Reviewer’s report

Title: Using the Nominal Group Technique to Involve Young People in an Evidence Synthesis which Explored 'Risk' in Inpatient Mental Healthcare

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Reviewer: Vanessa Pinfold

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for inviting me to review this article which I read with interest. It is well written. I enjoyed reading it.

I have a few comments that may improve the article. One concern I have is that I have reviewed a few pieces for this journal and they tend to be about one off meetings, written up as research to build an evidence base around PPI. As with all research I think this paper needs a limitations section at the very least to acknowledge that best practice is for young people's voices to be found throughout the research process from bid development to research phases and dissemination. Working with Young Minds is excellent. But this paper presents a one-off input. More importantly there is no sense the young people's involvement stretches into phase2. Will the stakeholder group meet again to look at results out of the evidence synthesis? As far as I can tell this paper is written about a stakeholder meeting that had 2 young people in it and the young minds rep (who also brought the views of 7 people not in the room). What is their influence outside of this one part of the research process? I do think it's important to situate what is a very useful piece of work in a wider context, because I'm not sure the recommendation would be to duplicate this as PPI, but instead as one component of it. But that is my personal opinion.

Another general piece of feedback is I got confused in this paper about who the stakeholders were and how equality was created in a meeting of 14 people (I don't know how many, the figure is not reported). Because the paper talks about being about adaption for young people to engage in the process. And the adaptations were for young people but stakeholders were others too. The exclusion of parents (or carer both terms were used) from the actual meeting, but the inclusion of other adults, and lots of research staff does need explanation. I think the adaption you are describing in the nominal group technique was previous consultation - bringing views via young minds consultation. But is unclear, were there others?

Throughout the paper I think you need to define terms used. The ones I picked out were:

a. Collaboration with young people
b. Engagement with young people
c. Co-production
d. Contribution of young people

PPI looks at engagement, participation and involvement. These are not the same things and should not be used interchangeably. Collaboration means something very specific in the INVOLVE guidance and acknowledging the limitations of your collaboration would be useful as described in the paper - there might be other examples in the study (but we don't know).

Feedback on content

* Abstract is the first thing I read obviously, and the conclusions seemed basic. To say nominal group technique might benefit from adoption isn't a very strong conclusion when that is what the paper is all about. Also saying the technical aspects to adapt are warm up and ice-breaker (which are not mentioned anywhere else in your paper) again does not do justice to what you write in the main body if the text. I suggest you revisit your conclusions and revise this abstract.

* Page 2 - plain language summary. Unclear what 'contribution' of young people means here. Sounds vague and overly generalised. Line 19. Might be better to say we wanted to include a contribution from young people alongside other stakeholders with expertise to guide the research team in decisions made setting parameters for the review.

* Page 2 - plain language summary. It does not refer to other stakeholders at all. This is something I noted in opening comments - I think you need to acknowledge that nominal group was more than a process to capture the views of young people …

* Do you need to say adapted nominal group technique was used? Line 21.

* Everyone having an equal say - when most of the young people's views were presented via another person (young mind coordinator and the consultation work) thus many were outside the nominal group. Did they have an equal say? Might be better to say that the process allows varied opinions to be heard from different stakeholders.

* Line 24 - how the stakeholder group helped to shape the focus of the study - I am not sure this paper does this, as it shows how young people shaped the research - but the stakeholder group was larger .. and only 2/14(TBC) people were young people in the room. Should it say shows how young people helped shape.

* Background page 4 line 53. The word co-production is mentioned first off here but does not feature in the abstract. Should it? I would suggest you have looked to co-produce decisions on the scope of your review and would be useful to say this in the abstract. Also on page 5 line 77 it is mentioned but not defined. Can you define what you mean by co-production in a research context?
* Background page 4 line 62. The phrase "informed" young people is used. Not sure what the definition is of an informed young person. Do you mean has experience of inpatient use, might be better to say that instead …

* Background page 4 line 62. It says here that you wanted to ensure 'their perspectives' weren't filtered by adults but I think in the method section the two young people were supported to attend by practitioners. Apologies if I misunderstood. And only 2 young people were "in the room". So this seems contradictory to your actual methods?

* Background page 4 line 64. What does a contribution to 'crafting' this paper mean? Not a term you often see in an academic publication. Are they an author? Did they review a draft? I think you need to state contribution.

* Study overview pages 5 and 6, several mentions of stakeholders - I think its imp to be clear if this paper is about all stakeholders or really only the young people component (as per other comments above).

* Engaging young people, page 6. Line 113. Might be helpful to say what age range you are using when you say young people? 14-25 or ??? What is young?!

* The paper is very descriptive in places, which has the advantage that others could replicate when you did, but could do with some editing so strategy and rationale come first followed by description of how you achieved that. Page 7 for example.

* The method you choose involved the young minds coordinator to be the spokesperson for the 5 people who provided consultative conversations. More discussion of that and reflection on it would be useful.

* Page 7, nominal group technique. I am still struggling with the idea that the technique puts equal weight on views - but only 2 young people were in the room to express a view. Were decisions made in the group - or did research team make them later? Not sure the decision making part of line 43 is described anywhere .. Sorry if I missed this in the text.

* Another question - why only one nominal group was held - is that standard practice? References to show that?

* Page 8 step 1. Line 154. More detail would be helpful. How many people were in the stakeholder group? A quick tally shows:

   a. 7 research team members

   b. 5 practitioners (adults) plus young minds person?

   c. 2 young people (would be useful to know ages of this 2 people as per definition of "young")
The strategy to not have a parent in the room would be usefully explained further as there were other adults. Why practitioners ok but parents not? Who might have been parents too of people with MH problems. Links to issue of identity and multiple identities and experiences that people bring into a room/ group or choose not to.

Page 8 line 31 says 7 people were in the young minds consultation. But on page 7 line 127 it says 5. Which was it?

Page 9, the statement that young people might find silence uncomfortable I think is potentially discriminatory. Anyone might. Actually young people are used to silence - in their exams, in libraries studying in classroom working. I just think this needs removing. There are a few statements about young people in the paper that could be carefully reviewed to ensure they are not stereotyped.

Page 9, line 186 the term here is carer - I think you mean parent as that was used before - need to keep terms consistent. This process of absent voices being "presented" in the room by others - needs far more reflection. Changes the dynamics of a conversation. The way I am reading the paper is that young people and the parent voice is "equal" in the room as they are presented. I encourage that to be reflected upon as a method.

Page 10, voting and ranking. Unclear if only those 'present' voted or if the people in the young mind consultation somehow voted too. How? Line 205. Also line 205 is the "person" here the 15 people in the stakeholder group - might be better to say this.

Page 11, table 1. Having read a lot of description we come to the voting data and the terms used in this paper seem unlikely to be those used in the room. Did the term dislocation come from young people? Why is this language used? Were young people comfortable with the concept of contagion to describe their experiences?

In the abstract it suggests that warm up experiences etc are imp for the group - no mention of this in body of your results sections. Ok - I see this now it's in your "limitations" section that is appearing nearer the end. I still think this needs to be better structured and more detailed.

Discussion from page 12 - first issue is need limitations section. Line 251 - wanting equal contribution - did your number impact on this?

Do you need to ref the statement on lines 236-238?

I think acknowledge the wider involvement of young people in your study is imp - how are they involved in stage2?

There is a big leap to the conclusions that young people encouraged you to think about risk differently - where is the evidence? Does table 1 need presenting by stakeholder - research team, clinicians and young people (and parent)?? Line 275 - where are those themes in table 1 - education, friendships and relationships?
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