via the Childline moderated online peer-peer message boards](#)
Cross-sector placement hosted by the NSPCC and led by Vanessa Bennett (University of Oxford)
- [Supporting working parents caring for adolescents with mental health difficulties](#)
Research project led by Dr Jackie Parsonage-Harrison (Oxford Brookes University) and Dr Faith Martin (Coventry University)

Embracing Complexity

How can we best meet the needs of children and young people who have intersecting needs and face complex situations? For example:

- are not in school or are at risk of being excluded from school
- have neurodevelopmental conditions
- have special educational needs
- experience communication challenges
- experience physical health conditions
- have behavioural difficulties.



Projects we supported to help address this research challenge included:

- [SOcial MEdia use among young people with Type 1 diabetes and the influence of Mental wellbeing \(So'ME T1ME\)](#)
Research project led by Dr Emma Berry (Queen's University Belfast)
- [Language and communication needs in mental health](#)
Special Interest Research Group led by Dr Hannah Hobson (University of York)
- [Embracing complexity in neurodevelopmental conditions and mental health](#)
Special Interest Research Group and cross-sector placement led by Georgia Harper (Embracing Complexity Coalition) and Dr Suzi Sapiets (Universities of Kent and Warwick)



Supporting Research

Across the life of the Emerging Minds Network we held [four funding calls](#) to help address our research challenges. Applicants had to demonstrate potential for impact, collaboration and involvement, and research excellence in project proposals.

Through all our funding calls we aimed to:

- fund projects which were collaborations across disciplines and sectors – we strongly encouraged collaborations with the voluntary and community sector and lived experience-led groups
- support projects which offered opportunities for early career researchers
- fund research activities with the potential to generate future research opportunities and secure more substantive funding e.g. through targeted research projects and pilot studies, or workshops to develop research collaborations.

First Funding Call

February 2020

Focus:
all 4 research
challenges

76 Applications

6 Successful
projects

Total awarded:
£200,000

Second Funding Call

June 2021

Focus: Voices,
Power, and Attitudes
research challenge

9 Applications

3 Successful
projects

Total awarded:
£70,000

Third Funding Call

December 2021

Focus:
The Big Question
research challenge

8 Applications

3 Successful
projects

Total awarded:
£140,000

Fourth Funding Call

July 2022

Focus: for groups
supported by the
Network

10 Applications

10 Successful
projects

Total awarded:
£25,000

We sought to have an impact not just through the projects we funded but also in how we set our priorities and developed our funding calls. You can find out more about the approach we took for our second and third funding calls and the impact they are having below.

Voices, Power, and Attitudes Funding Call

Although our [first funding call](#) (May 2020) invited research proposals to address [the Voices, Power, and Attitudes research challenge](#), none were funded in this initial round. This prompted us to take a very different approach to encourage and help develop research projects on this topic.

For our [second funding call](#), we decided to focus on specific important themes which we felt were under-represented in research. We invited proposals for projects which aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the impact of racism on the mental health of children and young people in the UK?
- What interventions will be effective in addressing racism in ways that will benefit children and young people's mental health?

We arrived at these areas of focus through a thorough priority-setting exercise. In late 2020 we recruited an intern, Fiyory Ghezae, and two advisors, Nikki Adebiyi and Jawwad Mustafa, to help identify research priorities in this area and develop our second funding call.

Fiyory worked with us for over 3 months to carry out a rapid scoping review (pending publication) of existing published research focused on the impact of racism on children and young people's mental health in the UK. This highlighted the clear research gap in this area.

Fiyory, Nikki, and Jawwad hosted a priority setting workshop with young people aged 16-24 years with lived experience of racism and/or mental health difficulties in January 2021. This was followed by a [priority setting workshop with those who support young people who experience racism](#).



The trio then led a [public information webinar](#) about the [second funding call](#), encouraging applicants to focus their proposals on the priorities that emerged during the workshops and literature review. Our second funding call closed in June 2021, and we awarded a total of £70,000 between three successful research teams.

Fiyory, Nikki, and Jawwad published two articles in relation to their work:

- A commentary in *The Journal of Mental Health*: [Amplifying the voices of young people from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds in mental health research](#)
- A correspondence piece published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*: [‘How does racism affect the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in the UK?’](#)

Fiyory’s internship was one of [5 paid internships](#) we offered through the life of the Emerging Minds Network, and she has since gone on to undertake a PhD at Oxford Brookes University. Fiyory continued to work with Emerging Minds and, alongside Nikki and Jawwad, conducted a workshop at our Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022 focusing on co-production in research: [‘From interns and advisors to setting research priorities and producing journal publications: the importance and impact of co-production’](#).

“Through Emerging Minds, I have learnt how to conduct a review and publish, which is invaluable as a PhD student. I’ve had various opportunities to network and connect with amazing academics and researchers, as well as public speaking opportunities. This experience has helped me with public speaking, academic writing and overall networking.”

– Fiyory T. Ghezze



Funding Recipient Spotlight: The TRADE Project

One of the projects we funded through our second funding call was led by Dr Yasmin Ahmadzadeh, an early career researcher at King's College London. The research project examined intergenerational experiences of racism, in collaboration with the Centre for Mental Health.

This was the continuation of a collaboration begun through Yasmin's [Emerging Minds cross-sector placement with the Centre for Mental Health](#) earlier in 2021. Yasmin was also able to offer fantastic career development opportunities for a number of students at King's College London through the TRADE project.

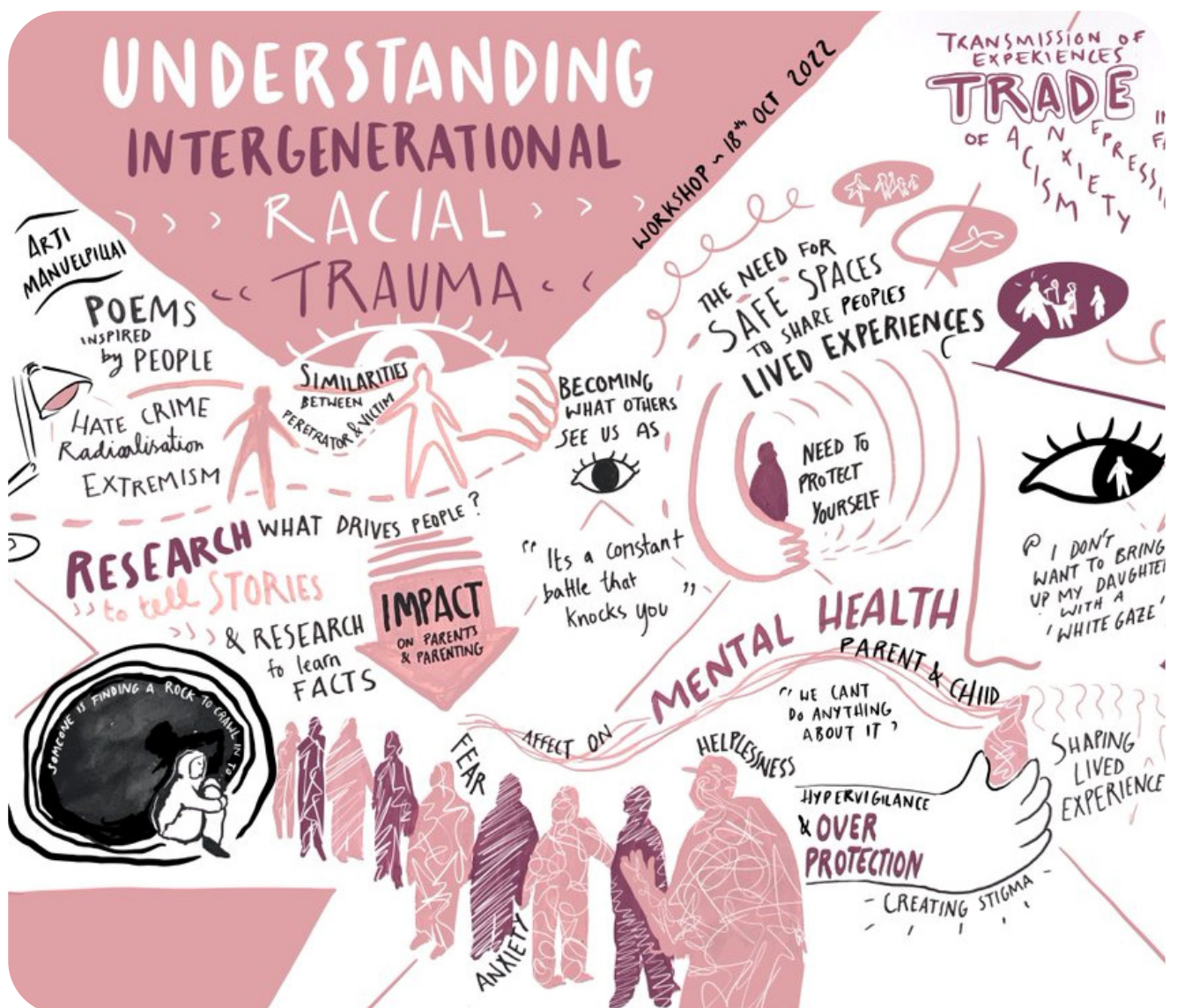
As part of the research project, the TRADE team spoke with 28 parents and teenagers with African, Caribbean, South Asian, and East Asian heritage from across the UK. Participants had lived experience of exposure to racism from a young age, both directly themselves and indirectly through their parents, with an impact on mental health evident in both generations. Many of the parents sought to raise their children to cope with the racism that they saw as inevitable, and many of the teenagers wished their parents would try harder to resist the racist system.



Spotlight continued...

With additional funding from our [fourth funding call](#), the TRADE team delivered a [series of dissemination events](#) to share their findings from the project, involving [partnerships with poets and storytellers](#) to boost engagement.

