

CENTERING YOUTH VOICES

**CO-PRODUCING AND DELIVERING PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH
WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LAMBETH**

Lessons from the young researchers programme



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1

BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

Lambeth council is a culturally diverse borough in the south of London with many green spaces and a broad range of cultural sites such as the Imperial War Museum and Brixton village. Lambeth is home to a significant population of young Black people, with a report from Lambeth Council estimating about 40% of people aged 10 to 19 identify as Black or of mixed Black heritage. There are distinct challenges that face this group, including issues related to timely access to effective mental health services, higher proportions of Black families living in deprivation, and the impacts of racism and discrimination on day-to-day life and interactions with public services.

In 2022, as the world was emerging from multiple lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic, many young people were experiencing heightened mental health struggles. A study reported that young people experienced higher levels of depression and behavioural challenges after the pandemic, as compared to previously.

Black Thrive's Children and Young People's team believe that all Black young people deserve to thrive and experience positive mental health and wellbeing at home, at school and in their local community. Recognising the challenges faced by all young people and the particular issues impacting young Black people, in 2022, Black Thrive identified an opportunity to secure funding from Children in Need to begin tackling these issues. The programme centred the experiences and voices of Black children and young people in Lambeth, supporting the shaping and influencing of local policies to address their needs.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

The primary goal of the Children in Need-funded programme was to train children aged eight to thirteen as young researchers. These children were to be equipped with both the skills and support necessary to conduct local research and use their findings to advocate for improvements in local services and policies. Focusing on this particular age group was a deliberate choice, informed by research indicating that 50% of mental health challenges develop by the age of 14.

Children were involved in every stage of the programme. It began by recruiting a group of children and young people interested in developing their research skills. They were invited to attend age-appropriate training sessions in spring and summer in 2022 to learn more about core research principles and approaches. Alongside this, the children and young people were assigned a daily task to learn how to work together independently of adults. This was the lunch challenge, which involved the participants deciding on what they wanted to order for lunch each day. Those who wished to become more deeply involved in the longer-term programme applied to become young researchers. This opportunity was also publicised beyond the group of people who participated in the training sessions. The young researchers would lead the inquiry, working with other young people to explore research questions that mattered to them.

Eleven young researchers were recruited, with a median age of 10 years at the time of recruitment. All young researchers lived, studied and/or played in Lambeth. There were seven girls and four boys in the group.

ENGAGEMENT

To support this work, Black Thrive assembled a project team comprising staff with a combination of research expertise and experience working with children and young people. From October 2022 to October 2023, the team collaborated closely with young researchers to deepen their understanding of research through creative approaches, including the use of art to generate research insights and employing drama as a tool to explore research questions. Various external partners were involved to bring in their areas of expertise to support the young researchers.

The first workshop for young researchers was a research training session facilitated by Partnership for Young London. During this session, the young researchers collaboratively developed an early version of the research question to be explored:

WHAT FACTORS IMPACT THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG BLACK OR MIXED BLACK HERITAGE CHILDREN WHO LIVE, STUDY, OR PLAY IN LAMBETH?

Beyond research training, the young researchers engaged in several activities designed to explore aspects of identity, strengthen bonds, and celebrate Black culture. These included attending a Ballet Black show, a ballet company featuring only Black dancers, and a theatre show examining the experiences of growing up as a Black British millennial, among other group activities.

Throughout this period, the young researchers received support from a child therapist who was part of the Black Thrive project team. The therapist led specific sessions to help the group explore topics related to wellbeing and effective group work, particularly in managing differing perspectives. She also attended various sessions to observe and support the young researchers as they collaborated. By the end of the engagement phase, the young researchers had developed a strong understanding of different research methodologies and how these could support their ongoing research activities.

WORKSHOP DESIGN AND RECRUITMENT

To investigate their research question with other children in Lambeth aged eight to thirteen, the young researchers designed workshops using the Tree of Life (ToL) methodology. This is a trauma-informed approach designed to help individuals express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a supportive and creative manner. It uses the metaphor of a tree to guide participants through reflecting on their roots, strengths, hopes, and dreams. This approach enables young people to explore complex topics in a manner that feels safe and accessible, fostering open dialogue and self-reflection.

Working collaboratively, the project team and young researchers developed the study's structure and key materials, including information sheets, study questions using the ToL framework, recruitment strategies, and participant requirements.

The young researchers determined that participants should meet the following criteria:

- Be aged eight to thirteen years old
- Live, study, or play in the borough of Lambeth
- Identify as Black or mixed Black heritage

As a result of recruitment efforts, eleven children who met these criteria were selected. Of these, six attended the ToL workshops, while five withdrew on the day of the workshops. The median age of the participants was 11 years old, with five girls and one boy in attendance.

TOL WORKSHOPS AND SUBSEQUENT WORK

Two workshops were held during half-term week in May 2024, led by the project team, each lasting three hours. The child therapist also attended the sessions to provide emotional support both during and outside of the sessions, as needed. Opportunities to speak with her one-to-one outside of the workshops were signposted to participants. The sessions were recorded, with the consent of both parents and participants, to support data collection and analysis.

The young researchers collaborated with the Black Thrive project team to analyse the data, developing thematic codes and coding the data. The project team further refined this thematic analysis. The anonymised themes, analysis, and insights were validated with a group of young girls from the BayTree Community Centre, a local organisation, to see how they resonated with young people in the area outside the study group. Following data validation, a set of insights and recommendations was developed, drawing on the young participants' insights.

To take action based on the insights, the young researchers co-designed and delivered a wellbeing programme called Thrive and Vibe. The programme consisted of a series of four events, taking place between December 2023 and May 2024, that supported the wellbeing of Black and mixed Black heritage children and young people aged eight to eighteen years old living, studying, and/or playing in London. The young researchers delivered engaging events that were attended by 164 young people across Lambeth, receiving positive feedback from participants.

EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PROGRAMME

Overall, the young researchers engaged well with and enjoyed most of the training and cultural engagement activities in the first year of the programme. The cultural activities helped the young researchers connect well with each other and explore aspects of identity and wellbeing more holistically.

During the workshops, it took time for the children and young people to learn how to work effectively together. The children and young people reported growing in confidence, particularly due to the lunchtime challenge, as they learned to share their opinions in group settings, even if they weren't sure if others would agree. There were times when the project team had to remind the children and young people about how to manage conflicts and be respectful of each other. The project team also noticed that, overall, boys were less comfortable sharing in the sessions compared to the girls in the group. The boy who was most comfortable sharing in the group was the youngest.

