

LEARNING  
TOGETHER

# Thinking about taking part in research?

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
- BY YOUNG PEOPLE

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# Hello and welcome to our guide to help you decide if you want to take part in research.

As part of the Learning Together project, this guide was co-developed with young people in Albania and the UK. This included eight young people supported by the organization Different & Equal in Albania, who are involved in different projects as young advisors, young advocates and young researchers. It also included four members of the Safer Young Lives Research Centre's Young Researchers Advisory Panel, who work to ensure research about young people is informed by and undertaken with young people, including those with lived experience of issues being explored.

The draft guide was also reviewed by youth advisors from Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Uganda and elsewhere in the UK. Thank you to all of them!



*Research is more valuable with the inclusion of real people's experiences, thoughts and feedback.\**

## About this guide

**This guide is for young people who have been invited to take part in research about sexual abuse or other topics that might be considered 'sensitive'. It shares advice on things to think about and questions to ask before you decide to take part.**

It is designed to empower you to make sure you are being looked after and treated fairly and to remind you that taking part in research is always your choice. What is right for one young person might not be right for another – for personal, cultural or practical reasons.

**Please note:** *this guide provides general advice. It should always be read alongside information about the particular research project YOU are invited to take part in.*

*\*All quotes are from the young people who took part in this project.*

# What you need to know about taking part in research

## What is research?

Research is a process of collecting information to help people better understand an issue. Taking part in research is one way young people's views and perspectives can be understood more widely. When people better understand young people's experiences, it can help improve things for other young people in the future.

*My voice will be heard and this might help someone else who has been hurt.*

YOUNG RESEARCH ADVISOR

There are different ways of doing research with children and young people.

These might include:

### Surveys or questionnaires

When participants are given a list of questions to answer by completing a form (online or in writing), or talking to someone who asks them questions and completes a form

### Interviews

When a researcher asks participants questions individually as part of a recorded conversation (in person or online)

### Focus groups

When a researcher asks participants questions in a group setting as part of a recorded conversation (also sometimes called a group interview)

### Observations

When a researcher spends time with participants, or a service or community they are part of, and takes notes about what they see happening

### Creative workshops

When a researcher invites participants to make something creative - individually or as a group - to share thoughts, feelings or experiences

### Participatory research

When participants take part in developing research questions and undertaking research - alongside researchers, and use research to bring about changes that are important to them

# Before you take part – what you should expect to be told

If you are thinking about taking part in research, it is important someone explains everything clearly to you.

## About the research

- The purpose of the research
- Who the researcher(s) is/are, and who they work for
- Why you have been asked to take part

## What taking part will involve

- What taking part will involve (e.g. survey, interview, focus group)
- What you will be asked to talk or write about
- Where the research will take place - with confirmation this is a safe and appropriate location (i.e. not a researcher's private home)
- How much time it will take to take part
- The benefits and risks of taking part: for you and others (see page X)
- How to give your permission to take part (often called 'the consent process')
- How to withdraw your consent (even if you've already agreed to take part)

*Children and young people need all the information before they can make an informed decision.*

YOUNG RESEARCH ADVISOR



## What will happen to the information you share

- How the information you share is made anonymous
- How information you share will be kept safe and confidential and when information you share would be passed on to someone\* (this usually only happens if you share information that makes adults worried about you or someone else's safety)
- How your words or other contributions will be shared and used in the research outputs

## What happens after you take part

- What support is available for you during and after you take part
- Who you can contact to ask questions about the research or give feedback
- How and when you will be told what happened next in the research project
- When the research is expected to finish
- How to receive a copy of any research reports or other outputs

# When you take part – how you should expect to feel

Researchers have responsibility to do all they can to make you feel comfortable, safe and valued throughout the whole process. If you take part in research, you should feel:

**physically safe + comfortable**  
in the space where research takes place

**CONFIDENT**  
that information you share will be carefully looked after

That your involvement has had an  
**IMPACT**

**Valued & Thanked**  
able to access feedback

**RESPECTED + ACCEPTED**  
for who you are and not judged

able to contribute in ways that feel comfortable and not interrogated

**SUPPORTED**  
through the process and afterwards

**WELCOME**

That your views are heard & understood

**IN CONTROL**  
with choices to pause, stop, say no, or change your mind about taking part.

As young people we think feeling safe in research means feeling safe to say 'no' and knowing there will be no bad repercussions.

YOUNG RESEARCH ADVISOR



Deciding that you don't want to take part in research, or answer a certain question; or deciding you want to withdraw from research, can sometimes be a positive choice. However sometimes it can feel hard to say 'no'. Here are some ideas of phrases you might use.

'Thanks for the invite but this doesn't feel like this is right for me'

'I'd prefer not to answer this question.'

'I feel uneasy talking about this topic, so I'll stop there.'

'That's enough for me so I'd like to finish the interview/session there if that's okay'

\*And remember you don't ever have to explain why you are saying no to participation in research!

# Benefits and risks of taking part in research on topics that may be sensitive

It can be hard to know exactly what you will get out of taking part in a research project. Everyone is different, but here are some things that young people who have taken part in similar projects recommend you should think about.

## Feelings and emotions

Taking part in research on topics like abuse can be rewarding but can also bring up strong feelings. Only you – and those close to you – will be able to know if taking part in research is the right thing for you, at this point in time. Before you agree to take part think about whether you would feel safe and comfortable to answer questions about the topic. It might be helpful to talk this through with someone else who knows you.

## Access to Support

Another thing to think about is whether there is enough support in place if you did experience difficult feelings connected to taking part.

- Do you have someone you could speak to if you want to reach out for more support?
- Can someone support you to notice and respond to any difficult feelings caused by the research?
- What support are the research team offering, and is it enough to support you to feel safe during and after?
- Will someone check in on you after taking part?

## Being valued

Your time and views should be properly valued by anyone asking you to take part in research. There are different ways researchers might thank you for your contribution, and ensure you feel valued.

- You might be given a thank you card or message.
- You might receive feedback about the difference your contribution has made.
- You might receive a voucher or a payment to you, or a project you are part of.

For some people, knowing that the research might help other young people can be enough of a reason to take part, but others may feel differently.

Remember, it is up to you to decide whether taking part feels fair and worthwhile.

# Some other words you might not have heard before

## and what they mean in research

**Anonymity/ Anonymous** This means that your words or contributions can never be identified as yours or linked to you by people who listen to or read about the research

**Confidential/ Confidentiality** This is about protecting your personal information. This means storing information you provide very safely and never sharing it with anyone who doesn't have a right (or permission) to have this information. There are often limits to confidentiality in research and adults will have permission to share your information if they are worried about you or someone else's safety.

**Consent** This means giving your agreement to do something (e.g. take part in a survey or interview). Nobody should involve you in research without you giving your consent, and you should not feel pressured to give this. Researchers must always keep a record of your consent – this could be a recording of your voice agreeing to take part or your signature on a form.

**Creative workshops** When a researcher invites participants to make something creative (like a poem, photographs, theatre or artwork) – individually or as a group – to share thoughts, feelings or experiences

**Focus groups** When a researcher asks participants questions in a group setting as part of a recorded conversation (also sometimes called a group interview)

**Interviews** When a researcher asks participants questions individually as part of a recorded conversation (in person or online)

**Observations** When a researcher spends time with participants, or a service or community they are part of, and takes notes about what they see happening

**Outputs** Something produced as part of the research project to share learning. This could be a report, film, article, presentation or something else