The TRADE team are writing up their results for academic publication. The pre-print will be available from Summer 2023 and the manuscript has been selected for submission to the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health* (CAMH) Journal special issue entitled '[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Child and Adolescent Mental Health](#)', due for publication in May 2024. Yasmin has also continued her partnership with Centre for Mental Health as part of a Wellcome Trust-funded Public Engagement Research Enrichment grant.



The Big Question Funding Call

In early 2021 we supported Dr Tim Clarke and Araminta Peters-Corbett from the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust to set up and coordinate a Special Interest Research Group on [Building Research Implementation to Develop and Grow Evidence-based practice in children and young people's mental health \(BRIDGE\)](#).



We also recruited an intern, Abi Thomson, and two advisors, Nimrah Afzal and G Jerwood, to help us develop the criteria for [our third funding call](#), focused on our [Big Question research challenge](#). Alongside BRIDGE, they carried out a rapid scoping review and held priority setting workshops and interviews with key stakeholders.

Two virtual priority setting workshops were carried out, one with young people and the other with parents and carers of children with lived experience of mental health problems. The questions for both groups focused on effective use of research in improving services and the barriers around putting research into practice.

"So, parents are kind of wanting to know...why are we being given this advice, what are the outcomes that we should be expecting?"

- Parent

"Young people don't really know much about research or where to access it, and that can be also very big issue, so they're left in the dark more so than the practitioner."

- Young Person

Abi also carried out ten one-to-one interviews and an online survey with eleven participants. The interviewees came from across disciplines including Clinical Commissioning Groups, Multi-Academy Trusts, Mental Health Support Teams, local authorities, training providers, charities, and Public Health England. Discussions included factors affecting implementation of 'evidence-based' practice:

"I feel there is still a real disconnect between research (where the evidence base comes from) and wider practice. I also think there is then a gap in how the services that we are commissioning (not only via NHS trusts but wider services from the vol sector) can help contribute to the evidence base and how they show outcomes."

- Commissioner

Abi [also interviewed Lisa Nolan from the Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group \(CCG\)](#) to discuss some of the issues around research implementation which we hoped to address.

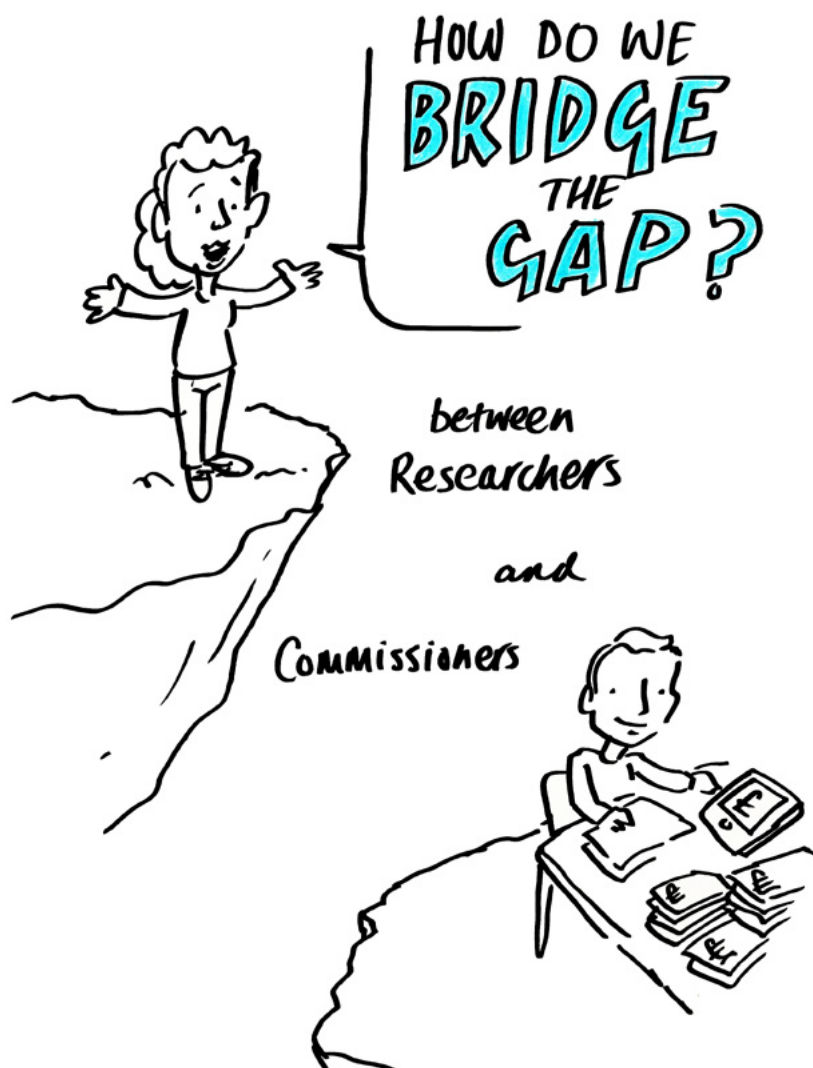
Finally, Abi conducted a scoping review (pending publication) focused on community-based implementation of evidence-based interventions in the UK for children and young people's mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment.

We held a webinar in September 2021 to [share existing research and evidence on this topic and provide an overview of these priorities identified by policy makers and commissioners of services](#), as well as by parents, carers, and those young people for whom these services are targeted to support. This review has now been accepted for publication in the BJPsych Open.

This priority setting work guided the core themes of our third funding call in late 2021 which invited research proposals to address the following:

- How can we enable decision makers to better understand, use, and allocate resources for research and evidence in practice?
- How can research evidence be co-adapted to meet local and specific needs in practice?

After reviewing 8 applications, we awarded a total of £140,000 between three successful research teams.



Funding Recipient Spotlight: Optimistic Minds



As part of our [third funding call](#), we funded Dr James Duggan from Manchester Met University to work with Dr Sonia Bussu (MMU), Dr Sarah Parry (MMU), Katy Rubin, and young people from Youth Focus North West and 42nd Street to develop [Optimistic Minds, a project seeking to include young people in decision making in youth mental health](#). Optimistic Minds uses a speculative State of the Youth approach to youth mental health.

The project sought to create a dialogue between young people's experiences and the empirical evidence of 'what works' in youth mental health provision. Optimistic Minds sought to inform the process and culture of evidence-based decision making for young People in Greater Manchester and specifically within the Greater Manchester Living Well Community Mental Health Framework.

The research team developed a legislative theatre play which was performed to diverse audiences to co-produce recommendations for youth mental health policy. One of these performances was at [our Big Emerging Minds Summit in November 2022](#), and had a significant impact:

"Completely blown away by Optimistic Minds' immersive workshop and play - showing the power of stories to influence policy and practice in mental health. Truly inspirational!"

- Lindsay Dewa, Summit Delegate



Spotlight continued...

"An inspiring day hearing about the many, many wonderful projects which @EmergingMindsUK has seeded and brought together. The final session – a piece of legislative theatre by Optimistic Minds - was genuinely breathtaking and creative #EmergingMinds."

- Summit Delegate, Prof James Stark

The research project findings challenged many of the existing approaches to mental health support. For instance, the young people participating were sceptical about receiving advice about breathing techniques, exercise, and mindfulness. They were also critical of approaches that individualised and/or over-medicalised mental health.

The young people taking part wanted mental health support that placed an emphasis on:

- trust-based relationships
- bringing mental-health experience into mental health training
- peer-driven mentoring, education, and support delivered by individuals who, because of their own experience, are qualified to support peers currently experiencing similar difficulties
- the co-production of care and settings of care with young people and their community (e.g. schools, colleges, family, and friends).

The project identified a number of factors relating to the location, time, and accessibility of good mental health provision in youth-friendly services clinics including after school clinic hours, peer support, and connection to the clinical staff.

The project has now secured funding from UKRI/RSA to continue into its second phase 'Mindset Revolution', which is combining these legislative theatre activities with participatory scrutiny practices to follow-up on what was promised during the first phase and expand the process.



Lived-Experience Expertise: Parents and Carers Taking the Lead

As well as working closely with young people with lived experience, parents and carers have made an essential contribution to our work.

In early 2019, our partner YoungMinds involved parent and carers in their [workshops to help identify our overarching research challenges](#).

Our parent and carer advisors joined our overall network advisory group working alongside senior academics, policy makers, industry professionals, and young people with lived experience of mental health difficulties. This group met every 6 months.

In addition, they worked with researchers to develop plans for specific research projects, including the [CoSPACE Study](#). This underpinning work led to grants of >£1million (from UKRI, JSPS, Westminster Foundation), and over [10 peer reviewed publications so far](#).

Parents and carers were involved as reviewers in [all four of our funding calls](#), as well as our [GROW Programme](#) application process, and the review of expressions of interest for our new [Special Interest Research Groups](#).



For example, we recruited 4 parents with experience of supporting young people with mental health difficulties as reviewers for our very first funding call. As well as reviewing research proposals and being part of the decision-making panels, our parent advisors took an active role in our [proposal development workshops](#). These workshops in late 2019 offered over 100 researchers the opportunity for direct, formative feedback from lived experience experts, and dedicated time to shape and build their project proposals. Our lived experience reviewers also contributed to an [invaluable blog around recommendations on best practice and common pitfalls](#) which we encouraged all applicants to consider.

Our advisors acted as champions for the involvement of parents and carers in research throughout the life of the Network. For example, they took part in a [panel discussion at the Big Emerging Minds Summit](#), along with our Director Professor Cathy Creswell, to discuss the importance of involving parents and carers in research, and how to do it well.

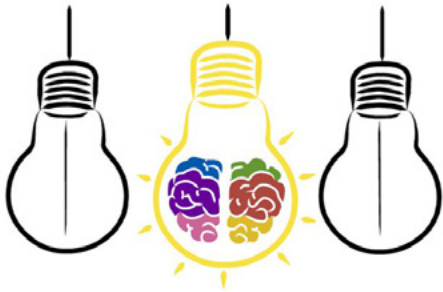
"It has been such a pleasure to be part of the Network. Not only being able to share our knowledge and expertise in such a supportive environment but also how much I have learned! Working with the Emerging Minds Network encouraged me to finally sign up for my Doctorate in Education (and you bet coproduction will be at the heart of my final research!) and also to apply for a grant to carry out some research in the school I work in (again v much focused on the children being part of the research)."

I really enjoyed being part of the panel discussion at the Summit in October. I imagined it would feel quite nerve-wracking but Cathy made it very easy and enjoyable! I was quite taken aback at some of the comments and feedback afterwards. I had worried that what we were saying would be pretty obvious to the audience of mainly researchers so it was a real eye-opener to hear what they had taken from it and how it would change their practice. Leanne sat next to a researcher who said to her "I've been doing it all wrong!"

I was thinking back to the early proposal development meetings in Birmingham and London and how brilliant they were and feeling sad that the Network has come to an end. I know the work will continue in a multitude of ways and it would be lovely to stay in touch."

- Kirsten Eccles, Parent Advisor to the Emerging Minds Network

Parent and Carer Involvement Spotlight: Rethinking Education: Lessons from Lockdown Special Interest Research Group



Rethinking Education

Nikki Chapman was a parent advisor to the Emerging Minds Network since 2019, alongside several other roles including co-founder of the Fresh Plus parent support and co-production group. In 2021, Nikki led the initiation of the [Rethinking Education Special Interest Research Group \(SIRG\)](#) with early career researcher Dr Emma Soneson, a funding recipient from our [first funding call](#).

The last few years have been an extraordinary time for children and young people; especially in terms of their education. The Rethinking Education: Lessons from Lockdown SIRG brought together those with a desire to learn from these experiences.

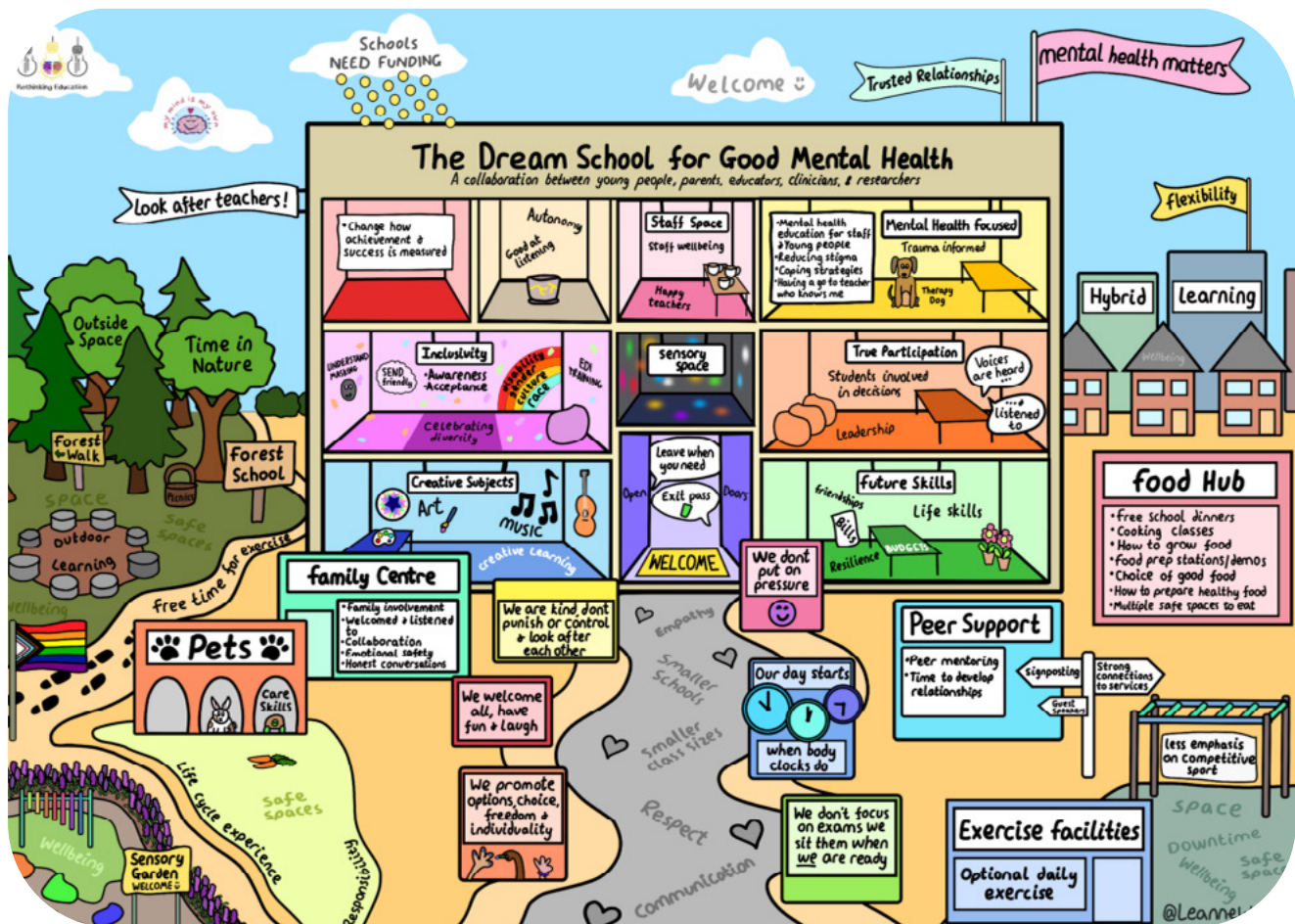
Since June 2021 Rethinking Education held a number of events bringing together young people, parents and carers, educators, mental health professionals, and researchers to propose research priorities in this area. By June 2022, they had narrowed these down to [five top research questions](#) which they hope can help inspire new research on topics that matter to stakeholders.



Spotlight continued...

As part of the work of their SIRG, Nikki, Emma, and others also co-authored the February 2022 paper '[Happier during lockdown: a descriptive analysis of self-reported wellbeing in 17,000 UK school students during Covid-19 lockdown](#)', in the *Journal of European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

The group partnered up with the [My Mind is My Own Special Interest Research Group](#), coordinated by early career researcher Dave McPartlan, to run a [workshop at the Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022](#). In the workshop, participants discussed key research findings surrounding mental health in schools, and then collaborated to create visual responses based on their own ideas for how schools can promote good mental health. Artist Leanne Walker drew together all the key themes and ideas from the workshop into the following visual representation of "The Dream School for Good Mental Health".



Addressing the Impact of COVID-19

Many of the activities led by, and supported through, the Emerging Minds Network, were planned from its initiation. As with many projects though, the COVID-19 Pandemic – particularly the first UK lockdown in March 2020 – had a huge effect on our plans and ideas. However, we were determined to continue fulfilling our aims of bringing people together across sectors and disciplines, supporting early career researchers, and facilitating research into children and young people’s mental health – even if how we did this looked slightly different to what we had anticipated.

We were also aware of the significant additional challenges many children, young people, and families were facing as a direct result of the Pandemic, and we wanted to actively support them through this time, adding a further remit to our work.

Our [Pandemic-related activities](#) included:

- creating an [evidence-based resource](#) for those supporting children and young people with worries about COVID-19 for those supporting children and young people with worries about COVID-19
- running a [webinar series](#) to share evidence-based advice on a range of topics affecting children and young people in the Pandemic
- launching and supporting [the Co-SPACE research study](#) to better understand how families were coping with the Pandemic
- leading [the CoRAY project](#) to coproduce resources by and for young people to provide support for particular challenges they faced
- partnering with Debating Mental Health and Didcot Girls’ School for a public engagement project: [‘Can we build a mentally healthy world?’](#)
- co-hosting an [online conference](#) on children and young people’s mental health and COVID-19.



Parent and Carer Resource for Supporting Children and Young People with Worries about COVID-19

In March 2020 we developed an [evidence-based resource](#) for parents, carers, and people that work with children and young people with advice, top tips, and further signposting to help support children and young people with worries about COVID-19. This included a briefing for anyone supporting school-aged children and young people (authors: Dr Polly Waite, Roberta Button, Professor Helen Dodd, Professor Cathy Creswell – Universities of Oxford and Reading) as well as a similar briefing for those supporting pre-school children (authors: Dr Polly Waite, Roberta Button, Professor Helen Dodd, Professor Cathy Creswell, Dr Pete Lawrence – Universities of Oxford, Reading, and Southampton).

The original resource was shared widely, and we were approached by a number of different individuals and organisations to produce [foreign language translations](#). Ultimately, the resource was translated into Afrikaans, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovenian, Spanish, Thai, and Turkish, as well as a special international edition for an Irish audience.

While it is difficult to assess how many times this has been downloaded and shared further, the [webpage containing the resource](#) has been visited over 3000 times.

A [webinar on the topic](#) was also hosted by Professor Cathy Creswell, Dr Polly Waite, and Professor Helen Dodd in March 2020.

Debating Mental Health project

In partnership with Debating Mental Health and Didcot Girls School, we secured funding from the University of Oxford Public Engagement in Research Seed Fund. A six week online debate training programme was then designed and delivered to students in Year 9 at Didcot Girls' School. We worked with 12 students who said that they found public speaking challenging or that they wanted to improve their confidence.