KEY PROGRAMME REFLECTIONS

This programme surfaced important insights into participatory research with children and young people. Key reflections include:

- **Empowering Young Researchers:** Equipping young people with technical research skills and responsibility in research design is key to empowering them to act as research leaders. Training sessions were effective for upskilling and building confidence, but research plans needed to adapt as young people's understanding grew.
- **Wellbeing Support:** Sensitive topics such as racism and bullying can evoke strong emotions. Having a child-focused therapist available during workshops was essential for safeguarding participants.
- **Child-Friendly Approaches:** Developing age-appropriate materials and adapting language helped maintain engagement. Testing the ToL study questions with a broader group of children could have improved clarity and data quality.
- **Recruitment and Representation:** More girls than boys participated, reflecting broader trends in qualitative research. No participants identified as LGBTQIA+, possibly due to age, comfort levels, cultural factors, or the nature of the topics discussed.
- **Growth Environment:** Creating a safe and nurturing environment was prioritised. Activities like the lunch challenge promoted collaboration and decision-making. Over time, participants became more comfortable sharing their thoughts and expressing themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For those seeking to deliver research projects about the experiences of children and young people, particularly those of Black heritage, the following is recommended:

1. Develop a participatory research approach that gives space for children and young people to have agency in shaping and leading research about them
2. Create a psychologically safe environment for children and young people to effectively engage with the research design and delivery
3. Develop child-friendly and age-appropriate materials
4. Create a nurturing environment for children and young people
5. Ensure the adults involved have the relevant experience and support to work with children and young people
6. Build in additional time for programme delivery



AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT BLACK THRIVE

Black Thrive is an organisation dedicated to addressing the inequalities faced by Black communities, with a particular focus on improving outcomes across mental health and wellbeing. Black Thrive's strategic aims include dismantling institutional racism, fostering equitable opportunities for Black communities, and amplifying Black voices in decision-making processes. Operating through its [Global](#) and [local branches across England](#), Black Thrive works with a variety of partners to create systemic change for Black communities. The Lambeth branch, established in 2016, leads community-based action to tackle health inequalities for Black communities, while the Global team provides research, advocacy, and strategic oversight to inform and support local interventions. The Black Thrive Research Institute and Observatory was established in 2021 with the aim 'To develop and implement meaningful and needed Black-led evidence-based research and policy to undo racial inequalities in health outcomes and healthcare, focusing on mental health inequalities among the Black community in the UK and globally.'

Children, Young People and Family Workstream

The Children and Young People (CYPF) workstream focuses on community engagement, centring youth voice and supporting organisations to improve offers for young people. The CYP team believe that all Black young people deserve to thrive and experience positive mental health and wellbeing at home, at school and in their local community. The workstream is driven by a commitment to address the persistent disparities experienced by young Black people in Lambeth and Southwark. Key strands of work include co-production with young people, partnership development with schools and mental health services, and advocacy for equitable resource allocation.

HOW BLACK THRIVE DEFINES BLACK PEOPLE

For the sake of this study, Black people were defined as those of African or Caribbean descent. This includes people of mixed Black heritage and those with multi-ethnic backgrounds that include African or Caribbean ancestry. This inclusive definition ensures that the diversity within Black communities is recognised and that all relevant voices are considered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the children and young people in Lambeth, along with their parents and guardians, whose time and efforts made this work possible. Special appreciation goes to the young researchers with whom we collaborated over the past three years.

We also acknowledge several organisations that supported our work with children and young people, and we are grateful for their help.

- Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
- Exceed Reading Stars
- Partnership for Young London
- Zine
- Chicken Shed
- Lambeth Libraries: Brixton, Durning and West Norwood
- Creativellaments
- Child Friendly Lambeth
- Jacque Cranston
- Autism Voice

Finally, special thanks go to Children in Need for providing the funding that made this work possible.

BACKGROUND

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BACKGROUND

In Lambeth, Black children and young people make up a significant proportion of the population, with estimates indicating that over 40% of the borough's youth (ages 10–19 years old) identify as Black or mixed Black heritage (Lambeth Council, 2022). Several studies and reports speak to the particular disparities experienced by Black children and young people. Data analysis by the Trust for London shows that Lambeth is one of the top 5 boroughs with the highest proportion of people who identify as Black, and it is also home to a number of the most deprived neighbourhoods in London (Trust for London, 2023). A report by King's College London found that Black people in Lambeth are more likely to live in deprivation (Impact on Urban Health, 2021) as defined by the government's indices of deprivation (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). This measure considers seven different measures of deprivation: income; employment; education, skills and training; health and disability; crime; barriers to housing and services; and living environment deprivation.

In the UK, various health inequalities are observed in specific communities (King's Fund, 2024). It has become widely accepted that factors in a person's life, such as housing conditions, quality of education, and employment, that are beyond one's access to healthcare, do influence health outcomes. This is the social determinants of health framework (World Health Organization, n.d.). Some of the social determinants of health are reflected in the indices of deprivation, including employment, education, and housing. Racism and discrimination can also exacerbate health inequalities, which Black children and young people experience. The Listening Project (Deti et al., 2024) was a partnership project, including Black Thrive, which explored the views of racially minoritised young people in London about mental health services. This project highlighted views of inadequate service provision driven by discrimination, issues of unemployment negatively impacting mental health and direct and indirect racism from public services harming life opportunities.

The mental health of Black children and young people is particularly negatively impacted by adultification. This is when children are not afforded the same perception of innocence and vulnerability as others by people and organisations who have power over the children (Davis et al., 2020). Jahnine Davis, the UK's leading researcher and safeguarding professional in adultification bias, defines the adultification of black children as '*a persistent and ongoing act of dehumanisation, which explicitly impacts Black children, and influences how they are safeguarded and protected.*' (Davis, 2022'). She reflects that Black children are more likely to experience adultification bias and that racism is the core of this experience. The experience of racism more broadly contributes to the poor mental health of Black children, as well as socio-economic disadvantage (Mental Health Foundation, 2024). This finding speaks to the interplay between mental health and deprivation

Lambeth's Child-Friendly Strategy with UNICEF

[Lambeth's child-friendly strategy](#), developed in partnership with UNICEF, represents a borough-wide commitment to embedding children's rights in local policy and practice. A UNICEF child-friendly community is one where children's rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled, ensuring that young people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and that services are designed around their needs. Lambeth has pledged to uphold these principles by enhancing participation, equity, and wellbeing for all children. As part of this commitment, Lambeth council has undertaken extensive consultation, invested in staff training, and established mechanisms to measure progress. The strategy places particular emphasis on marginalised groups, ensuring that the most vulnerable young people are prioritised in planning and delivery.

Black Thrive has contributed to the implementation of Lambeth's child-friendly strategy. This includes participating in co-design workshops, contributing to consultation processes, and taking part in UNICEF-led training to deepen understanding of children's rights. Crucially, Black Thrive has worked to ensure that Black young people and their families are meaningfully represented throughout the strategy's development and implementation, advocating for culturally competent approaches and inclusive decision-making.

Black Thrive's work aligns closely with priorities three, four, and five of Lambeth's child-friendly strategy. Priority three focuses on promoting equity and tackling discrimination, a core tenet of Black Thrive's mission, seen through initiatives such as anti-racism training for service providers. Priority four emphasises youth participation; Black Thrive supports youth advisory groups, providing platforms for Black young people to shape services and influence policy. Priority five centres on improving health and wellbeing, exemplified by Black Thrive's mental health advocacy and co-designed interventions that address the specific needs of Black youth. For example, Black Thrive collaborated with the mental health promotion team at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust to co-design recommendations for relevant services aimed at improving the mental health of young Black men.

BLACK THRIVE'S RESEARCH APPROACH AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CO-PRODUCTION

Black Thrive's research approach is grounded in the principles of co-production and Black-led inquiry, as demonstrated by the Black Thrive Global Research Institute Observatory. By ensuring that research is developed, led, and informed by Black communities themselves, lived experience situated within the sociohistorical context of racism is placed at the centre of knowledge generation. This commitment to elevating the voices and experiences of Black young people and families is fundamental to both the organisation's ethos and the effectiveness of its research.

Participatory research is an approach that actively involves those most affected by a particular issue in every stage of the research process (Cornwall et al., 1995) (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Rather than treating community members as passive subjects, participatory research positions them as equal partners in the design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. This method aims to ensure that research is relevant to participants' lived experiences, empowers individuals and groups, and helps shift traditional power dynamics by valuing community knowledge and perspectives. As a result, the evidence generated is often more meaningful and effective in driving positive social change.

As this approach shifts traditional power dynamics, it can support Black Thrive's aims to tackle racial inequalities and oppressive systems through research. Embedding participatory research into the work of Black Thrive ensures that the voices of those often marginalised in traditional research are not only centred but also guide the research design, activities, and insights generated. This approach can empower participatory researchers and increase their agency to change the systems around them. It also validates community knowledge and seeks to shift power dynamics in decision-making. By making space for community voices, Black Thrive challenges traditional structures and works towards fairer outcomes for Black young people in Lambeth. The process of co-producing research allows findings to be firmly rooted in lived experience, building trust and fostering collaboration with the communities served.

While many third-sector organisations aspire to co-production, there can be challenges in achieving it. Some of these challenges include resistance to shifting power back into the hands of those traditionally marginalised (whether knowingly or unknowingly), a limited understanding of how to do this ethically, and operational challenges such as budget and capacity limitations. Nonetheless, Black Thrive is dedicated to expanding the possibilities of co-production and continues to advocate for the necessary resources and systems to make genuine participatory research standard practice. Through these efforts, Black Thrive is establishing a benchmark for community-led research and demonstrating the transformative impact of centring lived experience in driving social change.

DEVELOPING A NEW APPROACH FOR PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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CHILDREN IN NEED PROJECT'S BACKGROUND AND AIM

Black Thrive successfully applied for Children in Need funding amid society emerging from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Studies have shown that young people's mental health suffered during the pandemic, with results showing higher levels of depression and behavioural challenges than before the pandemic (Montero-Marin et al., 2023). Research has also found that 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 (Kessler, et al., 2005). Recognising these challenges and the growing discussions about health inequalities impacting Black communities, highlighted by the disparate effects of the pandemic (UK Research and Innovation, 2025), the initial funding response aimed to empower Black children, young people and their families through participatory research.

The central aim of the programme was to train children aged eight to thirteen years old as peer researchers or young researchers, equipping them with the skills and support to conduct local research and use their findings to lobby for improvements in service provision. There was a focus on this age group, reflecting the findings that 50% of mental health challenges are developed by age 14. This initiative was designed not only to elevate the voices of children and young people but also to help them set priorities for a participatory fund managed by Black Thrive in collaboration with local children and young people. By fostering an environment in which families and communities could undertake research and leverage evidence, the workstream aimed to directly influence policy and commissioning decisions in Lambeth.

Black Thrive also viewed this programme as an opportunity to strengthen participatory research approaches with children and young people, with ambitions to test and refine co-production methodologies. The programme was foundational to the development of the CYP workstream, which was established around the time this funding was received. Previous CYP work had primarily focused on policy and strategic influencing, such as participating in local boards to support positive outcomes for young people, rather than on direct project delivery with young people. The team had to establish an effective infrastructure to deliver this programme and as a foundation for future CYP programmes. To enable effective delivery, new staff members were recruited, who have since continued to contribute to other CYP projects. The programme also served as a catalyst for building relationships with community partners, with CYP engaging more deeply in the Lambeth area. Black Thrive spoke at coffee mornings hosted by the Lambeth Early Help team, the Lambeth Parent Forum, and the Living Well Network Alliance, presenting the programme and engaging professionals and parents in understanding its content and context.

Alongside this engagement work, the CYP team was developing effective policies and procedures that promoted good safeguarding practices and ways to build trusting relationships with young people and their families.

Through these efforts, Black Thrive developed vital links with community organisations dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Lambeth. This groundwork not only enhanced the reach and effectiveness of the Children in Need programme but also laid the foundation for future community-led initiatives focused on empowering and actively involving young people.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

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RESEARCH ETHICS AND SAFEGUARDING

Black Thrive did not seek formal ethics approval for this programme because no academic research partner was available to lead the process. Nevertheless, the team upheld rigorous standards of care and ethics by applying the CYPF team's safeguarding policies and procedures throughout the research and conducting a comprehensive risk assessment. Parental consent was obtained for all participants, and strict confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Additional safeguards included a high adult-to-child ratio in sessions, recruiting a child therapist for support, allowing children to withdraw at any time, and not permitting siblings to participate as Tree of Life participants to further protect confidentiality. All data collected through the research adhered to GDPR guidance.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Children in Need programme took place from 2022 until 2025 and involved several key phases of activity. The timeline below outlines the programme activities that took place over four years, and further details about these activities are provided below.

At Black Thrive, a project team was established, comprising a mix of staff from the newly established team and research colleagues.



2022

**RECRUITMENT AND UPSKILLING YOUNG RESEARCHERS
APR - OCT**

**RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN
NOV - DEC**

2023

**RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
JAN - OCT**

**TOL STUDY DESIGN
NOV - DEC**

2024

**TOL STUDY DESIGN
JAN - MAY**

**DATA ANALYSIS AND VALIDATION
JUN - SEP**

**THRIVE & VIBE
PROGRAMME DESIGN
OCT - DEC**

2025

**THRIVE & VIBE
PROG. DESIGN
JAN**

**THRIVE & VIBE PROG
FEB - MAR**

RECRUITMENT AND UPSKILLING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Recruiting children and young people

A multi-stage approach was implemented to recruit young people to participate in the programme. Initial recruitment efforts were supported by Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) and Exceed Reading Stars, who played key roles in identifying and encouraging eligible children to join the two-day programme introduction held in May 2022. A targeted recruitment drive followed in June and July to promote the summer bootcamp, with information widely disseminated through both digital and traditional channels. Online tools, such as Snapchat, were used to reach young audiences, and hard-copy flyers were distributed to various community groups. Although the Snapchat advertisements generated strong engagement, as evidenced by the number of views, this did not translate into actual sign-ups.

