

# My future could be happier and healthier if...

**Introduction:** Successful public engagement, involvement and co-design can promote community ownership of research, aiding birth cohort recruitment and retention. Sharing best practice can help researchers do this well.

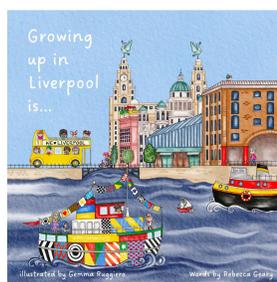
**Methods:** Young Voices, Big Ideas (YVBI) used creative methods to engage children and young people in schools and community centres in Liverpool, asking them to finish the statement 'My future could be happier and healthier if...' through **audio recordings**, **post its** and **'Write, Draw, Show and Tell'**, and to build healthy cities using **Lego® Serious Play®**. YVBI shared how the Children Growing up in Liverpool (C-GULL) study could answer questions related to their priorities to improve children's health. Young people co-designed **4-week arts-based workshops**, a **pop-up pod**, **children's books** and a **museum installation**.

**Results:** YVBI engaged over 900 children and young people, at 8 primary schools in deprived areas and 7 community events across Liverpool. The YVBI Museum of Liverpool installation (18th October-13th November 2024) was visited by up to 72,000 people and showcased the children's priorities for both the future of the city and for research. **Ten themes emerged** from the school workshops and public engagement activities (shown below).

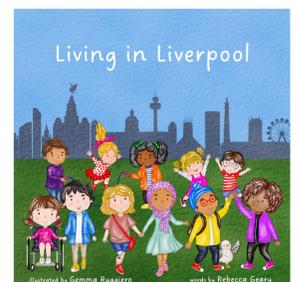
- Less Litter and Pollution
- Climate Action
- Friends and Family
- Mental Health
- Kindness
- Our Society
- Safety
- Healthy Food
- Activities
- Green Spaces



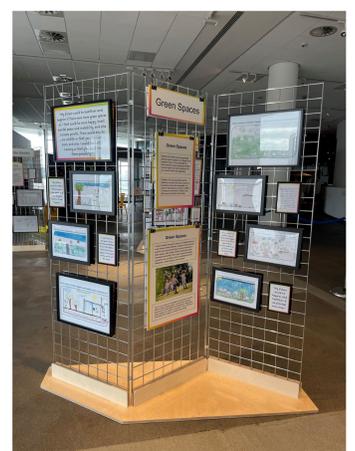
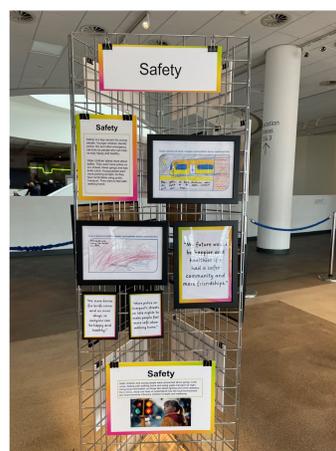
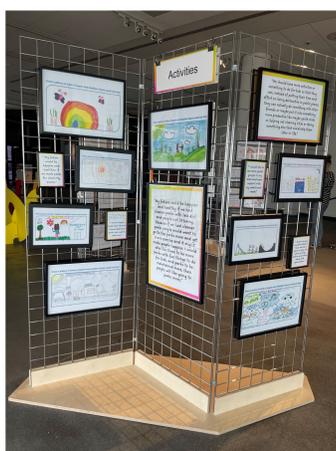
"Everyone wants to make the world a better place, it is just how we do it that we disagree on."



"Liverpool is much more than just landmarks. It is the people and the community that makes our city great."



**Conclusion:** YVBI used co-design to shape public engagement, and public engagement to shape research. The ten themes identified by the children and young people of Liverpool will help shape future C-GULL research priorities for children's health and happiness. This work highlights that we can increase the quality of research to help ensure it is relevant and positively impacts children's lives, by giving them a platform to have their voices heard.



**Researcher reflections on enabling conditions:** To successfully conduct this kind of engagement work, forming trusting relationships with partner organisations, children, young people and their families is needed. Working this way takes significant time and requires sustained commitment and resources from children, young people, cultural and community organisations, researchers and funders. Engaging public advisors from project inception ensures people know their value and reflects the important and unique contribution embedded co-design can bring to research and policy. Creating inclusive opportunities and using accessible methods can empower children and young people to take active roles in co-design.