

CASE STUDY



Empowering the future: Co-designing interventions and research to improve the health and wellbeing of young people

Youth Well Lab, The University of Sydney

The work and its impact

The [Youth Well Lab](#) works in partnership with young people aged 10–24 years to co-design research and policy to improve their health and wellbeing.

The team includes multidisciplinary researchers and young people. Together they use digital health technology and diverse methods to co-design health interventions and contribute to health research that meets the unique needs of young people.

Young people are supported to strengthen leadership and research skills by co-leading all phases of the research cycle. This includes agenda setting through to translating research findings into practice.

Recognising the importance of involving young people in shaping research that affects them, the Health Advisory Panel for Youth at The University of Sydney or '[HAPYUS](#)' was established and embedded within the team to advise, support and co-lead research.

These collaborations have resulted in many positive outcomes including:

- the co-design of health interventions and health research

- co-authoring of peer-reviewed publications with young people
- contributing to the development of national guidelines on youth participation
- leading youth advocacy on a global scale.

A key example is the team's [Health4Me program](#), a six-month digital health intervention funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing under the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). It aims to improve key health behaviours in young people to reduce chronic disease risk later in life. This grant helped establish HAPYUS, who identified the major lifestyle health issues faced by young people today, drawing on their everyday realities. These key insights were used to co-develop a healthy lifestyle text-message intervention. The results of this study are soon to be published.

Beyond digital health, HAPYUS also contributed to the team's food environment research program, including helping interpret findings on school food outlet exposure and reviewing results from 70 global studies on food environments. This ensured youth perspectives informed their analyses.

Importance of involving young people in health research

Effectively involving young people in health and medical research is important. It makes sure that the interventions, health research and policies developed meet their needs and experiences.

Due to their lived experience, young people can provide valuable insights into the challenges and concerns they face about their health and wellbeing. They can, should, and have a right, to collaborate on health research and policy aimed at improving the lives of themselves and their communities.

Involving young people in health and medical research supports a new generation of informed leaders, who will contribute to and shape future health and wellbeing outcomes.

The team are currently developing the [Health Hive](#) supported by a consumer-led MRFF grant to develop Australia's first digital training and engagement platform to support adolescents as active contributors across all phases of health research.



"The idea of being involved in the scientific community, when we've always been told it would need experience and qualifications, was simply wild! Hopefully, our work has inspired many young people to believe in our power to make a change."

NHMC

Bowen
Youth Advisor (2021–2022)