Introducing the programme and research skills

The two-day introductory programme was successfully delivered in May 2022 with the support of MTVH, engaging thirty children aged eight to thirteen years from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds who lived in or attended school in Lambeth. The programme introduced participants to the programme and its research focus, covering fundamental questions such as: What is peer research? What is ethics? How can I become a peer researcher? Creative activities were integrated throughout the sessions, making research concepts accessible and engaging for young participants. This approach fostered good engagement and curiosity among the children.

The research bootcamp, held over a week during the summer of 2022, attracted twelve young people. The bootcamp's content was co-developed through collaboration with King's College London, Centre for Society and Mental Health (KCL CSMH), and emphasised a high level of youth participation. A notable activity was the 'lunch challenge', which required the young researchers to collaboratively decide on their lunch orders each day, encouraging teamwork and decision-making. A range of creative and interactive techniques was used to effectively communicate research concepts. The presentation slides featured bright colours and cartoon images of young children to foster a sense of inclusion and representation. Synonyms were used to clarify complex terms, and games were incorporated, such as one designed to help participants understand the meaning of "ethical." These methods ensured that the sessions were both informative and engaging, tailored to the participants' age group.

Of the twelve children who attended the summer bootcamp, seven expressed interest in continuing and applied to become long-term young researchers. Ultimately, 11 young people were recruited to join as young researchers:

- Six had attended the summer bootcamp
- Four had participated in another workshop as part of the broader Children in Need programme
- One additional applicant joined independently.

There were seven girls and four boys. The median age of the students at the time of joining the programme was 10 years.

To ensure that all young researchers received consistent training, the Partnership for Young London delivered research training across two weekends, building on the foundation established during the boot camp and equipping all participants with the same level of understanding. The young researchers also developed an early version of the research questions used in the research study, which was:

What factors impact the mental health and wellbeing of young Black/mixed heritage children who live, study or play in Lambeth?

RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN AND CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Following the training days provided by the Partnership for Young London, the young researchers were supported in developing a survey, as they felt this would be an effective research tool. This took place from November 2022 until February 2023. By the end of this time period, the young researchers had concluded that the survey would not be an effective tool and were losing interest in developing it

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY

Throughout 2023, a significant portion of the programme's focus was dedicated to supporting young people in exploring creative methods for engaging in and delivering research. These activities also provided opportunities for the young researchers to examine various aspects of identity, which contributed to both research design and fostering connections among the group. In several instances, these activities were extended beyond the core group of young researchers to include additional young people.

Art Workshops: Collages and Mapping Lambeth

Several workshops were organised using artistic methodologies, three of which involved participants outside the group of young researchers. During these sessions, children were encouraged to create collages and maps that illustrated their experiences and perspectives on living in Lambeth.

As the programme progressed, the young researchers identified that voices from some key marginalised groups, particularly children and young people with special educational needs, were underrepresented. To address this gap, the project team collaborated with Autism Voice to conduct the collage activity with a group of 18 children they recruited who had varying levels of support needs, ensuring a broader and more inclusive range of perspectives.

Using Comics to Explore Wellbeing

Another workshop used comics as a medium for the young researchers to discuss and reflect on their current lives and to express their hopes for the future. With the facilitator's support, participants used the comic format to creatively explore themes related to wellbeing, encouraging self-expression and future-oriented thinking.

Exploring Drama as a Research Tool

Workshops were also held to investigate how drama could be used as a creative research approach. These sessions featured more active and expressive activities, enabling participants to explore mental health and wellbeing through drama workshopping tools and techniques. The young researchers quickly realised that this was not their preferred method, which was also helpful in narrowing down the kinds of creative practices they wanted to explore.

Cultural Enrichment Activities

At the outset of the programme in October 2022, Ebony Horse Club invited the young researchers to participate in a taster session addressing key topics including Holistic Wellbeing, Horse Care, and Rider Care. This activity made a traditionally elitist sport accessible to children who wouldn't usually participate in it. It was also an opportunity to participate in an outdoor activity, which can have a positive impact on mental health (Caryl et al., 2024).

In October 2023, a special creative research session was held as part of Black History Month. The young researchers discussed the theme of "Saluting Sisters" and were encouraged to identify inspiring women in society to whom they could relate. Each participant researched and discussed their chosen figure with the group, fostering a sense of connection, inspiration, and shared learning among the young researchers.

The young researchers, accompanied by some of their parents, participated in cultural outings to further support their learning and engagement. One such trip was to see Ballet Black in May 2023, a ballet production featuring Black dancers, which promoted awareness of diversity within the dance world. In February 2024, the group of young researchers, along with some of their parents, attended a theatre show at Brixton House called 'Is Dat u Yh?'. This production explored themes of childhood and growing up as a Black British millennial, offering additional perspectives and inspiration relevant to the research.

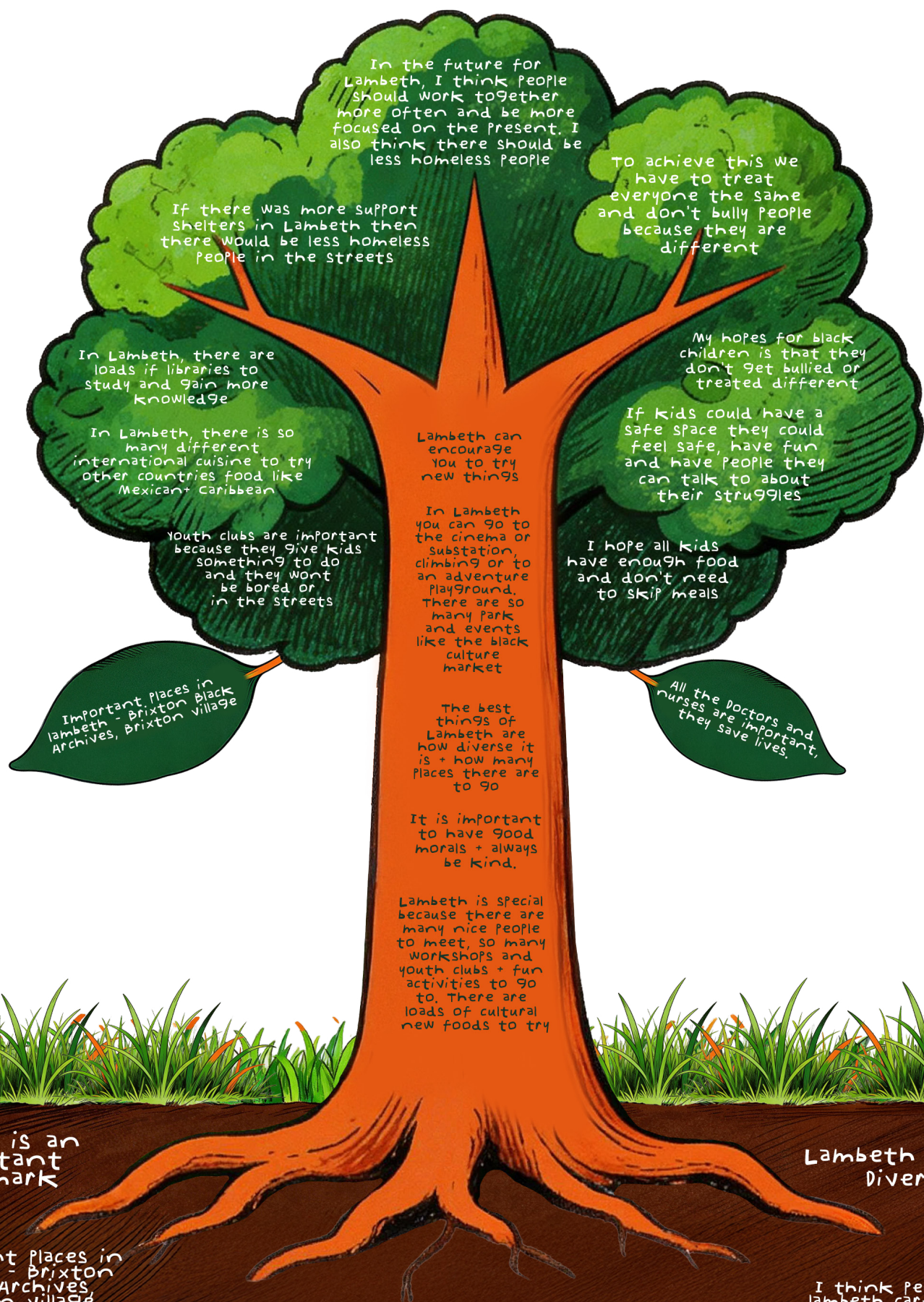
Support from the child therapist

To ensure that the children and young people were supported to safely explore topics that could be emotionally difficult, such as negative mental health experiences and racism, the CYP team worked with a child-focused therapist. She ran sessions with the young researchers from January to March 2023 to build a relationship with them and support them in understanding her role, what wellbeing can mean, and how to have respectful conversations. This allowed the therapist to observe the group dynamics among the young researchers and adjust the workshop plans to better their needs.

USING THE TREE-OF-LIFE METHODOLOGY TO SURFACE THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The Tree of Life (ToL) methodology is a trauma-informed approach rooted in narrative therapy, designed to empower children and young people to share their stories in ways that foster a sense of belonging, resilience, and strength. Developed by Ncube (2006), it uses a tree as a creative visual metaphor, where each part represents aspects of an individual's life:

- The roots signify origins, family, and community
- The trunk symbolises skills and knowledge
- The branches represent dreams and hopes
- The leaves honour important people, and
- The fruits embody gifts received, such as acts of kindness or care from others.



Narrative therapy, as described by White and Epsom (1990), provides a blame-free framework that allows participants to explore their life stories, making it particularly effective for those who have encountered trauma or challenging experiences.

Designing the ToL study and recruitment

Young researchers collaborated closely with the Black Thrive project team to refine the ToL study design, define participation requirements, and support recruitment efforts. This took place between November 2023 and April 2024. The participant requirements for the ToL study were decided, making it open to children aged eight to thirteen who live, study, or play in the borough of Lambeth and/or identify as Black or mixed Black heritage. Information sheets about the research were created to support recruitment efforts. The sheets explained the purpose of the study, the lead investigator, and the details of the child therapist recruited to support the children involved in the research.

The themes explored in the ToL workshops were surfaced through the creative engagement activities that took place in 2023 and 2024. The ToL methodology was particularly suitable for the topics brought forward by the young researchers, which included identity, safety, poverty, and bullying, subjects that often carry traumatic narratives. Using the ToL approach, each theme could be explored in depth, encouraging participants to reflect on both their struggles and their strengths. The visual and interactive nature of drawing and discussing the tree created a supportive environment for children to engage with potentially sensitive topics.

The research questions (see Appendix 1) were carefully developed using the ToL methodology to ensure they addressed each topic from a trauma- and a strength-informed perspective. The questions were reviewed multiple times by the young researchers and the project team to ensure clarity and appropriateness for the target age group, including the use of child-friendly language tailored to their needs.

There was a shared commitment to diversity, with young researchers emphasising the importance of including participants from minoritised groups, such as those who are disabled, neurodivergent, LGBTQIA+, and others. To achieve this, the project team engaged local youth services that worked with these communities and conducted community outreach, visiting schools and spaces throughout Lambeth to explain the aims of the young researchers' programme. The young researchers played an active role in promoting the study also, distributing posters, and sharing the programme with their peers to encourage participation. Due to the young researchers' active participation in recruitment, the project team were able to promote the study directly to a local primary school and co-deliver a presentation at a whole-school assembly with a young researcher. The project team emphasised the importance of young researchers connecting with new community members beyond their immediate circles to mitigate bias and maintain the integrity of the research.

Tree of Life Study Participants

A total of fifteen young people signed up to take part in the Tree of Life study. Of these, eleven applicants met the eligibility criteria and were included in the workshops. However, five of the eligible participants, including three boys, withdrew from the study on the day the first workshop was held.

The demographics of the final group are as follows:

- Gender: one boy and five girls.
- Age: between nine and thirteen years old, with a median age of 11 years old.
- Ethnicity: All participants identified as either Black African or Black Caribbean.
- Location: Every participant lived within the borough of Lambeth.
- Free School Meals: Five participants were recipients of free school meals at their school.
- Neurodiversity: One participant disclosed a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), while another participant shared that they are suspected to be neurodivergent, though this is currently undiagnosed.

The data collection process consisted of in-person workshops led by the Black Thrive project team, with support from a child therapist, Jacque Cranston. There were two workshops, each lasting three hours, held over the May half-term in 2024. During these sessions, ToL questions were posed to participants, creating a structured yet empathetic space for discussion. With parental and participant consent, video and audio recordings documented these sessions, ensuring a comprehensive and respectful record of the young people's contributions and experiences. At the start of the workshop, the purpose of having a camera to record the session was explained, along with how the data would be used, stored, and when the recording would be deleted. This helped to put the young people at ease.

Debrief sessions were held after each ToL workshops. During these sessions, the Black Thrive project team reflected on the effectiveness of the workshops and identified potential areas for improvement to implement in subsequent sessions.

DATA ANALYSIS BY YOUNG RESEARCHERS

To support young researchers in conducting data analysis and coding, three training workshops were delivered in late April and early May 2024, helping them learn these skills. The young researchers were provided with several texts and asked to share their understanding of different aspects of the text, and on another occasion, to highlight key words and sentences that can be used to develop analysis codes.

The young researchers worked closely with the CYPF and research team to review transcripts of the ToL workshops in a session held in June. These transcripts were shared with the young researchers, who, with guidance and support, engaged in the coding process. Together, they identified and assigned codes to key parts of the data, ensuring the analysis reflected the perspectives and insights of the young participants in the study.

After the initial coding, the Black Thrive research project team members organised the codes into a comprehensive coding scheme, which was then consistently applied to the remaining transcripts. This collaborative approach led to the emergence of preliminary themes and insights that captured key issues and strengths highlighted during the workshops. Building on these insights, the research team members, together with the young researchers, developed recommendations to address the common challenges and needs identified by the participants.

To validate and further refine the themes, the research team engaged in additional testing with young researchers and members of the Baytree Centre, a social inclusion charity for women and girls. Eight girls from the Baytree Centre, all aged between 11 and 16 and identifying as Black or mixed Black heritage, participated in these sessions, with two young researchers facilitating the conversation. Only anonymised themes, insights and recommendations were shared with the group. There was an intention to test the themes with young boys. However, due to logistical challenges, this was not possible during the available time.

The validation step ensured that the findings were grounded in the lived experiences of the broader community and reflected a wider range of voices and perspectives.



RESULTS

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ENGAGEMENT ACROSS ALL ACTIVITIES

Across all activities, the young researchers and other children who were involved contributed to activities and discussions. In certain activities, specific group dynamics emerged, which are detailed further below. Overall, it was observed that young boys tended to be quieter than young girls in larger group discussions. The boy who shared most openly was the youngest.

BOOTCAMP EXPERIENCE

The bootcamp session provided young people with an invaluable opportunity to actively engage in a process that prioritised their voices and perspectives. During the planning stages of the programme, some Black Thrive team members assumed that the children and young people would have limited ability to contribute to coding and analysis activities. It emerged that young participants could be more involved in coding and analysis activities based on their understanding of these concepts. This experience challenged some of the team members' assumptions.

One of the most transformative aspects of the bootcamp was the lunch challenge. Initially, many participants found this task challenging. The project team noticed that young people sometimes struggled to move beyond their differences. However, by encouraging kindness, open discussion, and creative thinking, the team created an environment where participants felt safe and secure enough to express themselves. The young people proved highly receptive to these approaches, and by the end of the week, they demonstrated a more thoughtful and constructive attitude toward conflict. They had learned how to make collective decisions without relying on adults. This shift not only improved group dynamics but also helped reduce traditional power imbalances (adults holding more power than children), ensuring that every child's voice was respected and valued. This collaborative exercise became a cornerstone of the week, fostering the development of vital skills such as communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution.

The impact of the bootcamp was evident in the feedback from the young researchers. One participant shared,

"They taught me how to be more independent, as most things I and all the other kids had to do ourselves, like order lunch (which is more of a challenge than you would think), and I made many new friends."

This sentiment highlights both the practical and social growth experienced during the programme. Additional quotes from the participants further illuminate the significance of the experience. One young person remarked,

"We talked about some of the issues that we young Black kids have that we want to improve and spoke about our experiences. Every day, I looked forward to going to see them and all the others."

Another reflected on the personal transformation fostered by the bootcamp:

This programme has really helped me to be comfortable with sharing my ideas and inputs, because I'm not really a person who is outgoing and confident; I'm normally quite shy and avoid awkward situations. However, this research programme helped me understand that that's okay and my views won't be pushed aside - they will be heard (most of the time)."

Together, these experiences demonstrate how the bootcamp not only equipped young people with new skills but also empowered them to participate meaningfully in group decision-making and self-advocacy. The process fostered independence, built friendships, and created a space where young voices could truly be heard and valued.

CREATIVE RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Following the unsuccessful survey design, the use of a wide range of creative research activities helped the young researchers and children outside of the group to have a fun way to gain new skills. Some of the approaches were more engaging than others, and it was valuable to receive feedback from the young people and observe their level of engagement in the various workshops.

The Black Thrive project team was concerned that the creative activities may not have been clearly understood as a research method. Initially, it appeared that the young people did not recognise the potential for these activities to inform research processes. However, when moving on to the research design, the young people demonstrated an understanding of the various approaches.

During the sessions involving the child therapist, she identified several challenging working dynamics within the group, which became more pronounced when the young researchers worked in smaller groups. During one of the sessions, it was observed that the young researchers struggled to manage disagreements and spoke unkindly to one another. They were reminded of the agreement made regarding how to interact with each other respectfully. In another session, older young researchers did not want to work with the young researchers.

Overall, the group worked well together, with support along the way to reinforce the agreed-upon ways of working, ensuring that all children felt safe and comfortable engaging with the sessions.

Throughout the various sessions, the project team continuously reminded the young researchers of their current point in the process. This helped to surface discussions about any gaps in understanding and seek reconfirmation from young researchers about the approach being taken.

TREE OF LIFE DISCUSSIONS

The Tree of Life discussions revealed some truly insightful perspectives from children that shed light on their experiences in Lambeth.

Identity

- When it comes to identity, the children indicated that it is a multifaceted concept shaped deeply by influences from family, community, ethnicity, and their countries of origin. This understanding showcases their reflective nature in navigating their identities.
- In their discussions, the children highlighted the power of kindness as a cornerstone of their identities and a strong strategy against bullying.

Challenges in Lambeth

- The children expressed that Lambeth presents a rich tapestry, marked by diverse identities and varying socioeconomic backgrounds. They identified homelessness and housing issues as pressing challenges facing the community, highlighting the need for awareness and action.
- The discussions also shone a light on community-driven efforts to combat poverty, revealing stories of neighbourly assistance through donations and school partnerships, showing the strength of community bonds.
- However, children noted a concerning absence of institutional support in Lambeth, emphasising a reliance on family and community for help. This points to an opportunity for organisations to step up and fill this gap.

Personal challenges

- The impacts of bullying surfaced as a significant concern, with children noting its harmful effects on both mental and physical health. They conveyed a deep understanding of how bullying creates a detrimental cycle, where victims can sometimes become bullies themselves.
- Schools were identified as environments where bullying and racism can flourish. While instances of support were acknowledged, they often came from individual teachers rather than systematic efforts, indicating a need for comprehensive strategies to address these critical issues.

Support systems

- A strong support system from family was unanimously recognised as vital for not only shaping one's identity but also nurturing a sense of safety and fueling future ambitions.
- Family emerged as a pivotal source of support for children dealing with bullying and racism, along with contributions from fellow members of the Black community. Their experiences reflect a strong sense of solidarity within their networks.
- Some children also mentioned the safety net provided by parental phone tracking, illustrating their parents' commitment to their wellbeing.
- While some institutional support was recognised, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of personal traits like resilience, self-awareness, and bravery. These characteristics are seen as valuable coping mechanisms for facing challenges such as bullying and feelings of insecurity.

Future opportunities

- The discussions included inspiring thoughts on the potential for self-employment, leveraging social media and marketing talents, which could open doors out of poverty for many.
- Finally, the children emphasised the importance of financial literacy, imparted by their families, as a crucial tool for managing poverty and striving for a more secure future.

These insights reflect the thoughtfulness and resourcefulness of the children and their community support networks in Lambeth, highlighting both their challenges and their hopes for a brighter future.

THE THRIVE AND VIBE WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Following the insights surfaced from the ToL workshops, the young researchers continued to work together to develop the Thrive and Vibe Wellbeing Programme. It was designed to address mental health topics that young people in Lambeth felt passionate about, combining these important themes with a range of creative activities. The programme took place from December 2024 until May 2025. 164 young people aged between eight and eighteen years participated in a series of four curated events during this time.

A key aspect of the programme was its collaborative approach. The young researchers involved met weekly at Brixton Tate Library to guide the direction and organisation of the programme. Their discussions covered every aspect of the initiative, including selecting the programme's name, deciding on workshop themes, recommending facilitators, identifying suitable venues and choosing collaborators. All activities were hosted within the Lambeth area, in partnership with local community organisations and businesses, ensuring that each event was rooted in the local context and accessible to the community.

For further details about the Thrive and Vibe Wellbeing Programme, please refer to the [full report here](#).



DISCUSSION

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This programme provided the Black Thrive project team with many key insights into how to approach participatory research projects effectively with young people.

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH TECHNICAL RESEARCH SKILLS AND RESEARCH DESIGN LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Empowering young people with technical research skills and giving them ownership of research design requires significant time and investment. Throughout the programme, training sessions and creative research activities emerged as an effective tool for supporting their upskilling. The young researchers effectively engaged in coding and analysis of the ToL workshop outputs. In creative research activities, it was important to be patient with young researchers, letting them enjoy the experience and not be too concerned about whether they could immediately apply it to the research design. Built into the process were multiple opportunities to recap previous research approaches, which helped young researchers understand the research techniques. This hands-on approach not only developed their technical competencies but also instilled confidence in their capacity to contribute meaningfully to research processes. There is a need for flexibility to accommodate changes in research design plans as young researchers gain a deeper understanding of how research tools are applied in practice. For example, the young researchers were supported in designing a survey over three months. However, this survey was not used, as the young researchers decided it was not an effective research tool.

CONSIDERING THE IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

The topics explored in the research surfaced challenging emotions for many participants, which is to be expected given the topics of racism and bullying, amongst others, that came up. Having a child-focused therapist on the team at workshops ensured that appropriate attention was given to children's wellbeing, relevant resources were signposted, and one-to-one support was available as needed. Whilst the young people involved in this programme did not take up the one-to-one support, the team believes it is an essential safeguarding practice to have a child therapist available to support when exploring complex issues such as racism and mental health.

Furthermore, using the ToL trauma-informed methodology and adapting the content to be age appropriate created an environment that allowed children to safely explore potentially emotionally challenging experiences.

USING CHILD-FRIENDLY APPROACHES TO SUPPORT RESEARCH UNDERSTANDING

Although the CYP and research team brought experience in working with young people and participatory research, respectively, no individual had prior experience with participatory research with young people. This gap affected programme delivery, underscoring the need for additional time to develop age-appropriate approaches and materials. Adapting language and materials to match children's comprehension levels proved crucial in ensuring ongoing, meaningful participation. For example, graphics and engaging content were used to explain complex research concepts such as analysis and ethics.

However, the team encountered challenges when testing research questions with the young researchers. Due to the training and various activities they were involved in, their baseline understanding was higher than average for their age group. Whilst they provided valuable feedback to refine the questions, the team noticed that some questions were confusing for the ToL participants and required more explanation than anticipated. Testing the ToL questions with a broader range of children, particularly those who had not participated in the bootcamps, could have enriched the data collected at the ToL workshop.

EXPERIENCES WITH REPRESENTATIVE RECRUITMENT

Overall, more girls participated in the activities as young researchers and participants. Whilst there is limited evidence from a systematic review, there are some sources that suggest more women participate in qualitative research than men (Ryan et al., 2018; Borg et al., 2024). The recruitment to this programme reflects this trend. It's unclear what led to the greater recruitment and participation of girls compared to boys. However, it should be noted that three of the four boys recruited to the ToL study dropped out on the day of the first workshop, compared with only one of the six girls.

There was also a notable absence of children and young people who openly identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Puberty increases children and young people's sexual feelings, leading to them developing a sexual identity. Some research suggests that puberty begins at 10 years old (Savin-Williams, 2005), although this may vary depending on the young person. Considering this, the age group participating in this are less likely to have developed their own sexual identity and therefore identify with any type of sexuality. Furthermore, the discussion topics did not cover romantic relationships or sexuality. This may reflect the younger age group of participants, as well as their interest and comfort in discussing these topics.

The programme also acknowledges that there is some research suggesting the presence of greater stigma around LGBTQIA+ identities within the Black community (Bird et al., 2023) (Rehman et al., 2021), which can further hinder representation and comfort in discussing issues related to this.

CREATING A GROWTH ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Creating a safe environment for exploration, skills development, and self-expression was prioritised. During planning and implementation, the team identified each participant's skills and interests and actively sought ways to nurture them. For instance, to strengthen decision-making skills, the programme introduced the 'lunch challenge' in which participants collectively chose lunch options within a set budget and parameters. This exercise fostered collaboration, negotiation, and practical problem-solving, giving the young people ownership over both the process and its outcomes. Having group outings also supported the young researchers in connecting outside of structured activities, increasing their comfort and confidence in working together.

It was vital to foster a growth environment at a comfortable pace, not rushing the children or expecting them to understand new concepts or learn to work together collaboratively too quickly. The programme encouraged this by supporting participants through the boot camp, enabling them to develop pitches for topics to focus on in another Children in Need-funded programme, Thrive and Vibe.

It was also noticed that participants in both the bootcamp and ToL sessions did not feel as comfortable sharing their thoughts initially. This improved throughout the sessions as the young people were encouraged to share what mattered to them, and their voices were centred. They became more comfortable with the project team and each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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For those seeking to deliver research projects about the experiences of children and young people, particularly those who have Black heritage, the following is recommended:

Develop a participatory research approach that gives space for children and young people to have agency in shaping and leading research about them

Involving Black and Black mixed heritage children through participatory research is crucial for genuinely empowering them and amplifying their voices, rather than including them tokenistically. This programme engaged children from the very beginning, allowing them to participate in recruitment, theme selection, and data analysis (including theme identification), and to offer suggestions to enhance their schools and communities in Lambeth. Although there may be some hesitation or concern about involving children at every stage, their participation in this programme was both empowering and impressive, particularly in terms of their grasp of research analysis.

Create a psychologically safe environment for children and young people to effectively engage with the research design and delivery

Participatory research can be more challenging because it is a less common approach and because people need to learn new ways of working and unlearn traditional approaches. When conducting participatory research with children, another layer of learning is introduced: the need to consider safeguarding and parent involvement. To ensure a safe environment, it's recommended to involve an expert in child therapy, conduct a thorough risk and safeguarding assessment, and adhere rigorously to any risk mitigation and safeguarding activities. Alongside this, it is crucial to be mindful of power dynamics between adults and children and to respect children's agency and experience. Adults involved in working with children may require training to support them in working compassionately and respectfully with children. Using trauma-informed approaches for research will also contribute to creating a psychologically safe environment.

Develop child-friendly and age-appropriate materials

It will be essential to explain new concepts and terms in an age-appropriate way for your work, whilst not assuming that young people are unable to understand them. For example, consider where graphics and visual diagrams can replace text. Continually seek feedback from children and young people to ensure that the language used is appropriate and reflects the level of understanding and maturity of the young people involved.

Create a nurturing environment for children and young people

Throughout programme planning and implementation, learn about the existing skills the young people have and any interests in new skills they would like to develop. Proactively facilitate opportunities for these skills to be developed in line with participatory research, even if beyond the programme's aims and objectives. This may include investing time in additional training sessions to learn about qualitative research methods that could strengthen the programme or future research.

Ensure the adults involved have the relevant experience and support to work with children

As participatory research with children and young people is not a common practice, your team may not have people with research expertise and experience working with young people. Where this is the case, intentionally build a team that has the right mix of skills and experience. Foster an environment that encourages the sharing of knowledge to ensure that children and young people are interacting with adults who have the appropriate experience to work with them. The adults working on the team should consistently reflect on and receive feedback on their approach to engaging with young people, to ensure they are acting in line with the expectations of all team members.

Build in additional time for project delivery

Working in this way will require more time than a traditional research project working with adults. When designing project timelines, consider building in time for upskilling adults involved in the work, building relationships with children, young people, and their guardians, and upskilling young people to participate in the project at a comfortable pace. Having less pressure to rush to meet timelines will ensure a better experience and research outputs.



CONCLUSION

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this report highlights the vital need to centre the voices and experiences of Black children in Lambeth when seeking to influence the systems that impact their lives. By engaging children and young people as active partners at every stage of the research, from design to analysis, the programme has produced insights that are both authentic and meaningful. This participatory approach not only enriches the research outcomes but also builds valuable skills among young participants, equipping them for future leadership and advocacy roles. Moving forward, it is imperative that similar inclusive methodologies are adopted to ensure that all research and policy initiatives genuinely reflect those they aim to serve. The lessons learned from this programme provide a robust foundation for continued progress and underscore the importance of collaboration, reflection, and ongoing support in participatory research with children and young people.



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APPENDIX

11

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FROM THE TREE OF LIFE STUDY QUESTIONS FROM THE TREE OF LIFE STUDY

The questions listed below are grouped by the different aspects of the tree of life framework and themes agreed upon by the young researchers.

Research theme	Roots: foundations, e.g. religion, culture, music, etc. – the things that make you who you are	Trunk: Imagine the trunk of a tree is like our inner strength – what makes us strong and confident.	Branches: represent our hopes, dreams and wishes.	Leaves: important people in your life.	Fruits: gifts received and given, e.g. kindness, love, support.
Bullying	Can you share experiences or stories about times when bullying was faced and how our caring community roots made things better for them?	What qualities do you think help us stand tall against bullying in Lambeth? How can these qualities help our community prevent and handle bullying situations?	How do you think bullying could affect this part of someone's life? Discussion: Can you think of cool ideas or programs that can grow like branches to stop bullying in these areas and make our community even better?	Who are the important people in your life that you would refer to if you ever face bullying? What role do the important people in your life play when dealing with bullying?	Have you witnessed or experienced an act of kindness or support from anyone in the community that helped someone who was being bullied? How did that make Lambeth a better place?
Feeling unsafe	What things in our community make you feel safe and like you belong like the roots of a tree? Discussion: Can you tell us stories about when you or someone didn't feel safe or wasn't cared for how the special parts of our community, like traditions and things we value, helped you or them feel safe again?	What skills and abilities do you have, that help you feel safe?	Are there certain parts of our community where people might not feel safe? How could this affect your hopes, dreams and aspirations?	Who are the important people in your life that make you feel safe? Can you share stories/examples of when they did this?	Have you ever experienced a time when someone's kindness or actions made you feel safer and happier while you were in Lambeth?
Identity	Think about your roots, the things that make you who you are. What makes you special and different? How do our unique qualities make Lambeth a wonderful place? Discussion question: Can you tell stories or share experiences that celebrate the cool and unique things about everyone in our community?	What are the special things about you that make you feel strong? Discussion: How can we make Lambeth a place where everyone feels strong and proud of who they are?	We all have hopes, dreams, and wishes. What are your own aspirations for your life? Can you think of ways our community can help you achieve your aspirations? Discussion: Can you share examples/ ideas of activities & friendships that can grow our community?	Who are the important people in your life who make you feel really special and happy about who you are? What is special about them that makes you feel that way?	Can you share a time when something happened in Lambeth that made you feel good about who you are or where you come from? What made that moment so special?
Poverty	Can you share of a time where you or someone in the community struggled with meeting their essential needs. What did that look like? How do your roots help you manage moments where you can't meet your essential needs?	What are the skills and abilities that people need to help them deal with not being able to meet their essential needs?	How does poverty affect our hopes, dreams and wishes?	How do important people help you or other people when dealing with poverty?	Can you share any examples of acts of kindness or support that helped make things better for someone facing challenges with money or not having enough? How did this make our community a more caring place?

Council programs: Imagine you are in charge of making Lambeth a better place for children like you. What are some things you think the council could do to help stop bullying, make sure you feel safe in Lambeth, celebrate who you are and make sure they have what they need to be happy?

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