



A comic exploring how young people's time and contributions are recognised when they take part in projects addressing childhood sexual violence.

About the Centre

The Safer Young Lives Research Centre is based at the University of Bedfordshire in the UK. The Centre works to create and share knowledge around young people's experiences of abuse, and to work with others – locally, nationally and internationally – to better prevent and respond to this. The Centre is committed to the participation of young people in research into, and responses to, abuse in childhood and adolescence. Over the last fifteen years, staff at the Centre have been working in partnership with young people with lived experience of abuse, and the practitioners working at the services supporting them, to understand the benefits, practicalities and complexities of working collaboratively with young people with lived experience of childhood sexual violence to inform and influence the development of research, policy and practice.

To find out more about the work of the Centre please visit beds.ac.uk/sylrc.

About the Comic

This comic explores the complexities and different perspectives relating to how young people's time, contributions and expertise are recognised when they take part in participatory research or activities, related to the topic of childhood sexual violence. It is important to recognise young people's contributions to any project they participate in. This is particularly so on projects where the topic is deemed sensitive, such as childhood sexual violence, where the emotional labour required is likely to be greater.

How young people are 'compensated' can take a range of forms such as financial payment, vouchers, or other types of practical support or welfare provision.

The comic is based on a series of conversations with those who have lived and learned experience of this topic. Conversations with researchers and practitioners working in this field were coordinated by researchers at the Safer Young Lives Research Centre (SYLRC) at the University of Bedfordshire. We spoke to seven researchers and practitioners, based in Germany, the Netherlands, India and Nepal who had experience of involving young people affected by childhood sexual violence in participatory research and advocacy projects.

Conversations with young people and adults who had lived experience of sexual violence, and had engaged in participatory projects addressing the issue, were facilitated by our partners. The organisations Different & Equal in Albania and Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) in Uganda held workshops with a total of 10 participants¹. In these workshops, the groups explored different scenarios and forms of recognising young people's time and contributions to projects.

Throughout the conversations, participants shared different ideas and positions when it came to financial remuneration specifically. For some, the provision of monetary payments in the context of sexual violence projects can be ethically challenging. Yet for others, this type of recognition can be preferable over other forms of support or reward – though this does not diminish the value they placed on having their contribution acknowledged in other ways too.

This comic is intended for young people, researchers and practitioners.

The perspectives of both groups are explored through a series of four scenes. As readers move through these, we hope to spark discussion between and amongst young people and adults to help them consider different ways of acknowledging young people's participation in projects seeking to address childhood sexual violence. Whilst every project or activity will have a unique set of circumstances, and resources and factors attached to it, we hope to highlight that a consideration of different views can help to support meaningful participation opportunities and outcomes.

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1. Our partners engaged with males and females between the ages of 16–29.

A Note on Language

Participation

Young people's participation rights are about their ability to inform and influence change – enabled through their involvement in different activities, in accordance with their evolving capacities.

Young people who have experienced childhood sexual violence may have opportunities to be involved in different decision-making processes or activities that seek to address this issue. For example, by working with different organisations to inform the development and implementation of research and advocacy, engaging in peer-to-peer education or mentoring, or taking part in advisory groups, or conferences relating to childhood sexual violence. When we use the term 'participation' or 'decision-making activities' in this comic, these are the kinds of activities we mean.



Terms associated with recognising young people's time and contributions

There are different terms and ways of talking about how young people's contributions to projects are recognised and valued. These groupings below are based on what we see in the literature and our discussions with participants². They are not necessarily exhaustive (or the only definitions) but may be helpful when thinking about your own perspective or practice.

Compensation: Often used as an umbrella term, referring to the payment for or acknowledgment of young people's time and contributions to the research/activity. Focus is on fair payment. It can take financial or non-financial forms.

Recompense: Like compensation, referring to the payment for or acknowledgement of young people's time and contributions to the research/activity. Focus is on recognising the emotional labour of their involvement. It can take financial or non-financial forms.

Incentive: Something that encourages young people's participation in the research/activity.

Reward: Something tangible that benefits the young person once the research/activity has ended (e.g. vouchers, tickets to an event, professional development or accreditation opportunity).

Remuneration: Payment given to young people for their time, work and effort, and for any inconvenience caused by participation.

Recognition: Something to thank young people and acknowledge the value of their involvement in the research/activity (e.g. thank you cards/letters, certificate of participation, end of project meal/activity, sharing of project outputs and outcomes).

Reimbursement: Money to cover any direct expenses related to participation e.g. reimbursing money for travel fares incurred by the young person and/or their parent or carer in order to take part).