Through the programme, the students had the opportunity to learn and develop debate skills, engage critically with mental health topics and interview leading academics about their research in children and young people's mental health.

The programme culminated in an exciting live debate, which was attended by professionals from the charity sector, local government, research and education. The debate was in a non-adversarial 'Harkness' style, which enabled all students to contribute, while building on and challenging the points of their peers while seeking collectively to answer the question "Can we build a mentally healthier world post COVID?"

Compared to the start of the programme all students reported a decrease in anxiety about speaking in public and an increase in confidence. The young people's quotes featured prominently in the UK Government All Party Parliamentary Group for the Fit and Health Child/ MQ report ['The COVID generation'](#).



COVID-19 Webinar Series



Between April and July 2020, we held a series of webinars alongside the [Mental Elf](#) to share evidence-based advice for those supporting children and young people during the Pandemic. These webinars were subsequently shared on YouTube and our website along with [further reading and recommended resources](#). During the 8 events we hosted 20 professionals, academics, and individuals with lived experience to share their research and experience on the following topics:

Living through Lockdown:

Social Isolation – Dr Maria Loades (University of Bath) and Professor Shirley Reynolds (University of Reading)
≈1200 views



Autism in Quarantine

– Dr Jonathan Green (University of Manchester) and Dr James Cusack (Autistica)
≈1600 views

Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm

– Professor Ann John (Swansea University) and Dr Faraz Mughal (Keele University)
≈700 views

Teens, Screens, and Quarantines

– Dr Amy Orben (University of Cambridge) and Dr Peter Etchells (Bath Spa University)
≈1000 views



Back to School: School Reintegration and Youth Mental Health

– Dr Polly Waite (University of Oxford), Fran Morgan (Square Peg), and Professor Tamsin Ford (University of Cambridge)
≈1800 views



Practical Parenting during the Pandemic

– Dr Pete Lawrence (University of Southampton), Professor Cathy Creswell (University of Oxford), Dr Polly Waite (University of Oxford) and Eshal Sajid
≈200 views

Let us Play! Child Mental Health during COVID-19

– Dr Wendy Russell (University of Gloucestershire) and Professor Helen Dodd (Exeter University)
≈1600 views

Teen Sleep during COVID-19

– Dr Faith Orchard (University of Sussex) and Dr Dimitri Gavriloff (University of Oxford)
≈500 views



There are indications that several of our podcasts have had lasting popularity, particularly the Back to School webinar which tends to see increases in views at the start of each school year or at the end of school holidays.

COVID-19: Supporting Parents, Adolescents and Children during Epidemics (Co-SPACE Study)

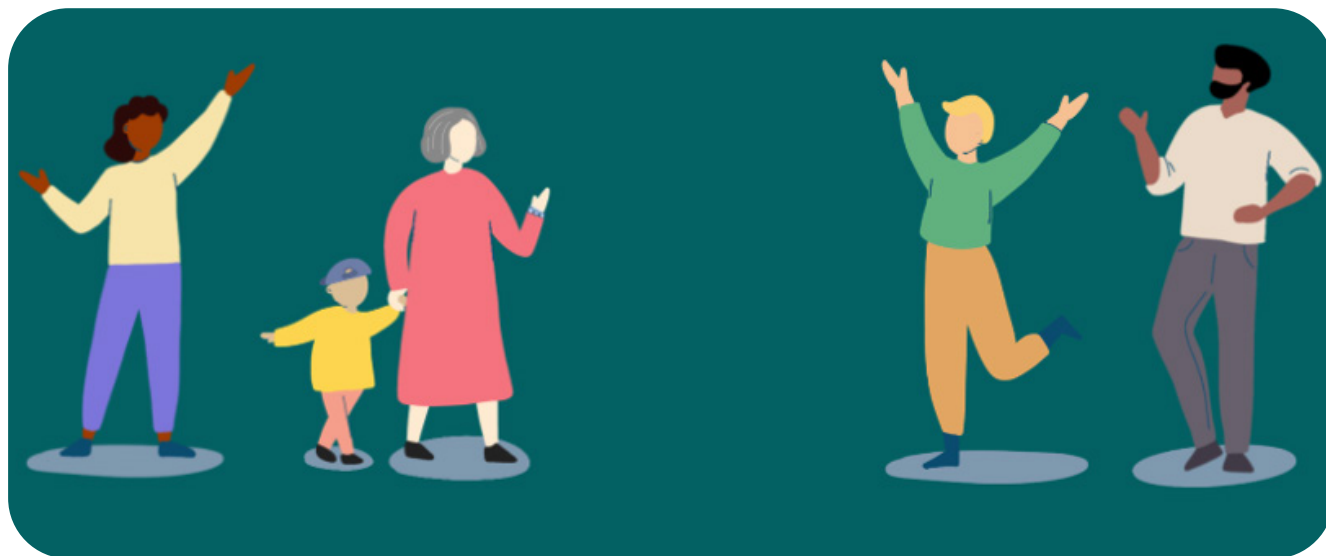


Emerging Minds supported the set up and launch of the UKRI and Westminster Foundation funded [Co-SPACE study](#) which aimed to understand how families were coping during the Pandemic, and to find out what kind of support would be most helpful.

The Co-SPACE study tracked parents, children, and young people's mental health between March 2020 and July 2021, with follow-ups occurring with participating families at various points between March 2022 and March 2023.

The Co-SPACE survey was created to collect data from parents and carers of children aged 4-16, with an opportunity for children aged 11-16 to self-report. There was also the [Co-SPYCE \(Supporting Parents and Young Children during Epidemics\) study](#) for parents and carers of pre-school children aged 2-4 years. Parents, carers, and young people, as well as people who work with children and young people, were invited to take part in an interview about their experiences during the Pandemic.

The Co-SPACE survey team have published [multiple reports, papers, commentaries](#) and [editorial perspective](#) both on school-aged children and their preschool counterparts. Their findings have offered guidance on specific areas of need around the mental health of children, young people, and their families. These have in turn been used to inform government policy moving forward, as well as being made publicly available.



The CoRAY Project



CoRAY

In the Summer of 2020, there was concern about the likely impact of COVID-19 and its associated restrictions on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in the UK. However, there was a lack of reliable, accessible information about what particular difficulties young people were facing and how to help.

The CoRAY project sought to address this urgent need in the system by working in a different way, short-circuiting some of the usual timescales for getting reliable and useful information into the hands of those who could use it.

There was good evidence to draw on to provide advice and support. However very little of the advice being shared seemed to be informed by this evidence base. The CoRAY project aimed to draw together and make sense of both what we knew from research and clinical practice, the wide range of emerging and changing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing, and to make sure that what we knew was put to use at this critical time.

In December 2020 and July 2021 we shared the results of two separate rapid syntheses of evidence, which had included both peer reviewed published academic papers, and other published reports from a wide range of sources including charities, public bodies, and results from our own priority setting activities directly with young people.

The evidence-reviews helped us identify 4 key areas that children and young people wanted support with and where evidence informed resources were needed. These were:

- 1) feeling bored, flat, and unmotivated
- 2) managing change and uncertainty
- 3) feeling lonely, isolated, and disconnected
- 4) seeking help and support for mental health.

In summer 2021 we also identified another priority theme of:

- 5) feeling anxious about social situations, reflecting the increased re-opening of social settings.

We worked with clinicians and researchers from universities across the UK to produce [evidence-informed, accessible briefings for each priority area](#).

The Co-RAY team supported a number of projects that brought together partners, researchers, and young people themselves to co-produce evidence-informed resources that would be useful and engaging for other young people. Together we shared these as widely as possible.

In order to build a legacy for the CoRAY project we are now working in partnership with the [Charlie Waller Trust \(CWT\)](#), a charity already seen as a trusted source of support for parents, carers, and school staff. This partnership ensures that the outputs of the project remain useful in the long term. We have worked with them to produce a set of [resources](#) including comprehensive lesson plans for each topic area for both mainstream settings, and those in alternative provision. In addition, CWT are producing packs for teachers and parents to help them discuss these topics with young people at home and at school. These are [now available on the CWT website](#) and are being promoted to [school staff, parents, and carers](#).

Partnership with BBC Bitesize

In June 2021, we partnered with BBC Bitesize to share a [short film created by a young team of performers and producers at Fully Focused Productions](#). The film was commissioned and hosted by BBC Bitesize and was accompanied by top tips for dealing with boredom and low motivation, all of which were based on our identified evidence-based priority areas. As of May 2022, the page had received over 73,000 visits.

In addition, BBC Bitesize went on to commission their own animation to share the evidence-informed advice from the CoRAY project about seeking help for your mental health. As of May 2022, the [‘Thoughts and feelings getting you down? When to seek help’ film](#) had received over 17,000 visits.



The CoRAY Voices Podcast

A CoRAY Voices Podcast Series was co-produced by a group of young people from the North East of England, alongside the CoRAY team and the charity Headliners (UK). The series builds on our evidence-informed briefings produced by researchers and clinicians and included episodes on:

- [Managing change and uncertainty](#)
- [Encouraging young people to seek support for their mental health](#)
- [Feeling anxious about social situations](#)
- [5 Top Tips for managing change and uncertainty.](#)

Infographics

Young people from the CoRAY advisory group also worked with design students from the University of Reading to develop new infographics to provide [support and advice to young people](#). The infographics were all based around the five priority areas determined through the priority-setting research, and were designed to be posted on social media and start conversations in classrooms.



'Its Not That Deep' Short Film Series

This [three-part drama series](#) was written and acted by a group of young people in just five weeks, in collaboration with Fully Focused Productions and our CoRAY team. The series draws on our evidence-informed recommendations for supporting young people feeling lonely, isolated, and disconnected, as well as insights on cyberbullying from Swansea University. It was published on Fully Focused Productions YouTube channel 'Million Youth Media' and our website.



Content from the original series was also edited into six short clips for social media site TikTok by Fully Focused Productions, and shared alongside one-line summaries of our evidence-based messages. High levels of engagement included over 850k views, 130k loves, 600 comments, 350 shares, and 5000 saves.

To further build engagement with the series, Fully Focused Productions recorded a behind-the-scenes film with their young cast members, discussing the theme of loneliness during Mental Health Awareness Week in 2022.

The young people involved in co-producing the resources reported finding the experience positive and enjoyable, as well allowing them to develop their skills, experience, and knowledge of how to support themselves and other young people.

"Working with other young people has been a huge skill, working in a team and having good vibes."

"Things are often more complicated that they seem no-one's life is perfect, I'm better at understanding others."

"I have learnt to always make sure others feeling included and not excluded cause IK [I know] what they feels like."

– Young people from the cast of Its Not That Deep

Youth Mental Health and COVID-19 Conference

In March 2021 we [co-hosted a free online conference and policy lab](#) on youth mental health and COVID-19 alongside the Centre for Society and Mental Health, King's College Policy Institute, and the Mental Elf.

Individuals representing policy, academia, civil society and schools, as well as young people, including those with lived experience of mental health issues, and parents and carers, were invited to participate in the discussion.

Across three days of events we explored:

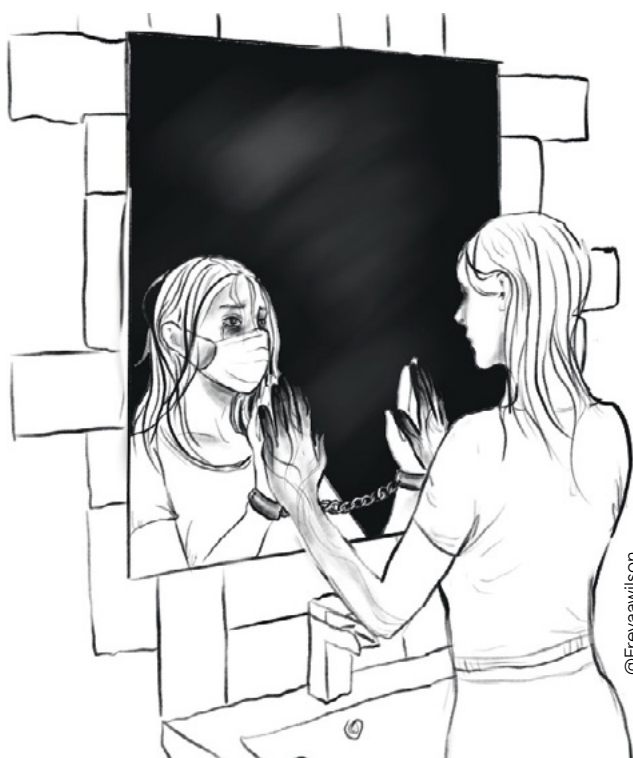
- [Evidence base 1 – Overall trends: How has children and young people's mental health changed due to COVID-19?](#)
- [Evidence base 2 – Disadvantaged, Marginalised and Vulnerable groups: How has the mental health of children and young people living in different circumstances changed due to COVID-19?](#)
- [Impacts in short, medium and long term: How will the wider societal consequences of COVID-19 affect children and young people's mental health?](#)

The first session was viewed by over 1500 people, and the second and third sessions were viewed over 500 times each.

We uploaded the conference in full to our website, with links to relevant papers, resources, and slides. Young artists [Freya](#), [Nefertem](#), and [Selorm](#) from [Fully Focused Productions](#) captured and shared the discussions through artwork. We also asked a panellist each day to reflect on their experiences of the conference and summarise key messages for the day's topic, and hosted blogs from [Lucy](#), [Anna](#), and [Cassandra](#).

Policy Briefing: Youth Mental Health and COVID-19: How can we build back fairer?

Following the conference, the Centre for Society and Mental Health, Emerging Minds, and The Policy Institute jointly produced a policy briefing. Researchers outlined 14 steps that schools, mental health services, and policymakers can take to help children and young people whose mental health has been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

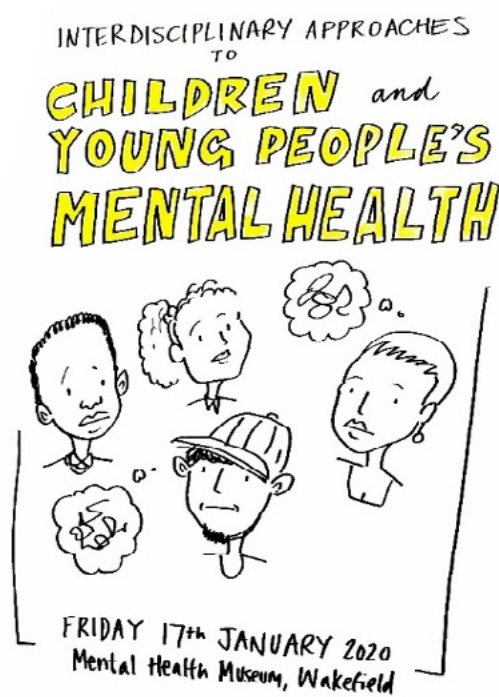


Supporting Early Career Researchers

The Emerging Minds Network offered a range of training and development opportunities for anyone who defined themselves as an 'Early Career Researcher' (ECR) focused on children and young people's mental health. We aimed to offer [opportunities for ECRs to develop their research and careers](#) as part of efforts to build workforce capacity to undertake mental health research in the UK.

Our activities included:

- Encouraging ECRs to apply for Network plus-funding through our [four funding calls](#). An essential consideration for all funding calls was the extent to which early career researchers were taking substantial lead roles in the project, with appropriate support.
- Dedicating ring-fenced funding for Early Career Researchers to undertake [placements across sectors](#), and access training and opportunities to form cross-sector partnerships through seed funding for [Special Interest Research Groups](#).
- Engaging and nurturing talent through [internships](#) to ensure the diversity of experience in our mental health research workforce is as wide as possible.
- Creating the [GROW Researcher Development Programme](#) to offer expert advice and training and personal coaching for participants, and develop a peer network for ECRs.
- An [in-person workshop](#) in January 2020 on interdisciplinary working in mental health research, co-led by Professor James Stark (University of Leeds) and Professor Cathy Creswell (University of Oxford), and hosted by the Mental Health Museum in Wakefield.
- Working with our 7 sister UKRI-funded mental health research networks to offer joint online events for ECRs. These took place in late 2020 and focused on securing funding for research and navigating careers in mental health research.



GROW Researcher Development Programme



Grow Researcher Development Programme

Feedback from our initial activities included requests from ECRs to have more opportunities to grow as part of an ongoing cohort of peers. We therefore developed the GROW Researcher Development Programme with the following aims:

- to **develop a network** of researchers focused on children and young people's mental health, to support each other through the programme in 2022, and beyond the life of the Network
- to **support the professional development** of researchers taking part so they can work towards and achieve the professional goals they set themselves
- to support participating researchers to **develop the networks, skills, and experience to work across sectors and disciplines** to make a difference to children and young people's mental health.

We held a competitive application process in autumn 2021, and received 35 applications from early career mental health researchers from across the UK. Our assessment criteria included considering the extent to which applicants could bring an important or distinctive perspective to the programme cohort and the extent to which they could benefit from the programme themselves. We awarded 18 places to researchers working in a range of settings including the NHS, charity sector, and UK universities.



The pilot programme ran from January to July 2022 and included:

- four individual sessions with a professional coach
- monthly online workshops on a range of topics including securing funding for research, establishing research collaborations, and involving children and families in research. These sessions included peer to peer discussions and presentations from senior colleagues and other experts.
- an in-person workshop with overnight stay in London.

We carried out an evaluation with our participants including surveys pre-programme, immediately after the programme, and a six-month follow up.

We had encouraging results, and participants felt they had developed in the following areas:

- feeling they were working towards clear professional goals
- feeling part of a supportive network with peers in mental health research across the UK
- feeling confident and able to work across sectors and disciplines
- having the networks, skills, and experience to make a difference to children and young people's mental health.

"My confidence and knowledge have increased through being part of the programme. The whole experience has been extremely valuable. It has been great to meet different people, receive coaching, learn more about CYP MH research and share ideas. I also feel I have gained a supportive peer network through meeting regularly with other members of the programme and working together on projects."

– GROW Participant

"I found the programme very helpful for providing a space to reflect on my career and future aspirations. The coaching also helped me to understand more about the skills I have and the way I work which have helped me to increase my confidence as a researcher. I have noticed the positive impact from this in my work."

– GROW Participant

Following the end of the 2022 programme, we supported Emerging Minds GROW cohort members to host a writing retreat and deliver a workshop at the Big Emerging Minds Summit: [Meeting of Minds: Imaging the future of children and young people's mental health research](#).

Following the success of the pilot programme, the Department of Health and Social Care have supported the delivery of [two further GROW cohorts in collaboration with the NIHR Mental Health Research Incubator](#). The first round funded by the DHSC attracted 77 applicants and 17 researchers were selected to take part. The latest application round has attracted 107 applications from across the UK and will run from June to December 2023.

You can read more about the aims, structure, and impact of our GROW Programme in our [dedicated report](#) evaluating the scheme.

GROW Cohort Spotlight: LGBTQ+ Mental Health Network

A number of collaborations have developed out of the GROW Programme and continue to flourish. For example, Dr Hazel Mazetti, from the University of Edinburgh, and Dr Catt Turney, from The Kite Trust in Cambridge, found a shared interest in LGBTQ+ youth mental health through their participation in the GROW pilot programme.

Together they launched the LGBTQ+ Mental Health Network for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and members of the public passionate about improving the lives of LGBTQ+ youth. Through their network, Catt and Hazel led a hugely successful [online conference in October 2022](#) featuring sessions from a wide range of researchers, practitioners, and third-sector workers.

Catt and Hazel [led a workshop at the Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022](#) exploring the existing research and challenges in LGBTQ+ youth mental health. They also hosted the first in a series of online networking brunch events in January 2023, and aim to host these quarterly.



Internships

Over the course of Emerging Minds [we hosted five brilliant interns](#), working on a variety of areas in relation to the Network. All our internships were paid and lasted for 12 weeks.

- November 2020: **Fiyory T. Ghezae** worked on priority setting for our [second funding call](#), focused on our Voices, Power, and Attitudes research challenge
- July 2021: **Abi Thomson** worked on priority setting to inform our [third funding call](#) focused on our Big Question research challenge
- August 2021: **Keili Koppel** explored [how design research and practice is being used](#) in relation to children and young people's mental health research.
- September 2022: **Rowan Streckfuss Davis** and **Felicity Hudson** joined the team to help prepare for the [Big Emerging Minds Summit](#) and collate legacy outputs from the Network.

We checked back in with our interns in November 2022 to discuss their time with us and the impact it has had on their professional development, and [all reported positive experiences of their time with Emerging Minds](#). The chief benefits they describe include networking opportunities, and skills-based development around public speaking and academic writing.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think an internship would turn into something this big and powerful."

– Fiyory Ghezae

"I am more confident in my ability to contribute to this field, and am excited about the possibilities."

– Felicity Hudson

"I've taken a renewed passion and focus through to my own research and made wonderful and positive connections with other researchers."

– Rowan Streckfuss Davis

We have been delighted by the [interns' on-going engagement](#) with the Network, with many of them continuing collaborations with us after the conclusion of their internships. Several have written publications and blogs arising from their time with us, others participated in our Summit in October 2022, and they all described an improved understanding of the field of children and young people's mental health.

Internships Spotlight: Design, Research, and Practice Internship and Report

A key priority for the Emerging Minds Network has been to encourage mental health research across sectors and disciplines. Our leadership team brought together experts with different perspectives and experiences including Professor Sue Walker from the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading.

In the summer of 2021, Professor Walker hosted Keili Koppel to undertake an [Emerging Minds cross-disciplinary internship](#) focusing on exploring and reviewing how design-led approaches and methods can encourage new ways of thinking about working with children and young people to promote and support good mental health.

One of the outputs of this internship is the report '[Designing resources to support young people's mental health](#)' authored by Professor Sue Walker, Keili Koppel, and Martha Barratt. The briefing summarises the contribution that design-led research can make to understanding, explaining, and supporting young people's mental health. There's also an invaluable appendix listing examples of design research projects focused on this field.



Encouraging Collaborations across Sectors and Disciplines

A key priority for the Emerging Minds Network has been to encourage mental health research across sectors and disciplines.

From the outset, our leadership team and advisory group brought together people from different perspectives and experiences including from academia, communications, design, public health, digital health, and parents, carers, and young people those with lived experience.

Activities to foster collaboration across sector and disciplines have included:

- supporting 19 new interdisciplinary [Special Interest Research Groups](#), all focused on moving forward a key topic within children and young people's mental health
- creating opportunities for early career researchers to work across sectors and disciplines through 4 [cross-sector placements](#) and 5 [internships](#)
- hosting 8 [Open Lab events](#) to bring interested individuals together from across the Network on a range of topics including perinatal and infant mental health, racism and mental health, young people's involvement in mental health research, and engaging with policy
- [podcasts and events](#) on interdisciplinary approaches in children and young people's mental health.



All our efforts, and the efforts of so many Network members, culminated in our [Big Emerging Minds Summit](#) in October 2022.



Special Interest Research Groups

From our Emerging Minds kick-off meetings in late 2019, it was clear there was real interest for developing research collaborations that build bridges across a range of expertise, subject areas, organisations, and sectors.

To that end, in late 2020 we invited individuals and organisations from across the Network to develop multidisciplinary Special Interest Research Groups (SIRGs). The aim of these collaborations was to make progress on a key topic within children and young people's mental health research.

19 new Special Interest Research groups were established:

1. ADvaNCE: Adolescent Depression – Network to Consolidate Expertise
2. BRIDGE: Building Research Implementation to Develop & Grow Evidence-based practice
3. Being Seen and Heard: Children Affected by Parental Mental Illness
4. Creative Therapy to Support Young People Engaged in Self-Harm
5. Crucial Conversations on Youth Mental Health and Racism
6. Eating Disorders
7. Embracing Complexity: Neurodevelopmental Conditions & Mental Health
8. Improved access to treatment choices for children and young people with multisensory hallucinations (the Uniting Senses and Experiences Network – USEN)
9. Language & Communication Needs in Mental Health
10. Live Music & Mental Health
11. My Mind is My Own: Empowering Young People around their Mental Health
12. PArental Wellbeing & Support for parents of young people with mental health problems (PAWS)
13. ReASoN: Researchers And Students on Neurodiversity on Higher Education
14. Rethinking Education: Lessons from Lockdown
15. Social Photography
16. Understanding Harm due to Child and Young Adult Mental Health Services
17. Young People and Self-Stigma in Mental Health
18. Young People's Involvement in Digital Mental Health (YPi_DMh)
19. Youth Voice In & Against Crisis Discourse

Each group received up to £1500 of seed funding towards running workshops, amplifying the voice of lived experience in their priority-setting work, and involving small community groups. Further SIRG activities included developing newsletters and podcasts, carrying out priority-setting surveys, and working on publications. 13 of the SIRGs [led workshops at our Big Emerging Minds Summit](#).

Our Peer Support Network for Coordinators

Every month throughout 2021, SIRG coordinators came together to share updates on their progress and seek advice on any challenges they were encountering. Each coordinator brought unique expertise and experience, so every other month we invited a different coordinator to speak on topics that would prompt useful discussion and sharing within the whole group. Topics included: patient and public involvement, building and maintaining engagement, and time management. These monthly networking meetings became an invaluable peer support network that coordinators could draw on as they built up their own research communities.

“Having the monthly meetings was really reassuring. It’s really reassuring to know that the challenges that we’re facing - capacity, engaging people in these times of Zoom - are challenges that other groups are facing too.”

– Georgia H., Embracing Complexity SIRG Coordinator

“Overall, the regular meetings were really useful. Fascinating and intimidating to hear what others are doing. A huge amount of learning and soaking up others’ experience.”

– SIRG Coordinator



Expanding the Role of Young People in Mental Health Research

From the outset, young people's voices were central in setting the research agenda. Each SIRG aimed to have one, if not more young person on their coordinating team. They were part of research prioritisation exercises and were supported to lead specific aspects of the work of their SIRG.

Young people took on different roles depending on their interests and experience. For example, our [Young People's Involvement in Digital Mental Health SIRG](#) (YPii_DMh) created Youth Coordinator roles, and supported these young people to share their experiences and priorities, coordinate events, and make links with other involvement groups. The SIRG ran a 'roles-reversed' Dragon's Den with young people critically evaluating researchers, an online ideathon/networking event in the virtual world of Gathertown, led a [workshop at our Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022](#), and hosted an [online awards ceremony celebrating young people's involvement in digital mental health](#).

"I am an early career researcher who feels very strongly about the involvement of young people in digital mental health research and development and along with other colleagues from across several organisations I co-founded YPii DMH to improve and increase the opportunities for young people in this area. It has been a real pleasure to organise these awards to recognise the incredible work that is being done involving young people in digital mental health research and development. It has been made possible by Emerging Minds who have supported us in so many ways on this journey."

– Dr Aislinn Gómez-Bergin, SIRG Coordinator



Involving Young People in Mental Health Research

Young people are eager and capable of being involved in all stages of a research process, yet often tend to be the subject of research rather than active participants or partners. Little information is available on best practice for involving young people in mental health research.



We supported Dr Nicola Cogan to develop the [Challenge the Stigma SIRC](#) to explore how self-stigma can serve as one such barrier to young people feeling confident and willing to engage in research. The SIRC explored participatory methods that include children and young people in the research process, from planning and developing research questions to disseminating research findings. Through workshops with young people, Nicola, together with lived experience researchers, Tom Sharpe and Molly Murray, have built skills and network in the field of participatory research and developed a [series of blogs, videos, and resources demystifying self-stigma](#). They also [published an article in Education Today Australia](#) on engaging young people with mental health research, and [led a workshop on the topic](#) at our Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022.



Participatory Methods in Research



The cross-disciplinary SIRG teams have flourished, and many are continuing their work through follow up research. SIRGs have been successful in securing additional funding both from our [fourth funding call](#) and from external funding sources.

For example, after drawing out priorities identified by young people and families with lived experience, the [Uniting Senses and Experiences Network SIRG \(USEN\)](#) teamed up the Hearing the Voice team at Durham University, and received funding from the Research Impact Fund at University of Durham University and also an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account. They are developing a prototype of the new LIVV App in partnership with young people, to improve quality of life for young voice-hearers.

“Our focus going forward will be seeking funding for intervention trials. Being a part of the Emerging Minds Network has offered support, comradery, encouragement, connections with people across the UK, and so much more. Emerging Minds has helped us learn what seeds need planting to advance support for young people with multisensory experiences.”

– Dr Sarah Parry, USEN SIRG Coordinator



SIRG Spotlight: Parental Wellbeing and Support for parents of young people with mental health problems (PAWS)



Over 1.25 million children and young people have a mental health problem, but most NHS services do not provide in-depth support to parents/carers. NHS services want to know what parents and carers need, and parents and carers need a way to get their voices heard. Dr Faith Martin brought together existing parent groups, The PLACE network hosted by Charlie Waller, academics, and practitioners to [coordinate research in this area through the PAWS SIRG](#).

