12 reflective questions for organisations growing peer and participatory research approaches

Youth Peer Researchers with lived experience of migration on the Migrant Youth Integration and Empowerment (MIMY) project have developed 12 reflective questions for others that are growing peer and participatory research approaches.

1. Who is this research for? This is important because the research should be designed to serve the interests of research participants. What are the initial intended aims and outcomes of the research when setting out this project, who has been involved in determining this? How has this changed as a result of, or been shaped by, peer researchers' lived experiences, opinions and feedback?

2. What capacity and resource do we have to make this research genuinely co-produced and/or participatory? Which key decisions have already been made and where is there

scope for genuine influence from people with lived experience? How do we properly incorporate feedback that may not be in line with the initial scope of the project? This is an important question to ask ourselves, to consider when we describe projects and it is integral we are clear and transparent about this with participating peer researchers.

3. How are we going to make participation meaningful? What is meaningful participation? Who is defining this, and what does this mean for the people involved? Where do peer researchers have influence in the project, how is feedback happening, what space is there for the project to grow based on peer researcher's own leadership?

4. Are the frames and concepts we are using the right ones? Who has been involved in shaping the ideas and concepts underpinning the project? Are they relevant or appropriate for peer researchers and research participants themselves?

5. Who is being targeted to participate in the research and why? It is important to build an understanding of why are we targeting a particular group of people, and what power relations related to social categories are at play. Have peer researchers been involved in designing the work? What labels or categories are we using, and will this reproduce any lines of inclusion and exclusion in society?

6. How will I ensure engagement and inclusion? We need to make sure that we have the skills to do this, but also because we need to make sure that we are aware of the challenges that

peer researchers might face when engaging, for example digital inclusion, care responsibilities, mental health or health-related issues.

7. Who is participating in this research project and why? Are these the same people we were thinking of when we designed the project? Who is missing? Why? What implications does this have for equality and equity?

8. What methods for creating knowledge are we using and why? How we learn about the experiences of research participants should be determined by how they want to express themselves about their lives. Are peer researchers involved in making these decisions? Understanding whether talking, creative, individual or collective approaches are more important or interesting to people , and then using these methods, can help build deeper and richer knowledge.

9. What will peer researchers and participants gain from this experience? Peer researchers and participants give their time, energy and knowledge. This question needs to answer if there is tangible remuneration for peer researchers, and for participants, how is their contribution being valued and recognised? Consider the constraints you face, such as the parameters set by funders and whether you can advocate for change with them. Intangible benefits might include connecting with other peer researchers, personal or group reflections, inspiration, skills, knowledge or a safe space to express themselves.

10. What kind of support are we going to provide throughout the research project? A linked question is what are the risks of causing any harm to research participants? This is an important question, as recounting experiences could be difficult for participants. It can be helpful to design a series of mechanisms, policies and guidelines around this and peer researchers can provide guidance and feedback. What are the considerations for support and sharing of resources post project? Is there a timescale here for support that will end when the project finishes? Is this clearly communicated?

11. How will research participants' experiences be represented in knowledge sharing and dissemination work? How have participants been involved in the decisions around the communication of their lived experiences? How do we mitigate against making generalisations about participants? Have peer researchers been involved in analysis and interpretation of the data?

12. Can we co-create ethical principles and practices with peer researchers? This is important because we need to understand the group that we are working with, their needs, aspirations, and the challenges that they may face in their lives that could intersect with a project´s journey. This will help us ensure that the research is being led by an ethical and trauma-informed approach. It is also important that peer researchers understand how they are being safeguarded and the support that is available, or not, and what are the boundaries of the project team.

Written by Cristina Blumenkron and Asma Kabadeh with MIMY Sheffield Youth Researchers and Dr Thea Shahrokh.

This post was produced as a part of the MIMY project which is working with young people with migration experiences and local youth in South Yorkshire to understand what empowered pathways of integration mean in their lives. Find out more at www.sheffield.ac.uk/migration-research-group/our-work/mimy.

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