2. See for example: [Graham and Powell, 2015](#); [Morrow, 2020](#); [ICCRP Ethics Working Group, 2024](#) and [Young Minds, 2020](#))

Meet the Characters



The Practitioners

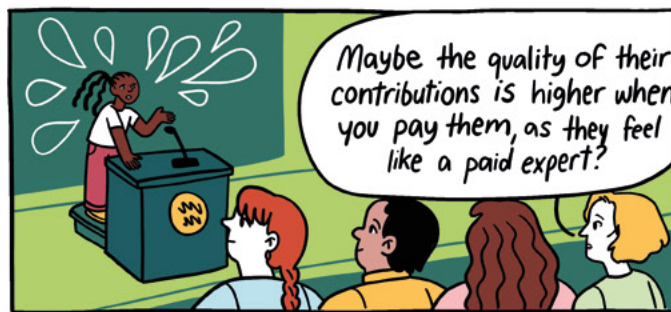


The Youth Advisors

Researchers and practitioners can hold different views about paying young people for the time they contribute to participatory projects and activities.



Let's Talk Money



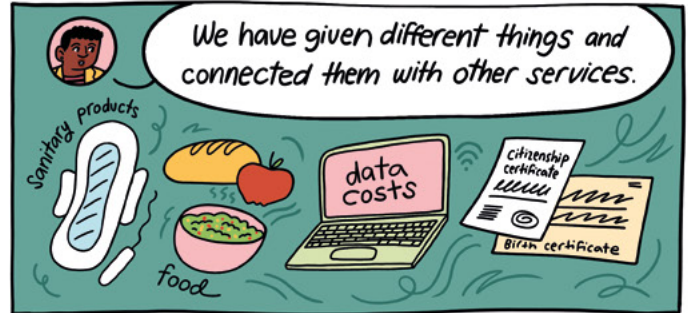
OTHER TYPES of ACKNOWLEDGMENT and SUPPORT



Sometimes, ethics committees³ may not allow monetary payments to young people. Organisational policies can also make paying young people challenging. In some countries, receiving monetary payments may have negative implications for young people's welfare benefits or taxes.

If you don't pay young people, how do you acknowledge and thank them?

By building relationships and trust.



We have given different things and connected them with other services.

We put together a board of specialists from different sectors who gave them practical, tailored advice and mentoring.



Be creative – ask young people what would actually help.



Training and skill development can help them to transition out of the project.



Also celebrating together.



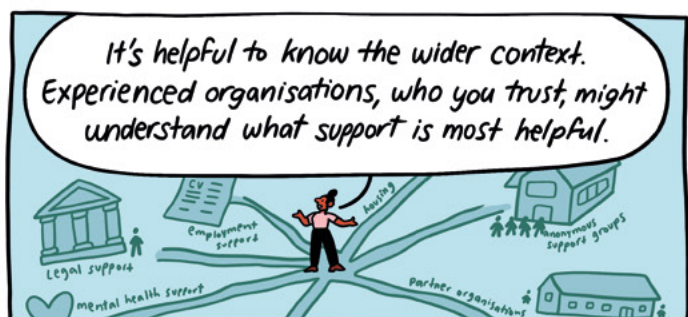
The type and length of engagement seems important when making decisions about compensation. What else impacts decisions?



You have to be realistic about what you can commit to. If you're a researcher, you may not be able to provide different kinds of support.



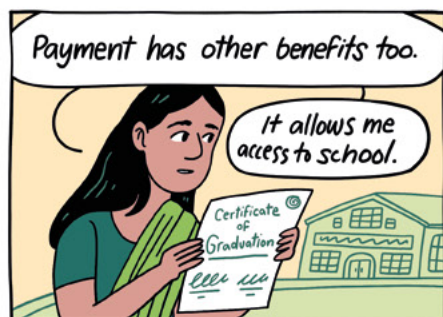
It's helpful to know the wider context. Experienced organisations, who you trust, might understand what support is most helpful.



3. An ethics committee is a group of individuals who review and assess applications from researchers wishing to undertake new research. The group's role is to consider the ethical implications of the research and think about the rights of those involved.

Discussing Compensation with Youth Advisors

There is no one-size-fits all approach to recognising and rewarding young people's participation. It can be helpful to think about what is fair, appropriate and meaningful by discussing feasible options up front with the young people involved.



Finding Common Ground

Practitioners, researchers and young people have differing views about how contributions could or should be recognised. What is key is finding some common ground and ensuring young people feel valued.

If young people have different views about this, how can practitioners and researchers approach this and understand what truly matters to them?

Everyone is different and we feel valued in different ways. Show us you value us.

Give us choices and options for how we are compensated and be upfront about what's possible.

a platform to be heard

Yes, if you can't pay us, it's important to find other ways to acknowledge our time and contributions.

Support

opportunities

health products

food

connections

It's also important that whatever form the recognition takes, it reflects the time and effort we've put in – if some of us do more, this should be acknowledged.

Paying for travel costs and providing food and drink is a non-negotiable...

...we should never be out of pocket or hungry!

Concluding Thoughts

For young people

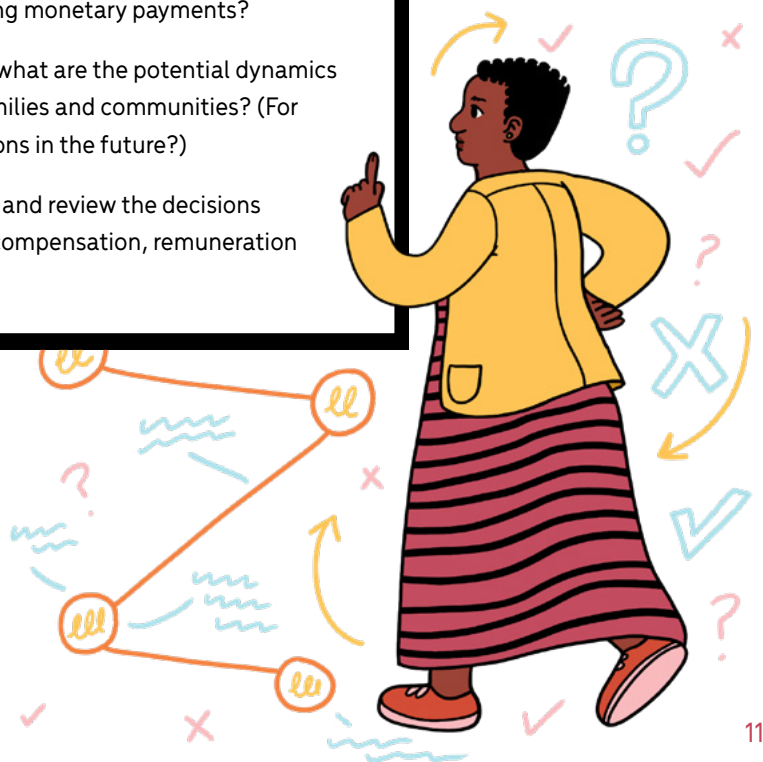
- When invited to take part in a participatory project, it may be helpful for you to think about what you feel is fair, appropriate and meaningful. How are you, and your contributions being valued in this project?
- Often there are different people involved in decisions around if and how the participation of children and young people is recognised and compensated. Researchers and organisations can be limited by policies, available budget or the authority of different review boards. Whoever is inviting you to participate in the research or activity should be able to explain to you if there will be compensation available and any options around this. If there are limited choices, they should be able to explain why that is the case.
- Travel costs for activities that take place in person should always be covered and appropriate food and drink during times you are involved in projects should be provided.
- In some cases, if monetary payment is involved, it is important for you to understand (and ask if you need to!) how this will be paid and any paperwork or documentation you need to complete.
- If you have ideas of what would make you feel valued, or a form of compensation that you would prefer, share this with those who are involved in the project. They may not always be able to accommodate this, but it is helpful for them to know for future work which options could be available.
- Remember, you have the right to withdraw consent at any time so if you are not happy with any aspect of the engagement, or do not feel your input is being valued, you have choices about whether to continue or not.

For researchers and practitioners

- In addition to compensating young people for their time, it is also important to think about the resource implications for facilitating organisations. They need to be reimbursed for the time they spend, and the expenses they incur, when supporting any work.
- If the project team has a good relationship with the facilitating organisation, a cascading system where the local facilitating organisation makes decisions about how to compensate young people, may work well as they are likely to have a better understanding of the local context and young people's needs.
- Every project is different. That makes it difficult to be prescriptive about how an organisation should reward and recognise young people's expertise and time. If you are initiating or supporting participatory work, collaborating with young people, human resources and finance teams to develop a policy around compensation may be helpful. This policy could help to provide some clarity, transparency and consistency in approach and should be subject to review.
- If you are planning to offer young people a monetary payment, you may need to seek out specialist advice due to potential legal implications surrounding tax and benefits.
- Ask young people what makes them feel valued (or not) in terms of recognising their contribution and expertise. This is vital for ensuring they feel valued and appreciated. Their ideas and insights will also inform the ways in which you consider and improve the experience for everyone.

Reflective Questions

- What is the role, level of responsibility and commitment you are looking for from young people?
- Are there differing roles for the young people you may work with? Some examples might include: research participant, advisor, peer researcher, co-facilitator.
- What options are there for remunerating and rewarding young people? (For example, you could brainstorm all the different ways young people could be recognised and reimbursed for their time.)
- Does the donor or the ethics board have rules around compensating young people who engage in this project?
- Will there be opportunities for young people to consider different options for compensation? How can you determine, together, which options are most appropriate and suitable?
- Are you working with those under the age of 16? If so, parents and carers may need to be involved in any discussions related to the participation of that young person. This would include how they are compensated.
- If you are able to pay young people for their time: what mechanism will allow this? For example, will they be employed (perhaps through a University or another facilitating organisation)? If so, what are the potential implications of this legally (the impact on benefits or tax payments for example)?
- Do you have any potential concerns around financial or economic abuse?
- Are you aware of any other risks to giving monetary payments?
- If young people are paid for their time, what are the potential dynamics for the young people involved, their families and communities? (For example, how will this shape expectations in the future?)
- How can you establish ways to monitor and review the decisions and actions that happen in relation to compensation, remuneration and reward?



Acknowledgements

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Valuing Participation



To find out more about the work of the Centre please visit the Centre's website beds.ac.uk/sylrc.