The PAWS SIRG carried out a survey, workshops, and focus groups, to understand parents' priorities for research. Responses will be compiled into a brief report to help guide further research activities, and PAWS will continue to have an online social media presence to share news of relevant research and connect researchers and stakeholders together.

The SIRG was awarded Research Capability Funding (RCF) from Faith's local clinical commissioning group for a literature review and secondary data analysis to help develop a bid to understand how best to support parents and carers of young people with anxiety and/or depression. Early findings indicate a lack of studies aiming to support these parents and carers, and a lack of evidence to help understand family, parent, carer, or child characteristics that may relate to greater need for support.

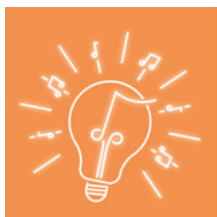
The PAWS SIRG also used links within the Emerging Minds Network to make a successful bid for Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) funding from the National Institute for Health Research, to develop systematic reviews in this area to help guide further intervention development work.

Faith also secured additional funding via Emerging Minds for a project to develop online support for parents and carers of young people who self-harm. This utilised PAWS network connections to co-design and alpha test a web-based intervention. Alongside PAWS, the researchers plan to apply for NIHR RfPB funding for a feasibility study in 2023.

Faith led a powerful workshop summarising findings and future areas for research on this topic at our Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022 entitled [“Won't somebody please think of the parents?”](#).



SIRG Spotlight: Live Music and Mental Health



The [Live Music and Mental Health SIRG](#) brought together Amy Woodhouse from Children in Scotland, Duncan Sutherland from Scottish Ensemble, and others from the University of Stirling, the Scottish Government, and Changing Our World to explore the impact of live music experiences on children and young people's mental health. The SIRG was unusual in that it was led by a voluntary and community organisation, rather than researchers in academia.

The existing published research in this area is extremely limited. However, there is evidence that young people feel the connection between live music and mental health is strong, so it was worth exploring. The SIRG ran four workshops with young people, policy makers, musicians, children's organisations, and mental health organisations, to understand the relationship further.

The SIRG were able to develop new links with both arts and NHS organisations, learning about art therapy from NHS Lothian, and social prescribing from The Alliance, and exploring how live music experiences can complement other types of mental health support.

Based on all their findings, the SIRG [identified a series of recommendations](#) that could help support children and young people to experience the mental health benefits of live music. Their work on the connections between health services and music organisations suggested that those relationships need to be strengthened. They considered how health services could be more aware of live music opportunities available in their localities and how partnerships could develop. The SIRG shared these findings [in a workshop at our Big Emerging Minds Summit](#) in October 2022.

The SIRG and its partners have been successful in obtaining funding from Creative Scotland to continue exploring the impact of live music on children and young people's mental health. In 2023 Children in Scotland, Scottish Ensemble, and the University of Stirling will be working with children and young people across Glasgow, Inverness, and Stirling to co-produce ideas to open up live music opportunities for children and young people.



Cross-Sector Placements

One of the aims of the Emerging Minds Network has been to encourage and support the development of early career researchers looking to build careers in the field of children and young people's mental health, particularly across sectors and disciplines. To that end, we have hosted [four cross-sector placements](#) over the course of the Network with some fantastic organisations.

Summer 2020: the autism research charity **Autistica**, who chair the Embracing Complexity Coalition, hosted **Suzi Sapiets** to [investigate how we can better embrace complexity in neurodevelopmental research](#). At the end of her placement, Suzi [published a report](#) which highlights the priorities, barriers, and opportunities for research that considers multiple neurodevelopmental conditions.



Suzi continued to be actively involved in Emerging Minds by co-leading the [Embracing Complexity in Neurodevelopmental Conditions and Mental Health Special Interest Research Group](#) alongside Georgia Harper. The SIRG hosted an [Emerging Minds Open Lab](#) on the topic in May 2022, as well as running a [brilliant hybrid workshop](#) at our Big Emerging Minds Summit in October 2022.

The Embracing Complexity SIRG also worked with the Language and Communication SIRG to jointly publish the [“Transdiagnostic Approaches to Mental Health and Neurodevelopment”](#) briefing in November 2022.

Autumn 2020: the **NSPCC** hosted **Vanessa Bennett** to work with the NeurOX Young Person's Advisory Group at Oxford University [to explore the Childline peer-peer message boards](#).



Vanessa continued to work with the NeurOX YPAG to co-produce a number of further outputs based on the project including a [project summary](#) and [reflective blog](#), and publications including a [co-produced methodology to explore real-world online help-seeking](#) and a [practical case study and evaluation of this methodology](#) (both published papers), and [“In their own words”](#) (a pre-print paper).

Vanessa also worked with NeurOX to co-create an exhibit at our Big Emerging Minds Summit, [“‘What’ matters to ‘who’ in mental health research with young people”](#) and recorded a [related podcast](#).

Spring 2021: The Centre for Mental Health hosted **Yasmin Ahmadzadeh** to [support two evaluations of projects designed to alleviate youth mental health inequalities in London](#). A report

co-authored by Yasmin on one of the evaluations, [“Always there for us” - evaluating Project Future’s work at Bruce Grove Youth Club](#), was published in September 2022.

Yasmin successfully applied for funding from our [second funding call](#) which focused on the impact of racism on the mental health of children and young people in the UK. Her [TRADE research project](#) focused on intergenerational experiences of racism, and involved continued partnerships with both Emerging Minds and the Centre for Mental Health, including dissemination events, an upcoming publication, and a [workshop at our Summit](#) in October 2022.

Centre for
Mental Health



Spring 2022: Mental Health Innovations hosted **Carolina Guzman Holst** to [investigate suicide de-escalation on the SHOUT 85258 text-based crisis support service](#).

Carolina carried out an investigation using anonymised texts from young people who had initiated a text conversation with the Shout service and expressed a wish, plan, means, and timeframe to attempt suicide to a volunteer. The Shout service is powered by volunteers who are supported by clinical supervisors when taking conversations. As part of her investigation, Carolina conducted interviews with both volunteers and clinical supervisors to understand their experiences of suicide prevention and intervention on the Shout platform.

Carolina wrote substantial blogs about her placement for both [our website](#) and [the Mental Health Innovations website](#), as well as reviewing some recent research in the field of self-injury for the [Mental Elf website](#).

MENTAL
HEALTH
INNOVATIONS



Encouraging Policy Engagement

In June 2022 we held a [Policy Engagement Week](#) across the Emerging Minds Network.

The week began with a workshop day for the early career researcher participants in our GROW Researcher Development Programme. This included sessions on building a public profile on social media with André Tomlin from the Mental Elf, and engaging with policy makers with Claire Robson - Programme Manager in the Early Years, Children, and Families Directorate at the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

The week culminated in an Open Lab event focused on responding to the UK Government's call for evidence for their proposed 10-year mental health plan, facilitated by Professor Cathy Creswell.

During the week we also ran a campaign on Twitter including:

- guest tweet threads from a range of perspectives (including policy maker, third sector, researcher) on how best to engage with policy
- advice from our Open Lab event around breaking down barriers to engaging with the government call for evidence
- conversation starters inviting people to share their experiences, frustrations, best practice, and barriers to engaging with policy.

There were common themes across the feedback from policymakers, third sector representatives, and researchers. Good communication was emphasised, with a need to match the language used by the groups you are trying to influence. The key was having a clarity of purpose and outcome. There was also broad agreement that contributions reflecting lived and clinical experience were vital across the research journey.

And again, the importance of networking and building strong relationships was highlighted as vital for creating opportunities to proactively and successfully shape policy.

Emerging Minds

#PolicyEngagementWeek

Perspectives on engaging with policy:

voluntary and community organisations, policy sector, researcher, social media, early career researchers

Conversation starters:

Share your experiences, frustrations, best practice, and barriers to engaging with policy

