



An international qualitative study: views of young people and stakeholders on the active ingredients of mental health

Commissioned by the Wellcome Trust

The project aim

We collaborated with colleagues from World Awareness of Children in Trauma (WACIT); Leicester University, and Euro Youth Mental Health.

Young people participation

We used participatory action research methodology, which involves researchers and participants collaborating at each stage of the project. Young people with lived experience of depression or anxiety were involved as peer advisors throughout the project, to ensure that the research activities and outputs were in line with young people's understanding and views, as well as compatible with the sociocultural norms of each country.

We also had two peer researchers centrally involved throughout the project as part of our research team. The peer researchers played a key role in project governance through all elements of the research, including co-designing materials, co-facilitating focus groups, and contributing to the analysis and write-up.

Focus groups were conducted in eight partner collaborating countries (Brazil, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Portugal, South Africa, Turkey and the UK) with 120 young people aged 14 to 24, and 63 professionals from different disciplines (including researchers, clinicians and policy makers). The purpose was to explore views on an existing list of "best bets" for what works in the prevention of and support for young people experiencing anxiety and depression. We grouped the themes from these discussions into an ecosystem model (see image).

By actively involving young people through a participatory action research approach, their lived experience expertise was recognised and embedded throughout the project. Promoting shared decision-making in research and generates meaningful and diverse insights

Peer advisors were particularly helpful to:

- Engage young people in each partner country and interpret their feedback appropriately as a result of their cultural expertise.
- Ensure communications and materials were tailored to young people and reflected country-specific considerations.
- Avoid losing sight of the young person's perspective when interpreting the findings.

Our peer researchers led a [publication](#) about their experiences working on this project. One area of key learning we have taken forward into other projects was having clearly defined roles at the start.