**Key lessons from our expert advisory groups**

**Learning from feedback and evaluation of CAFADA project expert advisory groups**

**SPACE: Supporting context and resources**

* 1. **Existing relationships of trust** **between research team members and staff (support worker and management of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partners**
  2. **On-going commitment** **of voluntary sector (NGO) frontline** (support worker) staff – rooted in recognition of benefits of the research
  3. **Voluntary sector (NGO) frontline staff** involved in set up, delivery and follow up of sessions
  4. **‘Buy-In’ and commitment of young experts/ women’s experts to project objectives:** belief in their contributions impacting change for others
  5. **Experience and skills of facilitators** - with specialist knowledge of domestic abuse
  6. **Funding for research staff time and supporting costs**
  7. **Delays to project provided additional time:** supported fuller analysis of data, feedback to groups and invitation for them to review and inform measure design. Reflected the slow nature of meaningful participation work.

**VOICE and supporting involvement in ACTIONS**

* 1. **Support workers role in ‘transferring trust’** (communicating their trust in research staff to women and children – encouraging engagement)
  2. **Detailed preparation and planning for participation sessions**, including collaboration with support workers, ensuring smooth running of groups and trust and ‘ownership’ of support workers
  3. **Structured consultation work-plan** including on-going workshop design; delivering pre-workshop materials to participants; workshop delivery; workshop feedback to participants; data captured and stored. (This required adapting face to face consultation workshops to online space – including use of new technology to support)
  4. **Ongoing relationship building with participants** (through both NGO workers and researchers). Steps taken to ensure participants know they are being ‘held in mind’ and individual relationships and connections created - supported through ‘care packages’ and personalised correspondence. Check in and warm down at end of sessions. Finding points of connection with individuals during meeting (e.g., through food; remembering of details about individuals; and findings things to laugh about together).
  5. **Demonstrating to expert advisors and support workers that they were valued** (and ‘fair exchange’ for contributions) – through vouchers and provision of food and care packages.
  6. **Creation of safe critical thinking and discussion spaces –** Workshops incorporated rapport and trust building (‘warm ups’) alongside focused discussion and cool down chats.
  7. **Regular and accessible feedback to participants on impact and influence of work**
  8. **Consultation design to support a range of communication preferences and styles –** options for participants about how to respond both within workshops and outside (worksheets; online chat box; ‘padlet’; zoom whiteboard; verbal discussion in pairs; small groups; 1:1).

**Barriers or limiting factors for expert groups**

1. **Staff capacity** – needed to draw on staff from other research work streams to support running of groups
2. **Young expert group member time to be involved** (and their changing, wider commitments)
3. **Limitations of using online spaces** (shorter sessions; zoom fatigue; group dynamics harder to ‘read’ and facilitate). Not feasible to incorporate feedback and evaluation within shorter sessions.
4. **Attempting to use different or multiple technologies** – added a layer of complexity and sometimes anxiety to work (although enjoyed by some)
5. **Wider project momentum** (due to COVID and impact on wider CAFADA progress – delayed feedback to participants – not all young experts were still engaged with NGO gatekeepers by time of feedback)
6. **Need for clearer/ more timely feedback and ‘endings’**: recognition that participants’ circumstances could change quickly and needing to ensure feedback or endings were not delayed significantly after consultation/ participation processes

Important skillset and values for expert group facilitation identified by CAFADA expert group participants