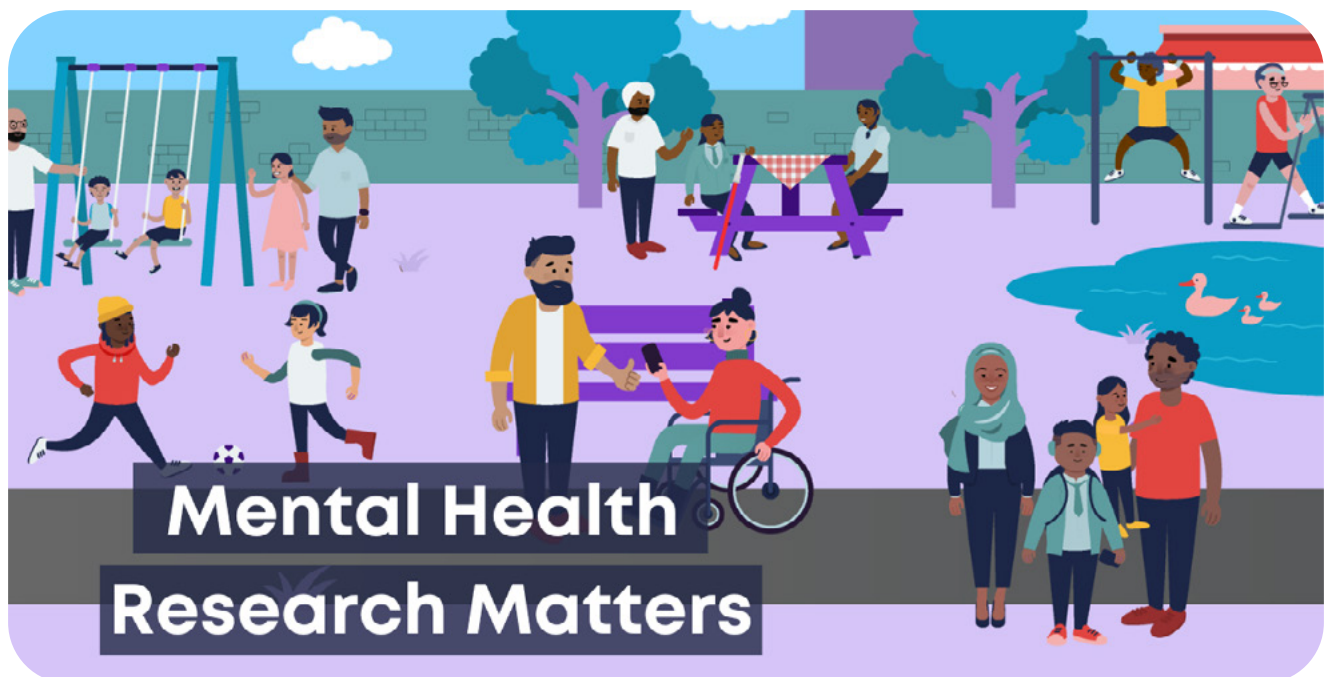
Mental Health Research Matters Campaign

In Autumn 2022, the Emerging Minds worked alongside our 7 sister UKRI-funded mental health research networks to support The Mental Health Research Matters campaign. The campaign aimed to start a conversation and showcase excellence in research practice through online events, Twitter conversations, [animations](#), blogs, and infographics.

The campaign has generated [an incredible bank of resources](#) around inclusive research, multidisciplinary working, centring lived experience expertise, and creating partnerships with organisations outside of academia.

Members of our Network were also actively involved in the campaign by taking part in webinar panels and writing blogs:

- Our Network Manager Emily Lloyd, and participants from our cross-sector placement programme Dr Suzi Sapiets, Georgia Harper, and Carolina Guzman Holst shared insights for [the campaign's webinar on partnership working](#).
- Our lived experience advisor G Jerwood wrote a [brilliant blog on what they gained though getting involved in mental health research](#).
- Dr Yasmin Ahmadzadeh, who took part in an Emerging Minds cross-sector placement and was also awarded funding through our Voices, Power, and Attitudes funding call, [joined the panel for a webinar on inclusivity and tackling inequalities](#).
- Dr Ruth Knight, a member of our GROW Researcher Development Programme for early career researchers, co-authored a blog exploring the [unique viewpoint of being academic researchers with lived experience of the subject they study](#).



The Big Emerging Minds Summit

[The Big Emerging Minds Summit](#) gave us the opportunity to share, discuss, and celebrate all that had been done during the life of the Emerging Minds Network. In October 2022, over 300 delegates joined us in-person and online to take part in 24 workshops, explore 18 exhibits, and share their experiences, interests, and passions around children and young people's mental health research.

Delegates from across sectors and disciplines came together to learn more about what has and is being done in the field of children and young people's mental health research, and share and develop ideas on what we can do in the future.

The Summit was structured around our four Research Challenges which underpinned all the activities of the Network from the start.

The Summit programme was very much built by our Network members. [All those who led workshops](#) had been supported by Emerging Minds in some way – for instance by leading one of our 40 research projects, Special Interest Research Groups, or cross-sector placements, or one of the 24 early career researchers who participated in our internships and GROW Researcher Development Programme. We were thrilled to offer this opportunity for them to showcase findings, air challenges, and use the collective imaginations and experiences of fellow Summit delegates to plan next steps for their research.



We also [held an Exhibition](#) showcasing academic posters, artwork, and multimedia focused on children and young people's mental health research, as an avenue for delegates to exchange ideas and build collaborations. 18 exhibitors took part, including a number of early career researchers who had never showcased a conference poster before.

We were also lucky to have [some amazing artists join us](#) at the Summit including [Tom Bailey](#) who captured discussions through illustration, and young artists [Conor](#) and [Ronni](#) from [Fully Focused Productions](#), who sketched through the day, and created artwork afterwards based on their experiences at the Summit.



We were delighted to make much of the [Summit available afterwards on our website](#) so that it was freely available for those unable to attend. This included live tweet threads, presentation slides, resources, digital exhibits, videos, photographs, and reflective artwork. The interns who had been recruited to support the event, Rowan Streckfuss Davis and Felicity Hudson, wrote a blog [reflecting on the benefits for early career researchers of attending research conferences](#). We also got some great feedback from attendees via social media, and blogs including [from early career researcher Memoona Ahmed](#).



"The Emerging Minds Network has substantially contributed to the success of this project. It was very helpful to get advice from other members of the workshops. [...] For the lead researcher in particular, being a co-lead of the Special Interest Research Group with Nikki Chapman (a parent expert-by-experience) was also helpful toward achieving the project aims. [...] Beyond this, involvement in the group helped us gain a better appreciation of the intersection between mental health and education, particularly in terms of appreciating parents' perspectives on the topic.

Finally, it was beneficial to attend the Big Emerging Minds Summit. Even though the project was completed at that point, it was great to grow our network of like-minded researchers and to share/discuss the findings of this study with people from a wide variety of backgrounds."

– Dr Emma Soneson, Plus-Funded Final Report

Summit: Next Steps

A central aim of the Summit was to foster connections and spark ideas for how to put research into action. During the Summit's closing plenary, we asked delegates to use their 'Next Steps footprints' to share reflections, hopes, and ideas for both their personal and our collective next steps in children's and young people's mental health research. Delegates kept their personal Next Steps and pegged their collective Next Steps around the Summit theatre, creating a wall of hope and action for the future.

Our intern Rowan Streckfuss Davis analysed the collective Next Steps to identify the main themes that came up when thinking about what we, as researchers, young people, families, clinicians, practitioners, commissioners, and policy-makers can do for the future.

You can read an [accessible summary of the findings](#) on our website, or the findings in full in our [Next Steps Report](#).



Afterword

We are very proud of what the Emerging Minds Network achieved during its lifetime. We funded inspiring projects which addressed our overall goal of supporting research that has the potential to reduce the prevalence of mental health problems in children and young people.

Right from the start, the Network was built on the understanding that the lived experiences of children, young people, and their family members, particularly parents and carers, must set the agenda and guide research. The power and potential of this has been demonstrated throughout, with young people and parents involved in, for instance, the setting of our research challenges, founding and leading Special Interest Research Groups, and shaping our funding calls.

We are particularly pleased with how our funding calls highlighted research gaps and prompted important conversations. We hope that our discussions, events, and publications on these topics will continue to have an impact on research in the years to come.

Part of our mission was to provide opportunities and support for early career researchers (ECRs), and we are very glad to have funded so many high quality projects led by ECRs. Through these projects, as well as our cross-sector placements and GROW Researcher Development Programme, we hope that the Emerging Minds Network will have a long-lasting legacy through the careers of this rising and evolving generation of researchers.

Most of all, Emerging Minds set out to create a network of like-minded people with a shared aim of improving children and young people's mental health. Our aim was always to support and encourage connections between those from different sectors and disciplines, including strengthening ties with policy and practice to ensure that our research is likely to make a difference. We have been delighted to see how colleagues have embraced this. Examples include the success of our Special Interest Research Groups and GROW Researcher Development Programme, but across the Network it has been wonderful to see how relationships have flourished and the fantastic achievements that have come from them.

Although the sun is setting on the Emerging Minds Network in its current form, we hope its light will live on. Our legacy website will continue. The GROW Programme will continue via the Mental Health Research Incubator, and our team will continue this work through the new Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre theme: [Mental Health in Development](#).

It has been inspiring to work with so many passionate people over the past four years, from across the United Kingdom, and from across sectors and disciplines. Looking over our Next Steps, it is clear that there is still a long path ahead, but we have high hopes that our Network members will continue the journey.



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Our Emerging Minds Leadership Team Members

Pam Miller (NSPCC), Kadra Abdinasir (Centre for Mental Health), Emma Thomas (YoungMinds), André Tomlin (National Elf Service), Dr Jen Martin (University of Nottingham), Professor Chris Bonell (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), Professor Sue Walker (University of Reading), Professor Deborah Chambers (Newcastle University), Professor James Stark (University of Leeds), Professor Caroline Jay (University of Manchester), Professor Ann John (Swansea University), Professor Sarah Halligan (University of Bath & University of Cape Town, South Africa), Professor Cathy Creswell (University of Oxford).

Our Emerging Minds Advisory Group Members

Chris Eldridge (Mayden), Professor Chris Taylor (University of Manchester), Professor Pasco Fearon (University College London), Dr Faraz Mughal (Keele University), Professor Richard Layard (London School of Economics), Dr Alex Mold (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Professor Pamela Qualter (University of Manchester), Professor Sarah Byford (Kings College London), Claire Robson (Department of Health & Social Care), Professor Stephen Scott (Kings College London), Dr Rachel Hiller (University College London), Andrea Taylor (Glasgow School of Art), Bethan Plant (Sheffield City Council), Sarah Brown (NHS England), Professor Chérie Armour (Queens University Belfast), Alicia Grandjean (BBC Research & Development).

Our Emerging Minds Team (University of Oxford)

Core Support Team: Susannah Perkins, Heather Dyer, Emily Lloyd, Beatrice Shelley, Cathy Creswell (and authors of this report).

Our Interns: Fiyory Ghezae, Felicity Hudson, Abi Thomson, Keili Koppel, Rowan Streckfuss Davis.

Our Emerging Minds Partners



Our Emerging Minds Funders

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Our Impact Report Artists and Photographers

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Photos by various including Oxford Atelier, John Cairns, and Emily Lloyd.

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