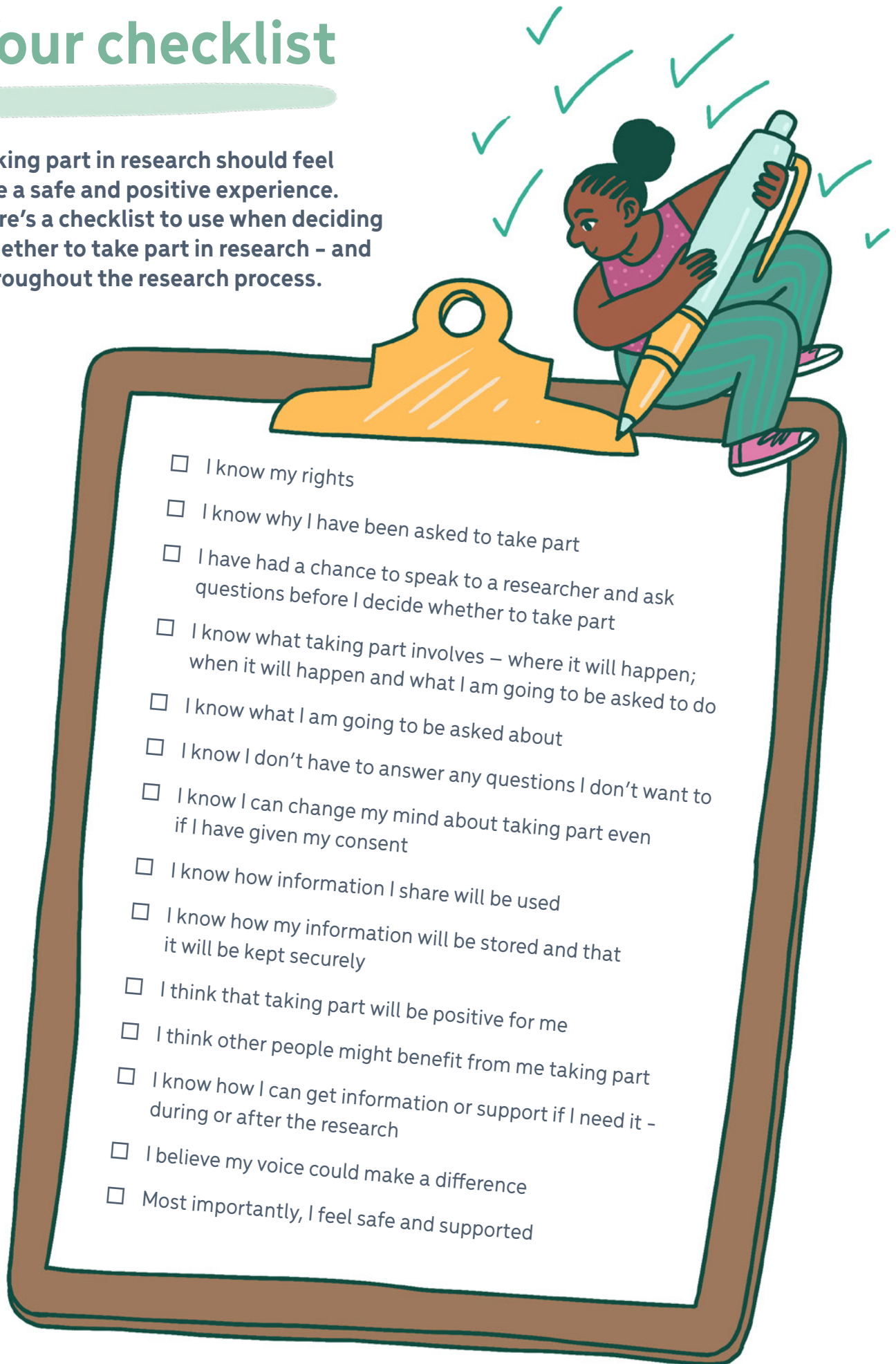
**Participatory research** When participants take part in developing research questions and undertaking research – alongside researchers, and use research to bring about changes that are important to them

**Research** Research is a process of collecting information to help people better understand an issue. It involves asking questions about something and looking for answers in a systematic or planned way

**Surveys or questionnaires** When participants are given a list of questions to answer by completing a form (online or in writing), or talking to someone who asks them questions and completes a form

# Your checklist

Taking part in research should feel like a safe and positive experience. Here's a checklist to use when deciding whether to take part in research - and throughout the research process.



- I know my rights
- I know why I have been asked to take part
- I have had a chance to speak to a researcher and ask questions before I decide whether to take part
- I know what taking part involves – where it will happen; when it will happen and what I am going to be asked to do
- I know what I am going to be asked about
- I know I don't have to answer any questions I don't want to
- I know I can change my mind about taking part even if I have given my consent
- I know how information I share will be used
- I know how my information will be stored and that it will be kept securely
- I think that taking part will be positive for me
- I think other people might benefit from me taking part
- I know how I can get information or support if I need it - during or after the research
- I believe my voice could make a difference
- Most importantly, I feel safe and supported

# A place for your notes or questions





This guide was produced as part of the **Learning Together** project, funded by Porticus.

Find out more about the project here:  
[www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc/current-programmes-and-projects/learning-together](http://www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc/current-programmes-and-projects/learning-together)

We'd love to hear your feedback about these guides. You can do that here:

