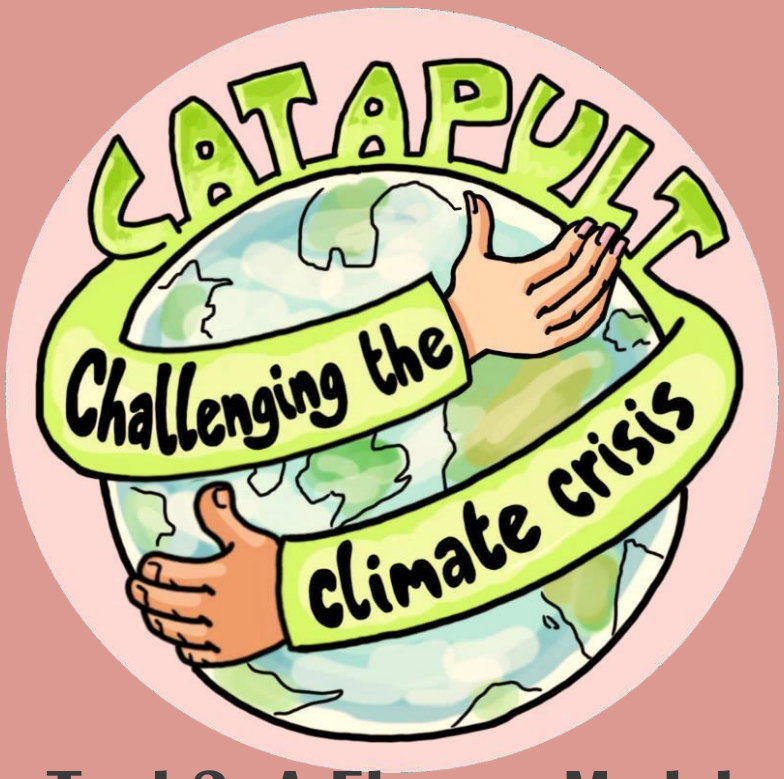
The CCC-CATAPULT Toolkit



Tool 2: A Flower Model for Co-production with Young People

A Flower Model for Co-production with Young People

In November 2020, the 'Challenging the Climate Crisis: Children's Agency to Tackle Policy Underpinned by Learning for Transformation' (CCC-CATAPULT) commenced. A key commitment of this work was to ensure that all of the research – which was focused on exploring young people's agency in climate crisis – was channeled through the 'eyes and ears' of young people. The project team recruited young people between the ages of 15-18yrs to act as co-producers of the research, and they became Youth Action Partners (YAPs): engaging actively with the design of the research, its execution and delivery, its analysis, and its dissemination.

In late 2022/early 2023, researchers and youth co-producers came to together to reflect on their experiences of engaging with the project: exploring the challenges of working as co-producers, what they gained from the experience, how they inputted into the development of the work, and what they would suggest future co-productive processes look like. Drawing these reflections together and building on the work of both Bell and Reed (2021) and Hickey et al. (2018), we created a "flower model" for co-production with young people that sets out the key factors for consideration in the process. In this model:

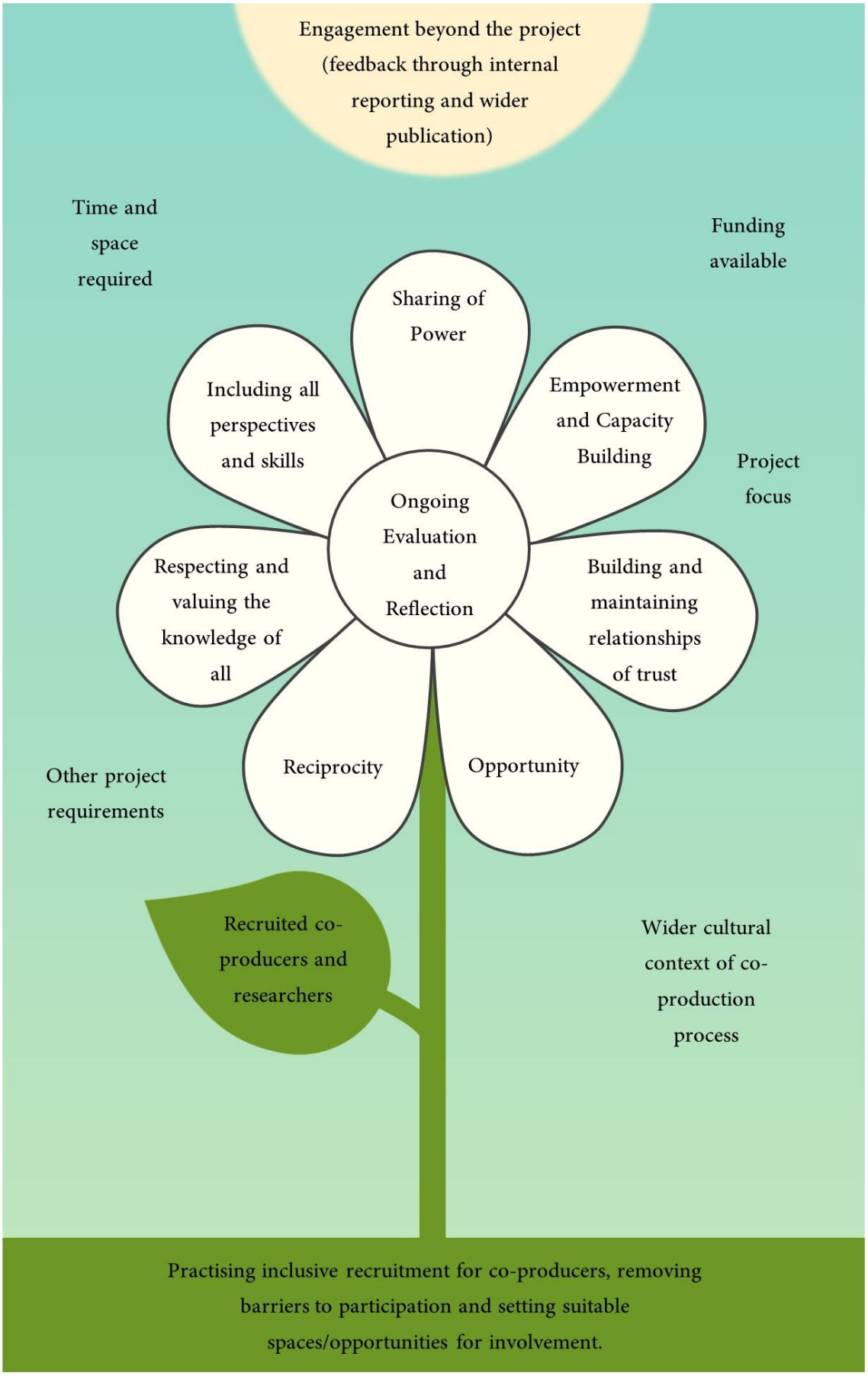
- The Earth represents the considerations one needs to be mindful of when setting up a co-productive process. It centres around removing barriers to participation, ensuring that those who are 'in the room' fairly represent their community. An important sub-factor to consider is the setting up of safe and welcoming spaces to ensure participation for young people.
- The Stem and Leaves represent the people who need to be involved as equal partners, in this instance both young people and the researchers.
- The Petals represent the key principles which we advocate as necessary for underpinning a youth-focused co-production process. Extending on the work of Hickey et al. (2018), these span: 'including all perspectives and skills', 'sharing of power', 'respecting and valuing the knowledge of all', 'reciprocity', 'building and maintaining relationships of trust', 'empowerment and capacity building', 'extended opportunities', and 'ongoing reflection and evaluation'. These key principles are then held together through the middle of the flower, which advocates the need for ongoing evaluation and reflection. A full exploration of each of these principles is available in the article 'Reflections on co-productive research in a youth-focused climate education project' (Portus et al., 2024).
- The Sky represents the wider influences which researchers need to consider when designing a co-productive process. These include the cultural context within which the project is occurring, the suitability of the project focus and ethical issues which may arise, the funding available to implement a rich, fair, and meaningful co-productive opportunity for young people, the time and space they have available to lead such a process, and any additional project requirements which need to be accounted for.
- Finally, the Sun represents the post-process need for ongoing engagement. This suggests the importance of having a platform which allows for communication beyond the project end date, and for the co-producers to have the option to continue to be involved should they wish.

The next page shows the model itself. The following pages contain an activity, involving prompts for research teams undertaking a project involving co-production with young people. We recommend all researchers involved in the project complete the Discussion points and Activities with notepaper to aid the outcomes of the discussions to be summarized. It would also be a useful exercise for researchers and young people involved in co-productive research engaging with this activity at the beginning of your research project.

Once you have completed the Discussion points and Activities it will be crucial to use the

information generated to inform your planning for co-production. You should consider making a timeline and adding important details at the appropriate times. At the end of this document, we include an example timeline tool with some suggestions of key inclusions. This can be copied and pasted to assist your own co-production planning.

Modelling Co-production with Young People



Planning for Co-production: Activity for researchers and young people

The rest of this document is designed as an activity to facilitate research teams in planning a co-production process involving young people (YP). We recommend engaging with this activity at the beginning of your research project and ideally completing and/or sharing this with young people, and then returning to it at various points throughout the process to reflect collectively on the co-productive nature of the work.

There is a separate page for each of the principles from the flower model, with some reflections and prompts stemming from our work on the CCC-CATAPULT project – both from the research team based in Bristol and in Tampere - and the young people who participated in this work in Bristol, Tampere and Galway, as members of our YAP groups (Youth Action Partnerships). This activity is designed to stimulate discussion and encourage planning at the outset of a project and is informed by the reflections from our experiences. We provide some examples from our process for inspiration and suggest prompts that can be used to consider how each of the principles will be embedded into co-productive processes involving young people.

Key:
YP = young people
YAP = Youth Action Partnership (read more here)

Please note it is advisable for the whole research team to make notes collectively (and maybe individually) as you progress through the discussion points and activities and so please ensure that you have paper and pens to facilitate this.

Principle: Sharing power

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- There are different power entities: funders, research leads, individuals with different priorities levels of experience and expertise. These all intersect and play a part in how power is distributed.
- Different people exercise power differently because of values, personalities, confidence, and their positions within teams.
- Co-production is difficult to achieve and to communicate – it is necessary that there is some uncertainty and this conflicts with a desire at the start of the project to provide clarity. It is essential to share uncertainty, embracing the messy without appearing incompetent and/or seeming like there is a lack of vision. Explaining the principles of co-production and examining the importance of shared power is essential.
- Academic titles (Prof and Dr) and roles are off putting and can create divisions in perceptions of power.
- Young people may not want power, it may feel like too much responsibility and they may need more guidance.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- It is important to communicate the vision so that everyone shares the same goal and feels empowered.
- Knowing your role and your responsibilities is an important part of sharing power: *"I think our roles were more focused in the beginning and so it was easier to contribute."* (Bristol YAP member)
- YAP members acknowledge power imbalances as evidenced in the following exchange between Bristol YAP members:

  "I don't think I felt on the same level as the academics of the project, but it was definitely a way between young people."

  "Yeah, the same for me. I guess it's because the academics are spending so much of their time doing it and they're so… they are consistently doing it and we've only got monthly meetings, it's hard to feel equal to, but I definitely felt like when we were there, we had power to get our opinions across and we were definitely heard and had power to shape things."

Discussion points and Activities for research team

- As a team think about how people exercise power? What might influence this?
  - Identify how power is distributed in your project and acknowledge why different levels of power are important. Consider the benefits and challenges.
  - You may want to consider using role play – Adopt different roles (researcher as YP; YP as researcher). Where is power exercised? Do all roles want/need power? How does it feel to have power?

- Break down boundaries that cause imbalance.
  - Don't be afraid to learn together. Would you be prepared to expose different parts of your character and experience that may result in exposing vulnerabilities?

- Consider which team members will be working most closely with YP and the support that they will all need.
  - Communicate and plan how and where power can be shared, where can YP make decisions and where there are more limitations and explain why?

Principle: Including all perspectives and skills

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- Young people's existing skills were utilised in the research project by creating opportunities to put them to use, for example in Tampere YP helped organise a panel event. In Tampere they also contributed to filming a video about the research, which allowed them to use performance skills and English language skills. In Galway, the YAP's had the chance to shape the process for the focus groups and saw their input being taken on board.
- We initially asked YP to complete research diaries but we found that YP wanted more guidance about what that entailed. They responded to this request better when we provided prompts and when there was time to complete reflections in the meetings. Some chose to write and some visualised reflections through drawings. We reflected on the importance of not making assumptions about contributions and in discussing how YP would contribute.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- Assigning tasks aligned with individuals' skills help YP to feel confident.

- The activities that make YP feel really involved may not be the ones that are most crucial to the research process, but have real capacity building potential, such as organising events, creating content (videos, blogs) and this may lead to securing more longitudinal involvement and creating a collaborative process.

  "I have come to feel that I have just been able to talk about the things related to [climate change] and other things without being judged." (Tampere YAP member)

  "We have always had just like in the beginning [of every meeting] we have always had little moments like exchanging news." (Tampere YAP member)

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. As a team explore and test out a range of ways to include perspectives and skills
   - Research diaries
   - WhatsApp groups
   - Presentations
   - Discussions
   - Not always verbal (arts-based?)

2. Find out about the YP and where their skills currently lie?
   - Are they interested in embedding and using these skills and interests in the research project? How can you integrate these into the project?

3. Are there particular skills that the YP want to develop?
   - How can you co-develop activities to facilitate this?
   - How can you integrate these into the project?

Principle: Respecting and valuing knowledge

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- YAP members had lived experience of peers that were disengaged / said they didn't care or want to be involved with activities linked to Climate Change.
- YAP members encouraged the research team to use Instagram and other social media. They were motivated and keen to set up international YAP meetings and WhatsApp groups.
- YAP members input into the survey design encouraged us to use simpler language and a shortened version of the survey.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- When the research team acknowledged that they may have overlooked an aspect which the YAP members suggested, this made the young people feel they had really contributed something, e.g. the inclusion of emotions in the survey.
- *"[Researcher's name] played a big and important role as a representative of us young people"* (Tampere YAP member)

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. What are the different knowledges represented by members of the project?
    - How will these affect different members of the research team including YP?
    - Develop a project plan to ensure that different perspectives and knowledges are communicated throughout the research team.

2. Taking the perspective that YP are experts on their own lives, how can this knowledge of themselves and their lived experiences within their peer groups and families contribute to the research?

Principle: Reciprocity

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- We compensated and valued time through securing small amounts of funding through internal university opportunities. This involved risk from uncertain outcomes, as well as additional work, but we reflected that those opportunities e.g. designing and delivery of a climate cafe, digital skills training added to the longitudinal engagement of YP in the research project.
- Through the original CCC-CATAPULT funding we compensated YP through expenses incurred through provision of food and drink, venue hire, travel expenses.
- We also reciprocated through providing advice on professional development and in particular on University applications.
- We often felt some guilt in asking for YP's contributions because they were contributing voluntarily. We reflected on the uncomfortable feeling of asking for their work and time when they had other priorities (mainly studying for exams). We felt that payment would have been appropriate.
- We made some suggestions including giving YP the opportunity to talk with decision makers but reflected that YP were most interested in activities where they felt there would be more direct impact (e.g. desire to develop educational tools for teachers).

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- For many of the young people, having the chance to learn about the research process was a valuable experience: *"getting to know how University research / a research project works and yeah, I think that was... helping me the most."* (Galway YAP member)
- Other informal types of meet-up and experience offered a lot to the young people, including picnics and meals together: *"I think that our dinner was good because we got to talk about all the feelings about the panel and so on."* (Tampere YAP member)
- The research should give something back to the community that it seeks to study: *"these research results will generate discussion and through that . . . new thoughts and feelings will be awakened, so maybe, maybe attitudes would change as a result."* (Tampere YAP member)

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. Consider the ways in which you can demonstrate the value of the YPs' expertise and contributions to the research project. Find out how YP would like their contributions to be recognised – are they joining with specific aims and desires that could be developed through the project.

2. Explore the feasibility of applying for funding to remunerate the young people for their time?

3. Explore ways in which you can embed opportunities for the research to reciprocate to the community under study?

Principle: Building and maintaining relationships

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- In initial YAP meetings we spent time informally finding out about each other and our hopes for the project and world more broadly.
- The YAPs are at crucial stages in their development and particularly in their education. Researchers became advocates and mentors especially those who had most contact and were only a bit older than the YAPs. Researchers aimed to provide gentle support.
- Researchers knew that the YP wanted to 'do something' - they appreciated that research takes time but there were other things that they could do.
- Friendships are very important at this stage of development, and so cultivating and developing friendships between peers (local and international) are likely to lead to a stronger YAP group, as well as develop peer support.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- Establishing a team spirit and positive attitude was important for the young people. Feeling like people would listen was very important in building trust:
  - *"At the beginning I had difficulties coming to the meetings and I talked to [researcher name] about it. It felt nice that she listened and encouraged me to participate"* (Tampere YAP member)
  - *"I'd say like at the beginning I didn't really know what to expect, and who [researcher name] was so I wasn't that confident at the beginning. But that changed quickly."* (Galway YAP member)
  - *"I feel like we were supported; I knew that we could actually be listened to, and it wasn't just top-down and one-sided."* (Bristol YAP member)

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. How will you get to know your group, and show that you are actively listening and responding?
   - Why are the YP there?
   - What do they already know and do?
   - What would they like to do? Do they know what the options are that are available to them?
   - What level of support/guidance do members want/need?
2. How will meetings be conducted? Consider the importance of location, refreshments, timings (often evenings required).
3. Think about how you can continuously evaluate how relationships are developing. How are the YP feeling valued? Are YP comfortable expressing and contributing? How are YP benefiting from being involved?
4. Plan activities that allow you to work together. Prioritise activities that allow for connections to emerge (sharing films, organising events). This also allows indirect explorations of feelings and emotions. Consider mentoring and building in opportunities through the research process for personal and professional development.

Principle: Opportunity

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- Young people are giving their time presumably because they want to develop, and they want to take part in climate action. Researchers sought opportunities for YP in skill development and public engagement.
- We nominated the Bristol YAP group for a Community Heros award – they were finalists and the researchers chaperoned them to a celebration event.
- We secured additional funding through university internal opportunities to host digital skills training at UWE Bristol, and for a panel event in Tampere University.
- We hired out a venue and organised a film night to take place after the YAP meeting.
- We hosted international meetings for YAP members across the settings to connect.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- "I remember in some of the early meetings we were talking about how to communicate and make safe spaces for talking, and how to have forms of dialogue and engaging people, and I thought all of that stuff was quite useful and really interesting. I definitely remember all that stuff." (Bristol YAP member)

- Other valuable activities helped young people form new connections, including connecting online with the other YAPs in the other project locations. These international opportunities were inspiring and motivating for YAPs.

- "Those international meetings have been terribly nice. And because somehow I am really interested in going abroad like in working life and so on, to studying and other things... it's been really nice to be able to talk a bit with people other than just Finns." (Tampere YAP member)

- "It was pretty exciting to see what's going on because you don't actually get that many opportunities to talk to people in their normal course of life in other countries, so that was quite exciting." (Bristol YAP member)

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. Find out what might appeal to the YP you are working with. What extra activities could you organise that would provide opportunities for young people?

2. What kinds of opportunities are the young people most interested in? For example, developing new skills, taking part in/organising public events, making new connections, gaining knowledge, visiting schools and universities?

3. What resources / contacts /opportunities do you have available as a group that you could draw on?

Principle: Empowerment and Capacity building

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- We recognised that YP wanted more guidance – they did not want to share power equally – they were not trained and we needed to be mindful of placing too much responsibility on them. We needed to empower them but with gentle support. We needed to guide but not direct. We needed to listen to their needs and be prepared to seek out and secure additional opportunities.
- In Bristol, we collectively decided to design and run a climate cafe – primarily because the YAPs were interested in representation and increasing diversity of our YAP group.
    - we also decided to write an article because YP liked the idea of writing about their experiences
    - we also involved YAPs in presenting at academic conferences.
- In all locations we hosted international YAP meetings.
- In Finland YAPs organised and facilitated a panel event.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- The young people really valued opportunities to be part of planning projects and events that they wouldn't often get a chance to do, such as making a film, organising a climate cafe event, or planning the panel event.

- "I think because we'd planned it [climate cafe event], it was nice to see it carried out" (Bristol YAP member)

- "So that [planning the panel event] was a good way to get involved with the YAP process because, after a small bit of panic, I had the opportunity to see it become something really successful and great" (Tampere YAP member)

- The international meetings where young people were able to exchange ideas (and for some practise their language skills) was a valuable part of the capacity building experience.

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. What skills / capacities are you currently missing as a co-production team? What additional skills training / other activities will make the co-production team the strongest it can be for this project?

2. Do any individuals need any further training to feel they can confidently contribute to the research process?

3. At what point along the process will you revisit this question and how will the capacity need be evaluated?

Principle: Ongoing Evaluation and Reflection

Key reflections from the CCC-CATAPULT researchers

- After each meeting researchers wrote reflections in a diary.
- Each YAP meeting involved a planning meeting between local research teams.
- In Bristol we provided guidance for research partners in the other settings to follow for their YAP meetings to ensure processes were parallel.
- At the end of the research process researchers in Bristol and Tampere had 3 long reflection meetings to consider how we experienced the YAP process.

Key Reflections from the YAP members

- The interviews conducted with YAP members at the end of the project gave them a chance to reflect back over the whole process. These interviews used a timeline activity where each meeting and its content was detailed (see example at the end of this document). This provided a reminder and prompt allowing YP to consider different elements of the research and their influence on the research as well as them personally.

- Thinking about what they would do if setting up a similar research project in future, one YAP member said, *"definitely have a clear structure or set of goals, you know, a sense of direction and maybe a way to concretely evaluate what you have done, so when you get to the end of the project, you can look back and say, 'What did we want to achieve when we set out to and have we actually done that?'."* (Bristol YAP member)

Discussion points and Activities for research team

1. Think about how you plan in time to embed a work practise of continual reflection and evaluation. What will your reflection process look like?
    - How will facilitate and plan time for reflection within the project?
    - Will this be personal or shared collectively, or will there be elements of both in co-reflections?
    - What methods will you use to aid reflections?
    - Are there any training needs required to help you (and the YP) reflect – any frameworks you can use?

2. If you are working across multiple research settings, ensure a shared approach for consistency.
    - What do you need to enable this?

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Example Timeline for YAP process in Bristol

June 2021	July 2021	August 2021	September 2021	November 2021	December 2021	January 2022	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022
• Recruiting for the process through reaching out to community groups, charities and schools.	• First online meeting. Introduced the project, the process with questions and answers.	• Face to face all-day meeting at an International centre for Arts. Refreshments provided. • Focused on YAP process deciding on meeting schedules, completing reflections and identifying support needs. • Shared and discussed the draft survey, suggested improvements. • Facilitated a 'Timeout' discussion to explore thoughts and feelings about the climate crisis and begin to get to know each other.	• Meeting held in meeting room in café. Refreshments provided. • Through discussing membership of the YAP group decision to host a climate café. • Decision to write a co-authored article for the National Association of Environmental Education (NAEE)	• Online Meeting • Planning the climate café (i.e discussing poster design) • Sharing the published survey • Celebrating success - NAEE article accepted.	• Online International Partner Meeting • Introductions and shared interests through presentations.	• Meeting at an International centre for Arts. Refreshments provided. • We planned the focus groups and interview questions. We also wrote a story about discussing climate change with different family members.	• Climate Communications Training event • All day session at the University focused on climate communication and young people.	• Online talk by Elin Kelsey • Elin Kelsey spoke about the need for hope in the climate crisis.	• Climate Café Event • Co-delivered the climate café event which invited young people to share their thoughts and feelings about the climate crisis.	• Young Heroes Introductory event • Opening event for the Young Heroes Event. Attended a pre-event interview and photo session.	• Online meeting • Planning and testing the use of deep mapping techniques to think about climate change in the past and the future.	• Arnolfini meeting and awards evening • Half-day session to pilot the deep mapping work • Attended the young heroes award.	• Co- created short testimonial reflections, to be included in conference presentation.	• Co-presented at the Royal Geography Society conference event.	• Online International Meeting and Film Screening: • International discussion of the survey results.	• Online Meeting: • Co-analysis of the narrative and drawing work done in the deep mapping sessions.

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Università di Genova

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For more information about the project, please go to the CCC-CATAPULT website: