Reviewer’s report

Title: Involving young people in BRIGHTLIGHT from study inception to secondary data analysis: insights from 10 years of user involvement

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Reviewer: Paul Charlton

Reviewer’s report:

Very well written article with a flow that brings the reader along well. Clearly of exceptional interest to an audience wider than public involvement including mainstream public and media interest.

The first diagram needs to have the acronym definitions at the head of the table and not at the bottom

The first footnote needs rewritten - training event for.....

There is a wealth of public involvement information addressed in this article making it necessary reading for all PPI development activities: the failure to usefully set up a Facebook page because of the host institution regulatory time lag and the ethics committees obligation on indigestible patient information material a couple of hard hitting negatives to attend to which were outside the control of the Brightlight YP support structures with the advisory panel mitigating with an audio version of the patient information

The outstanding achievement in PPIE expressed in the Brightlight study obligates the widest dissemination: in the articles own words -

"We have presented our reflections on 10 years' experience of involving young people in research. We cannot say how different the final BRIGHTLIGHT study might have been if all the preceding steps had not been in place, and the CCG and the YAP had not informed all stages of development work. To the research team, their input has felt rich and indeed invaluable, especially in identifying solutions to the many challenges we have faced in this decade of work. Many of these we would not have been considered and all their suggested changes were accepted as amendments unconditionally by the Research Ethics Committee. The CCG and YAP are valuable members of our team and through them we have managed to involve through consultation and collaboration over 1,200 young people, approximately the same number of participants in the BRIGHTLIGHT study (Figure 4)."

Recruitment and retention to the programmes of study are stated as the most significant achievements obtained by the YP involvement: EG the YP creative critique as to improving recruitment moving from a researcher approach achieved through an understanding of literature to an accessible and more graphic based information use. Retention rates increased from 30% to 60%.
The authors question whether the YP PPI account is weakened because there was no formalised evaluation mechanism. I can't agree that formalised evaluation would have lent richer understanding of the relationship based mechanism between the YPs involved and the Brightlight person resource engaging their support. The research impact is objectively described as most significantly recruitment and retention but throughout the article the centrality of researcher learning is described. The impact of researcher behaviour change through the YP involvement in Brightlight resonates repeatedly and is reported effectively. The mutuality of benefit was an intended purpose with the benefit to the involved YPs described such as learning about themselves and harder skills as public speaking and to the researchers as informing the study questions and methodology at first level principles.

The authors comment in the challenges of YP involvement such as Facebook and then new iterations of YP technology use. They also comment on involvement cost as high and of the practical difficulties of bringing the YPs together. The guidance to the latter point is very useful but clearly the adjustments required as to the first two lie with the institutions and funding bodies: being a member of an NIHR funding board the cost of involvement requested to our panel is miniscule - and always under-cossed. Researchers - please be more ambitious and demand the costing required for involvement! Reference this article when you do so! And shame on the publishing journal refusing to adjust to allow YP co-authorship!

Thank you to the determined and open minded researchers and persons supporting the YP involvement in Brightlight....

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An exceptional article

**Quality of written English**
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